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EXPOSURE

A FILM BY HOLLY MORRIS

EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION GUIDE

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ABOUT THE FILM

Against all odds and polar advice, a Muslim chaplain, a French biologist, a Qatari princess and eight other women from the Arab World and the West attempt to ski across the melting Arctic sea ice to the North Pole. Director Holly Morris and her crew document an audacious and intimate story of resilience, survival and global citizenry in **Exposure**: the last-ever-expedition to 90° North.

THE CHARACTERS



FELICITY ASTON
Explorer - UK
Expedition Team Leader



SHEIKHA ASMA AL THANI
Marketing Director - Qatar



MISBA KHAN
Chaplain - UK



SUSAN GALLON
Marine Biologist - France



MARIAM HAMIDADDIN
Entrepreneur - Saudi Arabia



ANISA AL RAISSI
Outdoor Instructor - Oman



IDA OLSSON
Polar Bear Expert - Sweden



LAMEES NIJEM
Graphic Designer - Kuwait



STEPHANIE SOLOMONIDES
Finance Professional - Cyprus



OLGA RUMYANTSEVA
Travel Agent - Russia



NATAŠA BRIŠKI
Journalist - Slovenia

SCREENING THE FILM

TOPICS As you prepare to screen **Exposure**, consider any specific learning or discussion goals you may have, in order to ensure lively and engaged conversation.

Exposure is an intersectional, ground-breaking film, touching on key topics including the following:

CLIMATE AND SCIENCE

- Climate science/Polar regions/oceans – the realities of melting sea ice and shrinking extant ice.
- Geo-politics – the impact of international relations and cooperation on climate research and exploration.
- Human health science – gathering physical and mental health-related data from women in extreme environments. Data rarely, if ever, collected.



THE OUTDOORS

- Access to the outdoors – breaking stereotypes, supporting Black, Indigenous, and all women of color in navigating entrenched outdoor communities, and creating an outdoors that is welcoming to all.
- The transformative power of the natural world – immersing oneself in the outdoors to improve mental, physical and spiritual well-being.
- The "Expedition Film" genre – flipping the script on the historically male-dominated, adventure film genre.



GENDER AND CULTURE

- Women's perspectives – storytelling in our own words.
- Cross-cultural collaboration – teamwork among women from different cultures, speaking different languages, with different abilities and personalities.
- Religion (Islam) – breaking stereotypes and supporting positive, wide-ranging representations of Muslim women in film.



SCREENING FORMAT IDEAS

Exposure screens well in-person and virtually. Here are some ideas for building a bigger event, or discussion, around the film.



INVITE THE FILM TEAM

Director Holly Morris, the cinematographers (both women), and select exhibition team members are available for virtual discussions before or after the screening. Additionally, the Director may be available in-person at your screening.

Contact info@powderkeg-studios.com to inquire about booking.

EXPERTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Speaker/lecturer – invite a climatologist, polar researcher, mountaineer, human health scientist, or other expert to make a keynote address around relevant topics.
- Lean into local organizations – outdoor and environmental organizations in every region offer ways to get involved, take action, and help build a movement. A short list of organizations is included at the end of this guide to get you started.



GET OUTDOORS

Take the audience outdoors – challenge audiences to a hike, nature-walk, or other outdoor adventure, whatever their experience level. If you are hosting the screening virtually, invite audiences to engage on their own in forest bathing¹, or observing the effects of climate change in their backyard or neighborhood.

Do you live in an area with drought conditions? Or regular flooding? What measures do you see that have been taken to ensure the livability of the place? Use these activities as a way to engage in a discussion of personal discovery made by observing and experiencing the natural world.



PROMOTING YOUR SCREENING

If you are screening the film to a large audience we recommend beginning your promotion at least four weeks before the screening date to ensure attendees have the date reserved in their calendar.

Use the social media toolkit provided as part of this watch kit to distribute information through your normal channels of communication, including your newsletter, website, e-mail list, and announcements at meetings.

A high resolution poster file has also been included, for print or digital advertising.



