

Bookfolio for **Matthew Henson: Explorer**

Author: [Michael Gilman](#)

First Publication Date: 1987

Publisher: Chelsea House

ISBN:

Recommended for: [Grades 5-8](#)

Classification: Nonfiction

Genre: [Biography](#)

MultiCulture: African American

Story Summary: Matthew Henson was born in Maryland in 1866 to free black parents. In 1867 his family moved to Georgetown, a part of Washington, D.C., to avoid attacks by the Ku Klux Klan and other racist elements present in the South after the Civil War. Henson had his first taste of world travel after he was orphaned at age 13. He enlisted as a cabin boy on the KATIE HINES, captained by Captain Childs, who worked with Henson to fight racial prejudice. After five years at sea, Henson worked in a hat shop in Washington, D.C. There, by chance, he met Robert Peary who was looking for a helper to accompany him to Nicaragua where Peary was surveying for an Atlantic-Pacific canal route. Henson went with Peary and later became a member of the surveying team.

In 1891 Henson accompanied Peary to Greenland to explore its northern limits. Henson proved invaluable as a builder, a recruiter of Eskimos, and a sled dog driver on the expedition. Two other expeditions to Greenland followed with Henson playing a major role. In 1906 Peary first attempted to reach the North Pole. Although he failed, he came within 17.5 miles of his goal. Henson, Peary, and four Eskimos finally reached the North Pole in 1909. Henson waited many years for public acknowledgment of his accomplishments. He was elected to the Explorers Club in 1937, was awarded a naval medal in 1945, and was invited to meet President Eisenhower at the White House in 1954. Matthew Henson died in 1955.

Read-aloud Recommendation: Chapter 3, "On to the Arctic."

The skills for each activity are identified by the following abbreviations:

R=Reading, W=Writing, S=Speaking, L=Listening, D=Drawing

Matthew Henson: Explorer - Independent Activities	Skills
1. Encyclopedic Fame (Writing a life capsule)	W
2. Introducing Matthew Henson (Writing a speech)	S , W
3. An Eskimo Village (Recreating a village)	D , R , S
4. An Eskimo Legend (Writing a legend)	S , W
5. Iceberg! (Researching a topic)	S , W
6. Civil Rights Then and Now (Making a time line)	R , W
Matthew Henson: Explorer - Group Activities	Skills
1. Friends or Associates (Analyzing character relationships)	S , W
2. Photo Opportunity (Making a photo essay)	R , W
3. The Race for the Pole (Researching a topic)	R , S , W
4. Two Pacifists (Researching a topic)	R , S , W
5. Arctic/Antarctic (Discussing the story)	L , S
6. "Let's Talk About..." (Discussing the story)	D , S

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