

Student Name

AP English Language & Composition

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Ice Bound: Passage Analysis

Published in 2001, Dr. Jerri Nielson's memoir *Ice-Bound* recounts her experiences as a physician to the American researchers working at the South Pole. Responsible for their health as well as her own, Nielson discovers that she has an aggressive form of breast cancer and must treat herself until she can be rescued. Nielson shows remarkable resilience as she must first come to terms with her devastating diagnosis and then consult with experts by satellite and e-mail to administer chemotherapy to herself. Nielson's purpose is to show how living through a terrifying experience in this unforgiving location -- where the supplies are minimal and the equipment is outdated -- she was able to rediscover the reasons she chose to become a doctor in the first place and find meaning in her life. She writes for people who may find their own hidden reserves of strength while dealing with difficult circumstances.

In this passage from *Ice-Bound*, the writer uses specific, concrete diction to describe her preparation for the trip to Antarctica. The effect of this language is to create a very detailed picture in the reader's mind. The warehouse is "brimming" with clothing, suggesting that it is crowded and the clothes and other items are practically spilling out of it (39). The sheer amount of equipment in the warehouse is echoed in the writer's use of "shelves upon shelves" as well (39). She goes on to list several items that she sees in the warehouse, including "geranium-red parkas [and] insulated Carhartt outerwear" (39). Comparing the parkas to the popular flowering plant, Nielson uses this metaphor to bring immediacy to this description of red parkas. They are

not just red; they are the precise red of geraniums. Using the brand name “Carhartt” also works to spark the reader’s imagination, as perhaps we too have seen construction workers wearing similar clothes.

Nielson’s attention to detail is also shown by her use of syntax in this passage. She uses an interruptive sentence to point out why the Carhartt outerwear is familiar to her and uses parallel syntax as she lists the “fleece, wool and microfiber clothing and accessories” in the warehouse. Nielson’s purpose in focusing on such specific details is to remind the reader of the remarkable preparation that must be undertaken to go on an expedition of this sort. Nielson will be virtually inaccessible while in Antarctica for nine months. She is trying to make the reader aware of how difficult her decision to become a physician in Antarctica must have been.

In writing this memoir, Nielson draws readers into her life and helps us understand why she views her decision to go to “the Ice” as a positive one. Certain choices Nielson makes in diction contribute to a somewhat conversational tone in the passage and elsewhere in the book. She uses the 2nd person pronoun “you” three times, as if she is talking directly to the reader. This word choice serves to create an intimacy with her readers as we journey with her into the longest nine months of her life.

Appositive ~ identifies "Carhartt
Interruptive —
Feels conversational
→ "outerwear"

Diction "spilling over"

Brand Name

Metaphor

Specific
Diction

The warehouse was brimming with racks of geranium-red parkas, insulated Carhartt outerwear —

familiar to me because they are a favorite with construction workers — and shelves upon shelves

of fleece, wool and microfiber clothing and accessories. Your choices depended on where you

were going on the continent and whether your job was primarily inside or outside. Mandy and I

had to take more clothing than the men because we would be wintering over on the Ice. I had the

most of all because I was going to the Pole (39).

Repetition

Jargon?

Subordinate
Clause

2nd Person
Talking to me?
Conversational

Balanced clause?

"on where... on whether"

Specific
Concrete
Diction

Works Cited

Nielsen, Jerri. *Ice Bound: A Doctor's Incredible Battle for Survival at the South Pole*. New York: Hyperion, 2001.