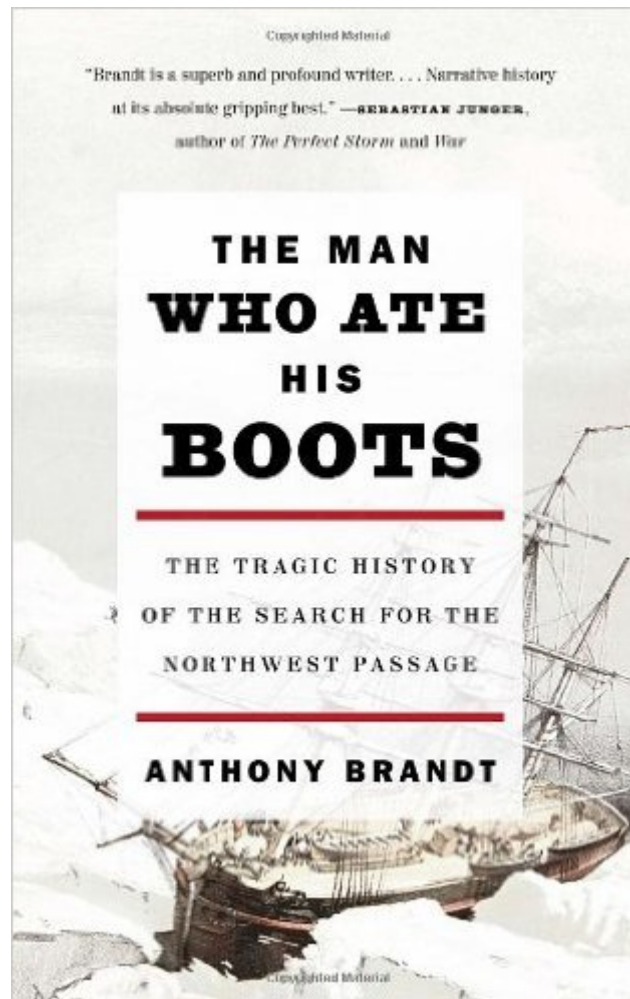


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The Man Who Ate His Boots: The Tragic History Of The Search For The Northwest Passage



Synopsis

After the triumphant end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the British took it upon themselves to complete something they had been trying to do since the sixteenth century: find the fabled Northwest Passage. For the next thirty-five years the British Admiralty sent out expedition after expedition to probe the ice-bound waters of the Canadian Arctic in search of a route, and then, after 1845, to find Sir John Franklin, the Royal Navy hero who led the last of these Admiralty expeditions. Enthralling and often harrowing, *The Man Who Ate His Boots* captures the glory and the folly of this ultimately tragic enterprise.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Most popular histories of polar exploration focus on Antarctica, particularly the doomed mission of Robert Scott and the heroics of Earnest Shackleton. I grew up learning these names, yet I was largely ignorant about the North Pole. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to read Anthony Brandt's *The Man Who Ate His Boots: The Tragic History of the Search for the Northwest Passage*, which provided both an exciting and comprehensive history of British exploration in the Arctic during the 19th century. For centuries, the fabled Northwest Passage was the holy grail of both empire and commerce. Explorers estimated that a water passage through northern Canada would allow sailors to head straight for the Pacific rather than rounding Cape Horn, South America, which would save 3,000 miles off the trip. Alas, the northern waterways are too filled with ice to be navigable (although global warming may change that). Brandt chronicles the journeys of John Franklin, Edward Parry,

George Back, and John Ross and his nephew James in the Arctic during the first half of the 1800s. The title of the book, [ASIN:0307263924 The Man Who Ate His Boots]], comes from one of Franklin's earlier expeditions when, yes, the crew literally ate the leather on their boots in order to survive. However, that certainly isn't the only harrowing tale of survival. The ice floes could potentially crush or topple a ship. Perhaps surprisingly, boredom was a significant problem. According to Brandt, some officers like Parry made sure to entertain the crew by staging plays or playing guitars.

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