

PSHE

Isolation

Ada Blackjack managed to survive on Wrangel Island for two years in extremely harsh conditions. For the first year she was accompanied by four male explorers but when food became scarce three of the explorers left on foot towards Siberia to find help. They were never seen again. Ada was left to care for the fourth man who was very ill. After six months this man died and Ada was left entirely alone on the island for three long months. She must have missed her son Bennett very much.



Ada Blackjack 1920.

Image credit Wikipedia



Questions for the class

- How does the film get across the sense of being alone in a wild landscape?
- Do you think writing a diary might have helped Ada not to feel so alone?

Group Discussion about Isolation

This could be done as a class circle time activity or in smaller adult-led groups, it can be linked into the children's experiences during the pandemic. Be sensitive to the children's various experiences, as some may have had a very difficult time. For some children it may be easier to talk about the film and Ada's experiences than to directly share their own experiences or feelings. Of course, some children may have had positive experiences during the pandemic, for example, enjoying extra time with family or spending more time outside.



Questions for the class

- What does the film tell us about how Ada felt on the island?
- How do you imagine she felt when she finally made it home to her son?
- How did you feel during the pandemic?
- Have there been any times in life when you have felt lonely?
- What sort of things can help us when we feel lonely?

We don't necessarily always feel lonely when we are on our own, sometimes it feels good to have time to ourselves. Sometimes people can feel lonely even when they are with other people, perhaps if they don't get on very well or they feel different or uncomfortable or just shy.

- How do you think Ada felt when she was with the explorers, before they disappeared or died?

Ada did not speak English as her first language, as they did, and because she was a native Iñupiat woman we cannot be sure how well they would have treated her, although she was an essential member of the expedition and ultimately the only one to survive. Ada had an expedition cat for company and she wrote a diary. Some people find that being in nature or remembering people that they love or a thinking about a happy place helps them to cope when they feel lonely. Reading a book, listening to music, or doing some exercise is also helpful for some people.

- How can we help somebody else who is feeling lonely or upset? How can we be kind?

Make a class list or poster to display of the children's ideas of how to be kind and inclusive. If you use a class marble jar or similar, have a special focus one week on noticing and rewarding kindness, maybe praise the kind acts but keep it anonymous: "I noticed someone who.....". Plenty of class kindness can lead to a reward for everyone such a game, or choosing time, etc.