



# **TED® Connection**

## **Why Bother Leaving the House?**



### **Overview**

Mensa for Kids' TED Connections are short, easy to use guides that help teachers, parents and youth use TED talks in a classroom or home setting. Rather than a lesson plan format, they have a list of discussion questions, all at higher levels of thinking.

### **Watch the TED talk at:**

[http://www.ted.com/talks/ben\\_saunders\\_why\\_bother\\_leaving\\_the\\_house.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ben_saunders_why_bother_leaving_the_house.html)



Explorer Ben Saunders shares why, even in the digital age, leaving the house is as important as it was 1,000 years ago. He explains the pull and passion of high adventure, and he invites everyone to “get out of the house.”



Photo credit: Andy Ward [used by permission]

## THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Ben Saunders says, “For me, [the North Pole] is about exploring human limits, about exploring the limits of physiology, of psychology and of technology. They’re the things that excite me.” Think of your favorite activity. What kind of limits does it explore?

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2. Saunders describes the feeling of looking out of the helicopter as one of “impending doom,” yet he was full of excitement. He says he felt like a cross between Jason Bourne (a spy) and Wilfred Thesinger (an explorer). He also mentioned “Fearless”



Felix Baumgartner (the Austrian skydiver who set the world record by skydiving from 39 kilometers in the air). What do you think all three of these people have in common? How is a spy like an explorer or a skydiver? How is a skydiver like an explorer?

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3. It is impossible to separate Saunders' exploration from the extreme conditions under which he travels. He describes temperatures of nearly 75 below zero with the wind chill and pulling 180 kilograms (396 pounds) of supplies. Since he can't spend all of his time in those conditions, how do you think he trains for this kind of endurance test? Can you think of three activities that might help him prepare for this kind of adventure? List them in order from most to least effective.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Saunders describes the unique scenery he saw during his North Pole skiing trek. It was unique because it was constantly changing and ever new. What other natural environments are constantly changing? Imagine that Ben Saunders offered to go on a trip with you, and you wanted to take him somewhere he would see something unique. Where would you go? Why is that place unique?



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5. Imagine the loneliness of being the only human being in 5.4 million square miles of territory. How is that kind of loneliness like claustrophobia?

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6. The “e” words motivate Saunders – endeavor, engage, explore. He doesn’t like the “w” words – watch and wonder. He says the meat of life is to be found in those first words. What other words can you think of the start with “e” that Saunders would like?

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7. He compares “life at the edge of what’s possible” in regards to polar exploration as similar to those researching pancreatic cancer (a particular deadly form of cancer). How is cancer research “life at the edge of what’s possible?” Can you think of any other endeavors that are at the edge of what’s possible?

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8. Saunders asserts that there is a misconception that exploration is over. He intends to complete the journey that Scott left unfinished, walking from the edge of Antarctica to the center and back again. “There and back again” is a common theme in life and even literature (think of *The Lord of the Rings*). Which part of the journey do you think would take more sheer force of will – getting there or getting back? How are the demands of the return different from the demands of going?

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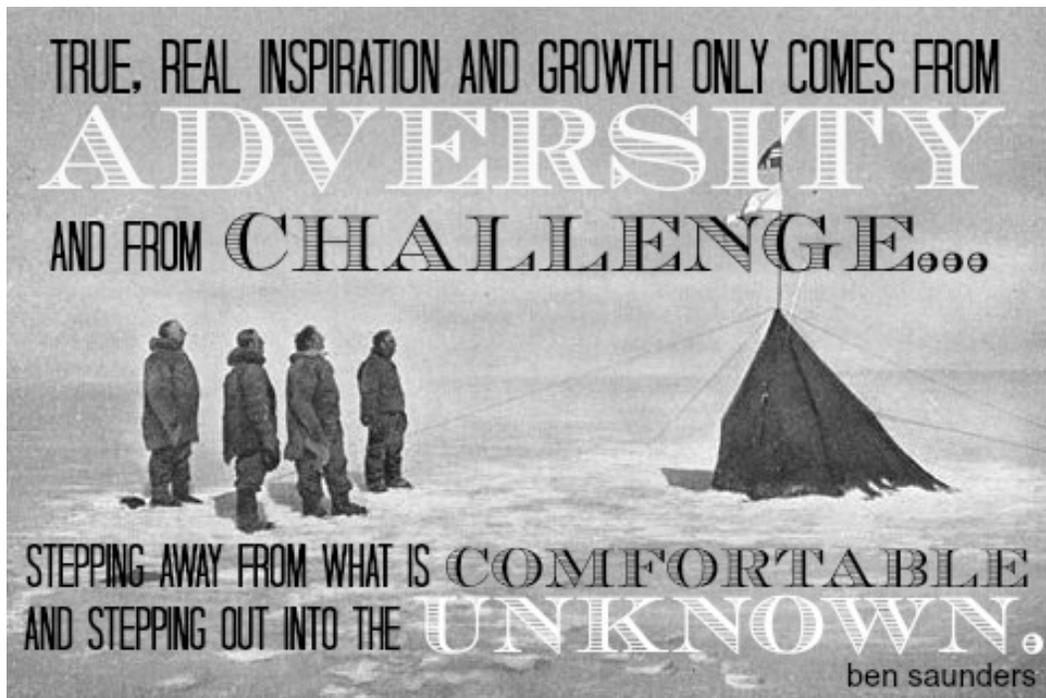
9. In the obituary of Wilfred Thesiger (the explorer Saunders felt like), it says Thesiger recognized that “satisfaction in attaining a goal was directly in proportion to the hardship and challenge involved in getting there.” Saunders said, “True, real inspiration and growth only comes from adversity and from challenge ... stepping away from what is comfortable and stepping out into the unknown.” In which ways do you agree with this? Why do you think it’s not unusual that two explorers of such different environments (Thesiger explored the Arabian peninsula) have such similar ideas?

