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Upon their return to Etah, Odaq said, “The devil is asleep or having trouble with his wife or we should never have come back so easily.”

## WORD SCRAMBLE:

Unscramble four names found in this brochure. When you’re finished, the letters in boxes will tell you which eight letters you can find in the Arctic Ocean.

W H E N A G G I \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 T H E A \_ \_ \_  
 Q O D A \_ \_ \_  
 S H O N E N \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Which 8 letters can you find in the Arctic Ocean?

(O<sup>2</sup>H) iO o<sup>1</sup>H :V

## BOOKS TO READ

### For Young Readers:

*Arctic Memories* by Normee Ekoomiak (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988).

*Harpoon of the Hunter* by Markoosie (Montreal: McGill:Queen’s University Press, 1970).

*The Inuksuk Book* by Mary Wallace (Toronto: Maple Tree Press, 1999).

### For Adults:

*Living Arctic: Hunters of the Canadian North*, by Hugh Brady (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987).

*Never in Anger: Portrait of an Eskimo Family*, by Jean L. Briggs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

**Q:** What did the Inuk’s warm furry hat say to his warm furry scarf?



**A:** You hang around while I go on ahead.

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# Odaq



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**Who was Odaq?  
 How did he help Peary?  
 Who were the first men to reach the Pole?**



The Peary-MacMillan  
**Arctic Museum**  
 & Arctic Studies Center

Bowdoin College

## Who was Odaq?

Odaq (pronounced Oo-tah) was one of the Inuit on Robert Peary's 1905 and 1908 expeditions to the North Pole. Odaq was from Etah, Greenland, and was personally chosen for the journey by Peary because of Odaq's renowned strength and skill as a hunter and sledge driver. He worked with Matthew Henson, Peary's African-American assistant.

## How old was Odaq when he worked with Peary?

Odaq was the oldest of the Inuit who traveled with Peary. He was 34, and married with children. The other three Inuit who reached the Pole with Peary and Henson, Seegloo, Ooqueah, and Odaq's brother Egingwah, were all in their 20s.

## Where is Etah?

Etah is in the northwestern district of Greenland. It is a cold, windy place at the bottom of a fjord, surrounded by mountains.



When Peary and MacMillan were using it as a base for their arctic explorations, it was known for its excellent hunting. Many of the Inuit who lived there were very good at hunting walrus and polar bears. Americans and Europeans learned a lot about how to dress, what to eat, and how to survive from the people living in Etah at the turn of the century.

## What made Odaq so special?

Odaq was known to be one of the greatest hunters in the community. He was strong, skilled, and an impressive 5'8" tall. Most Inuit are relatively short and stocky, a body type that conserves more body heat in the cold.



Nearing the Pole. From left, Egingwah, Odaq, Seegloo, Ooqueah.

Odaq was one of 39 Inuit on Peary's 1908-09 North Pole expedition, but as the group traveled farther and farther north, some parties were sent back to the *Roosevelt*, the ship that served as the base of operations. By the time they reached the Pole, only two sledge parties, consisting of Peary, Henson, Egingwah, Seegloo, Ooqueah, and Odaq, remained.

Odaq and Henson were often ordered to take the lead. Odaq knew a lot about sledges, and was very good at taking care of them. He could navigate around or through snow drifts better than anyone else in the group, and he could find ice strong enough to hold their sledges. According to his friend Henson, Odaq was "the best all around member

of the tribe, a great hunter, a kind father, and a good provider."

## Make new friends, to beat the cold

Odaq and Matt Henson, or "Miy" as his Inuit friends called him, became like brothers. They met on Peary's 1905 expedition, and when Henson returned to Etah in 1908, Odaq was waiting for him on the shore. They liked to hunt together, or race their dog teams when they were out in the front by themselves. Henson learned to speak the Inuit language, so the two were able to talk, joke, and discuss their frustrations. Even Odaq had difficulty adjusting to the harsh environment and low temperatures near the Pole, but the two gave each other hope. They saved each others' lives on several occasions. Once, Henson fell through some cracked ice into the Arctic Ocean, and would have frozen to death in minutes if Odaq hadn't pulled him out.

## Who were the first men to the Pole?

There are debates about who actually reached the Pole first. According to one account, Odaq and Henson were the first men from Peary's 1908-1909 party to arrive at the North Pole. Odaq observed, "There is nothing here. Just ice." They were in the middle of building an igloo when Peary and the others arrived, almost an hour later. The return trip took only 16 days, compared to the 37-day trip north.