Hostile and unforgiving, yet beautiful and seductive, the frozen continent of Antarctica has beckoned adventurers for over a century. Because of its location, extreme climate and landscape, the continent remains largely in its pristine glory. What is it about this frozen land that attracts explorers, scientists, and thrill seekers? How has Antarctica presented the supreme challenge to humankind’s desire to control nature? This special documentary presents the history of the continent and the efforts to explore and subdue it. Antarctica: A Frozen History would be useful for classes on World History, Exploration, Science and Technology and Geography. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

Objectives
Students will learn about the formation, climate and natural history of the Antarctic continent. They will learn about the exploration expeditions to the region, as well as the contemporary scientific expeditions.

National History Standards
Antarctica: A Frozen History fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5-12: chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretations, and historical research capabilities for World History eras 8 and 9.

- arduous
- charismatic
- contradictory
- culminate
- effusive
- expedition
- expertise
- exploit
- forays
- geological
- introspective
- logistics
- meteorological
- norm
- protocol
- temperate

Discussion Questions
1. Antarctica is one of the earth’s seven continents. Where is Antarctica located?
2. Antarctica is one of the most hostile environments on the planet Earth. Describe the climate, terrain and landscape of the continent.
3. For many adventurers and explorers, Antarctica was the grand prize. Why was the exploration of this continent the ultimate test of ambition? Why was there such a desire to reach the interior of the continent and the South Pole?
4. Discuss the process of the formation of the continents.
5. Temperatures on Antarctica regularly reach 50 degrees below Fahrenheit. Why does it get so cold on the continent?
6. What is Antarctica’s most distinctive feature?
7. Icebergs dominate the area of Antarctica. How are these icebergs formed?
8. Discuss the role of economics in the discovery and exploration of Antarctica.
9. What is the legacy of Antarctic explorer Robert Falcon Scott? Why is it controversial?
10. Compare the personalities and characteristics of Antarctic explorers Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton.
11. Experience showed that the best way to travel across Antarctica in the 19th and early 20th century was to use dogs to pull the sledges. Why did the British expeditions ignore this wisdom?
12. What qualities did Roald Amundsen bring to Antarctic expedition?
13. How did Roald Amundsen prepare for Antarctic exploration?
14. Compare the British and Norwegian expeditions.
15. What happened to Scott’s expedition?
16. What made Ernest Shackleton so unique?
17. Discuss Ernest Shackleton’s expedition.
18. What was the Mechanical Age? How was it different from the Heroic Age?
19. Discuss the dangers Richard Byrd and his expeditions faced in flying over the poles.
20. How did the Cold War influence Antarctic exploration?
21. Discuss Operation Deep Freeze.
22. What is the future of Antarctica? What are the dangers of global warming to the region?

Extended Activities

1. Create a mobile or poster illustrating the characteristics of Antarctica.
2. Create a poster illustrating the process of the formation of the continents.
3. Imagine that you were a member of one of the Antarctic expeditions of the Heroic Age. Create a diary or journal that tells of your adventures, glories and hardships.
4. Design a memorial for the pioneer explorers of Antarctica.
5. What is global warming? Research global warming on the Internet and use your data to create a report on this threat to the environment.