PARTNERSHIPS MAKE A BIGGER SPLASH

Reach out to organizations in your community who are interested in the film's focus issues: environment, women's leadership, and personal potential through engagement with the natural world. Invite them to attend, or co-sponsor your screening.

Possible partners include:

non profit organizations looking to get students involved; outdoor adventure retail stores; faith communities; environmental scientists and naturalists; and women's groups.

Leverage partnerships with these organizations by:

- Having them promote the event to their members
- Inviting them to set up an information table at your screening event
- Inviting their experts to share their experience in a keynote presentation or panel discussion

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Director Holly Morris and her-all women film crew document the incredible journey of the 11 women from the Arab world and the West, led by Polar Explorer Felicity Aston, who skied to the North Pole in 2018, against all odds. Due to geopolitical conflict, COVID-19, and climate change, no one since has even been able to attempt to reach the North Pole. This edge-of-your seat adventure film flips the historically male-dominated genre on its head, and shows us what an outdoor and environmental movement that is open and welcoming to all can look like.

The characters in **Exposure** are ordinary women—novice explorers—challenging themselves to do something physically and emotionally extraordinary, in one of the planet's harshest environments. Despite differences among them, the women come to respect one another, and the unique talents they each brought to the team, ultimately leading to a successful, transformational journey to the Pole.



ENSURING HEALTHY, RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION

After your screening of **Exposure**, use the questions on the following pages as a starting point for discussion. You can pose the questions to the audience, to a panel, or use them in small groups to dig deeper into conversations about the topics.

Before beginning, invite participants to adhere to a few guidelines to promote healthy discussion and active listening, including:

- Put aside your preconceptions
- Acknowledge your privilege, and your blind spots
- Internalize what you've learned, and understand how you might apply it to your life
- Approach the conversation with respect and curiosity
- Engage your active listening
- Use I statements and get comfortable with your own story

CLIMATE AND SCIENCE

Climate change is a planetary issue – meaning, our warming global climate is effecting change everywhere on the planet. But the types of changes that are happening all around the world are unique to each continent and region.

The North Pole is in the Arctic, which is an “ocean covered by a thin layer of perennial sea ice and surrounded by land. (Perennial refers to the oldest and thickest of that sea ice.)”²

On the other hand, the South Pole is located in the Antarctic, which is a continent covered by a very thick ice cap and surrounded by a rim of sea ice and the Southern Ocean.³

The Arctic Ocean is therefore more sensitive to climate changes, because it is a deep ocean linked with all the climate systems around it.



Ida Olsson, the Polar Bear Expert from the **Exposure** expedition team puts the changes into the context of surrounding wildlife:

“The further North you get, there shouldn't be any polar bears. But because of climate change the ice is breaking up, creating more open water – seal habitat. The polar bears are moving North looking for food – for seals. As the area of solid sea ice lessens, polar bears are getting higher and higher up.”

- “Extent” is a measurement of the area of ocean where there is some ice, all year round.
- Extent sea ice has been declining since 1979, and in 2019, it was the lowest it had been since 1850.
- The ice at the North Pole melts in summer, and re-grows in winter, a trend that results in an increasing loss of sea ice extent. Summer Arctic sea ice extent is shrinking by 13% per decade as a result of global warming.
- Ice at the Poles is critical to maintaining global temperatures, as it reflects solar radiation back into space.
- There is a wide body of research that links the burning of fossil fuels with Arctic sea ice loss.
- Paradoxically, some sea ice loss has been offset by aerosol particle pollution in the air, and as we work to end air pollution, sea ice loss will accelerate more.

² <https://climate.nasa.gov/ask-nasa-climate/2861/arctic-and-antarctic-sea-ice-how-are-they-different/#:-:text=The%20Arctic%20is%20an%20ocean,ice%20and%20the%20Southern%20Ocean,>

³ <https://climate.nasa.gov/ask-nasa-climate/2861/arctic-and-antarctic-sea-ice-how-are-they-different/#:-:text=The%20Arctic%20is%20an%20ocean,ice%20and%20the%20Southern%20Ocean,>

⁴ <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/arctic-sea-ice/>

CLIMATE AND SCIENCE - STARTER QUESTIONS

While we may not be able to reverse the trend of melting sea ice, we can slow it, and adapt our communities and regions so that we can move into the future with greater care and compassion for ourselves and the planet we inhabit.

