



# The Last Place on Earth: Scott and Amundsen's Race to the South Pole, Revised and Updated (Modern Library Exploration)

By Roland Huntford

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, the South Pole was the most coveted prize in the fiercely nationalistic modern age of exploration. In the brilliant dual biography, the award-winning writer Roland Huntford re-examines every detail of the great race to the South Pole between Britain's Robert Scott and Norway's Roald Amundsen. Scott, who dies along with four of his men only eleven miles from his next cache of supplies, became Britain's beloved failure, while Amundsen, who not only beat Scott to the Pole but returned alive, was largely forgotten. This account of their race is a gripping, highly readable history that captures the driving ambitions of the era and the complex, often deeply flawed men who were charged with carrying them out. **THE LAST PLACE ON EARTH** is the first of Huntford's masterly trilogy of polar biographies. It is also the only work on the subject in the English language based on the original Norwegian sources, to which Huntford returned to revise and update this edition.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

On December 14, 1911, the classical age of polar exploration ended when Norway's Roald Amundsen conquered the South Pole. His competitor for the prize, Britain's Robert Scott, arrived one month later--but died on the return with four of his men only 11 miles from their next cache of supplies. But it was Scott, ironically, who became the legend, Britain's heroic failure, "a monument to sheer ambition and bull-headed persistence. His achievement was to perpetuate the romantic myth of the explorer as martyr, and ... to glorify suffering and self-sacrifice as ends in themselves." The world promptly forgot about Amundsen.

Biographer Ronald Huntford's attempt to restore Amundsen to glory, first published in 1979 under the title *Scott and Amundsen*, has been thawed as part of the Modern Library Exploration series, captained by Jon Krakauer (of *Into Thin Air* fame). *The Last Place on Earth* is a complex and fascinating account of the race for this last great terrestrial goal, and it's pointedly geared toward demythologizing Scott. Though this was the age of the amateur explorer, Amundsen was a professional: he left little to chance, apprenticed with Eskimos, and obsessed over every detail. While Scott clung fast to the British rule of "No skis, no dogs," Amundsen understood that both were vital to survival, and they clearly won him the Pole.

Amundsen in Huntford's view is the "last great Viking" and Scott his bungling opposite: "stupid ... recklessly incompetent," and irresponsible in the extreme--failings that cost him and his teammates their lives. Yet for all of Scott's real or exaggerated faults, he understood far better than Amundsen the power of a well-crafted sentence. Scott's diaries were recovered and widely published, and if the world insisted on lionizing Scott, it was partly because he told a better story. Huntford's bias aside, it's clear that both Scott and Amundsen were valiant and deeply flawed. "Scott ... had set out to be an heroic example. Amundsen merely wanted to be first at the pole. Both had their prayers answered." --*Svenja Soldovieri*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Huntford's chronicle of the rivalry between the United Kingdom's Robert Scott and Norway's Roald Amundsen to become the first explorer to reach the South Pole, poses a substantial challenge for adaptation into the audio format. The narrative presents events in a third-person expository fashion, offering precious few opportunities for dialogue among the real-life characters. American listeners may consider Tim Pigott-Smith's British accent distracting, while others might enjoy it as a relevant bit of flair. The story contains plenty of inherent drama, but the abridgment seems to veer off course in the concluding sections, as the long-term legacies of the two polar pioneers is rather rushed. *A Modern Library paperback. (July)*

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#### Review

"A remarkably vivid picture of the agonies and feuds, as well as joys, of polar exploration . . . a fascinating book."--The New York Times

"An extraordinarily rich reading experience."--Los Angeles Times

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**Thomas Depew:**

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