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10. At the beginning of his talk, Saunders quotes Everest climber George Leigh Mallory as saying, “The first question you will ask and which I must try to answer is this, ‘What is the use of climbing Mount Everest?’ and my answer at once must be, ‘It is no use.’ There is not the slightest prospect of any gain whatsoever.... What we get from this adventure is just sheer joy. And joy is, after all, the end of life. We do not live to eat and make money. We eat and make money to be able to live. That is what life means and what life is for.” If this is true, what do you believe is the biggest mistake people make that creates a barrier to joy?
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## DO IT:

- Go somewhere you have never been, even if it is down the street. Explore a park near your home, trying to see it with new eyes. What are you seeing that no one else has seen (a particular bird flying through, the wind in the trees in just that way, etc.)?
- Pick your favorite quote from Mallory, Saunders, Scott or Shackleton and combine it with an image in the public domain. We used [www.picmonkey.com/](http://www.picmonkey.com/) to make the image/quote from Ben Saunders.
- Print out your own “[Leave the House](http://www.us.mensa.org/linkservid/E3ADEC53-E081-4C23-C42A2E3600726F80/showMeta/0/)” passport and begin your own adventures. (<http://www.us.mensa.org/linkservid/E3ADEC53-E081-4C23-C42A2E3600726F80/showMeta/0/>)
- Do some of the activities in *Polar Explorers for Kids: Historic Expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic with 21 Activities* by Maxine Snowde.

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## READ ABOUT IT:

- Read Wilfred Thesinger’s obituary here <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2003/aug/27/booksobituaries.obituaries>
- *The Arctic Grail: The Quest for the Northwest Passage and the North Pole, 1818-1909* by Pierre Berto (older readers)
- *Endurance: Shackleton’s Incredible Voyage* by Alfred Lansing (older readers)
- *The Heart of the Great Alone: Scott, Shackleton, and Antarctic Photography* by David Hempleman-Adams, Emma Stuart, and Sophie Gordon (all readers)
- *Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World: The Extraordinary True Story of Shackleton and the Endurance* by Jennifer Armstrong (younger readers)
- *Tom Crean’s Rabbit: A True Story from Scott’s Last Voyage* by Meredith Hooper (younger readers)
- *Race to the End: Amundsen, Scott, and the Attainment of the South Pole* by Ross D.E. Macphee (younger readers)



## WATCH IT:

- Watch Ben Saunders' other TED talk about skiing to the North Pole  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/ben\\_saunders\\_skis\\_to\\_the\\_north\\_pole.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ben_saunders_skis_to_the_north_pole.html)
  - Watch a documentary about polar explorer Ernest Shackleton's polar adventures  
<http://documentarystorm.com/shackletons-antarctic-adventure/>
  - Watch a movie about the conquest of Everest (including Mallory)  
<http://movies.nationalgeographic.com/movies/the-wildest-dream/>
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## SURF IT:

- Visit Ben Saunders' website: <http://www.bensaunders.com/>
- Visit the website of his expedition to recreate Scott's journey:  
<http://scottexpedition.com>