Like the women in **Exposure**, a key first step is to discover our motivation, our agency, and our own purpose—then challenge ourselves to reach it, no matter how challenging the journey may be.

- 1 Do you think that filmmakers have a unique responsibility when depicting science on screen?
- 2 How do you think film and other similar media can be leveraged to further educate the public about climate change and lead to real, tangible change and problem solving?
- 3 How do you think the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the climate change movement?
- 4 Sometimes the consequences of climate change are not obvious to some people, and certain facts are not commonly included in public discourse. For example, that specific populations are disproportionately impacted by climate change because of their race or ethnicity; or the ways climate change is impacting spaces and places far from where you live. What are some of the more subtle or hidden impacts of climate change that you find difficult to talk about?



CLIMATE AND SCIENCE - STARTER QUESTIONS


- 5 The specter of climate change can feel overwhelming. How do you deal with these feelings in your life and what type of actions do you recommend to empower folks who might be feeling the doom and gloom?
- 6 Exposure doesn't feel like a climate change movie, but the theme is an obvious concept underlying the entire film. How is this film different from other environmental films you've watched?
- 7 How important of a role do you see film playing in the climate justice movement? Do you think Exposure is filling this role?
- 8 Climate change isn't one bit funny. But, there is still a lot of humor in the film. How do the women use humor and joy to help to shift their perspectives from the scary stuff and ground them in the action of the moment?



ADDITIONAL READING


- Read about the impact of war on Polar research at [Science.org](https://www.science.org)
- Check out the NOAA 2021 [Arctic Report Card](#)
- Read Greenfacts.org [Facts on Climate Change](#)
- Check out the [United Nation's Climate Action](#) to learn what you can do to help your community adapt
- Learn about [adaptation strategies from the Environmental Protection Agency](#).

THE OUTDOORS



Getting outdoors is something every one of us needs to do, and a growing body of research⁵ is showing that there are a lot more benefits to being out in nature, for our mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health than we previously thought.

A major study of 20,000 individuals, published in the journal *Nature*⁶ showed that people who spent two hours every week in outdoor environments—either a park or some other space with trees, grass or bodies of water—were more likely to report a feeling of well-being and good health than those who were outside for less than two hours per week, or not at all.



Misba Khan puts it this way, just before she prays out on the Arctic sea ice,

“I do feel like I’m on a pilgrimage. My religious beliefs are stronger when I’m away from home. You have all these things in life that can take you away from the spiritual world. But here you’re stripped away of everything. You’re down to the basics of life. It’s really powerful.”

- Being in natural environments (with trees, plants and grass, animals, and bodies of water) can reduce feelings of isolation, promote calm, and lift mood.⁷
- Dr. Nooshin Razani from UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital, Oakland has prescribed time outdoors to her pediatric patients and their families as a preventive medicine.
- 20 minutes in nature improves concentration and reduces the need for ADHD and ADD medications in children.⁸
- Individuals are more likely to repeat being physically active when the exercise is performed in a natural environment.
- A 30-minute visit to a park can improve heart health, circulation and lower cholesterol, blood glucose, and blood pressure.
- Physical activity in a green space can improve cognitive control, short and long-term memory, and overall brain function.
- Not everyone has safe, reliable access to natural spaces. Learn more about the barriers prohibiting many Black, Indigenous, and other people of color from safely accessing the outdoors at Lower Columbia Nature Network.

⁵ <https://e360.yale.edu/features/ecopsychology-how-immersion-in-nature-benefits-your-health?ref=marketbulletin-dotcom>

⁶ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3>

⁷ <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/arctic-sea-ice/>

⁸ <https://www.nps.gov/articles/naturesbenefits.htm>

THE OUTDOORS - STARTER QUESTIONS

The health of the planet is inextricably linked with our own health.

Chances are, the actions you take to increase your own, your family's, and your community's exposure in natural environments will make you feel more connected to, and more protective and respectful of, the natural world.

- 1 How does **Exposure** connect to discussions about access to the outdoors, and do you think the film can make a difference in the outdoor access for all movement?
- 2 Have you ever had an experience where you didn't feel welcome, or safe in the outdoors? What do you think needed to change in order for you to feel comfortable?
- 3 What is one of your most memorable times in the outdoors? What made it so special? Do you think the natural environment had anything to do with your positive experience?
- 4 Have you ever noticed a difference in how you feel spending time outdoors after being inside for long periods of time? What do you attribute this shift to?
- 5 Sometimes we can get stuck thinking that if we can't afford something like a Polar expedition, then we can't have an awesome outdoor experience. But you don't need to be a millionaire to enjoy, and be transformed by, the outdoors. What are some fun local, free, or low-cost activities you could do outdoors right now?



ADDITIONAL READING

- Check out the book *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv, who coined the term "Nature Deficit Disorder" to describe the symptoms behind a lack of exposure to natural environments.
- Read Florence Williams' *The Nature Fix* to learn more about immersing yourself in nature, and why it is a good idea.
- Check out **Exposure's** community partner, *Justice Outside*, to learn more about the work they are doing to ensure that Black, Indigenous, and all people of color have equitable access to, and feel safe in, the outdoors.

GENDER AND CULTURE

Exposure follows the 2018 Euro-Arabian over-ice expedition to the North Pole. Felicity Aston conceived of the expedition to create dialogue, alliance—and change—between women from Western and Arab cultures. There was never a plan to document the expedition on film, but Director Holly Morris knew the expedition was unprecedented and that the stakes were very high.

Given the climate crisis, even back in 2018 many wondered if this team might be among the last, ever, to have a real shot at reaching the North Pole over the ice. Because the expedition team was all-women, it was important that the film crew be all-women, too.

This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to flip the historically male expedition genre on its head and create a new kind of adventure film.

Same as the expedition team members, the film crew trained for years—cinematographers Ingeborg Jakobsen, Kathryn Barrows, and Director Holly Morris—in both cold and desert environments. Between shoots on location, the crew sneaked into high rises and endured brutal stair climbing workouts, and learned the technical ins and outs for filming in such an extreme environment.

Once in the Arctic, the film crew of three pulled sledges—same as the women they were filming. They didn't have a budget for a big production. They skied out ahead, set up cameras. They skied backwards, holding cameras. They had no dogs, snowmobiles, craft services, or male helpers.



They struggled over the dangerous semi-frozen Arctic Ocean with camera batteries strapped to their warm-ish bodies to keep them from dying. They pulled sledges full of equipment in addition to their survival gear, trying to capture vérité and immediacy, so that they wouldn't need narration in the final film—a tool that most expedition films lean on.

Mic-ing and monitoring a team of eleven when they are so covered up made it difficult to know who was who, never mind what they were saying, creating an additional challenge of figuring out story points.

Audio was a constant issue to be solved, grappling with sometimes brutal cold and the incessant hiss of camp stoves which could not be turned off because they were literally the difference between life and death.



GENDER AND CULTURE

When the expedition and film crew got to Longyearbyen, they waited for a Russian team to build Ice Station Barneo – which had been delayed nearly three weeks in the wake of two helicopter crashes that grounded all aviation.

They thought they might not even get to go at all. And while they waited for their window, they dealt with the realities of being an all-woman, novice team among a rarified community of mostly white, male veteran polar explorers and scientists, who questioned their “place at the table.”

But the most terrifying part of making the film—and the journey—was the Arctic itself.

The existential threat of climate change became vivid and real. It is a miracle that this special team—of whom many were the first from their nations to make the journey, including Sheikha Asma Al Thani of Qatar – was successful.

But it’s an even more precious miracle that the crew was able to capture and share this inspiring—perhaps last-ever—over-ice polar expedition story with the world.



As a woman or girl, especially a woman or girl of color, you may not feel welcome, or prepared to engage with the natural world.

Mariam Hamidaddin, the Saudi team member expresses her feelings about that in the film very clearly:

“I’ve lived all my life, like...Mariam is not physically able to do such a thing, or Mariam doesn’t know how to camp, or she doesn’t know how to do this...No! I can learn these things. As cheesy as it sounds when people say anything is possible...it is true.”

The women from the Expedition and on the Exposure film team invite you to find your people—the ones who will support you, collaborate with you, and ultimately share in the joy of reaching difficult—but achievable—outdoor goals with you.



GENDER AND CULTURE - STARTER QUESTIONS

- 1 We often watch movies and then talk out of the theater without really reflecting on what we've seen or how to talk about it, or what impact these themes have on our lives. What are some of the scenes, people, lines, themes in the film that you remember— thinking about what might linger in your mind for a long time?
- 2 "True North" is a term used to describe North according to the Earth's axis, as opposed to "magnetic" North. As the women reach the Pole, the ice is on the move and landing at 90°—magnetic North—is temporary. What does the notion of True North mean to you in this context, both literally and figuratively? How can you apply this concept to your life?
- 3 Why is it important to have adventurous experiences in the outdoors, with others?
- 4 Even on a journey comprised of only women, stereotypical roles persist. How can this film help to challenge the idea of "men's" roles and "women's" roles in the outdoors?
- 5 These women all wanted to go on this journey and were willing to work hard to do it. But many people may not be physically or emotionally able, or psychologically motivated, to make such an extreme trip. What are some alternative ways to challenge yourself in the outdoors and collaborate with others whose skills and abilities may be very different from yours?
- 6 How do you understand "changing climate" as it is shown in this film? Not only the ice melting, but also the "climate" among the women, in the adventure community, in the science field?



RESOURCES

- [Justice Outside](#), a national organization located in Oakland, California ensuring equitable access to the outdoors.
- [Adventure Divas: Searching the Globe for Women Who Are Changing the World](#), a book by Exposure Director Holly Morris.
- [The Wanderlust Women](#), normalizing Muslim women exploring the great outdoors, located in UK.
- [Outdoor Afro](#), celebrating and inspiring Black connections and leadership in nature.
- [Women's Wilderness](#), supporting women, girls, and LGBTQ+ accessing their power and improving their health through connections to the outdoors and community.
- [Meet 5 Women Redefining Nature Documentaries @Shondaland](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Brown Girls Surf	https://www.browngirlsurf.com/
Color Outside	https://coloroutside.org/
Diversify Outdoors	https://www.diversifyoutdoors.com/
EDGE Outdoors	https://edgeoutdoors.org/
Educators of America	https://educatorsusa.org/our-programs/bcb-program/
Free to Run	https://freetorun.org/
Girl Scouts	https://www.girlscouts.org/
Girlventures	https://www.girlventures.org/
Global Nomads Group	https://www.gng.org/
GreenFaith	https://greenfaith.org/
International Women's Day	https://www.internationalwomensday.com/
Intersectional Environmentalists	https://www.intersectionalenvironmentalist.com/
Intrepid Magazine	https://www.intrepid-magazine.com/pioneering-women-of-colour/
JEDI Outdoors - Humaira Falkenberg	https://www.awexpeditions.org/field-notes/2020/8/26/the-next-frontier-of-civil-rights
Justice Outside	https://justiceoutside.org/
One Tree Planted	https://onetreeplanted.org/
One Up Action	https://www.oneupaction.org/about
Our Children's Trust	https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/
Outdoor Afro	https://outdoorafro.com/
Outdoor Asian	https://www.outdoorasian.com/
Outdoor Outreach	http://www.outdooroutreach.org/
Outdoor Women's Alliance	https://www.outdoorwomensalliance.com/about-owa/
She Jumps	https://www.shejumps.org/
TEDwomen	https://www.ted.com/attend/conferences/special-events/tedwomen
The Avarna Group	https://theavarnagroup.com/about/
Unlikely Riders	https://www.unlikelyriders.com/
UN Women	https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women
Wanderlust Women	https://www.thewanderlustwomen.co.uk/
Woman's Wilderness	https://www.womenswilderness.org/
Women's Earth and Climate Action Network	https://www.wecaninternational.org/
Women's Environment and Development Organization	https://wedo.org/
Campion Advocacy Fund	http://www.campionadvocacyfund.org/philanthropy/protecting-wilderness/



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