

Edmund Hillary

Edmund Hillary was an explorer and mountaineer. He was born in Auckland, New Zealand in 1919. His grandparents came from Yorkshire.

At school, he was small for his age, as well as very shy. He wasn't confident around other children, so he took refuge in books. He loved reading and his favourite books were adventure stories. He had a long train journey to school each day so he spent the time reading and day-dreaming about his own adventures.

When he was 16 years old, he became interested in climbing. By then, he had grown very tall and strong, and although he wasn't very skilful, he did have lots of stamina. He climbed his first real mountain while he was at University in 1939. It was Mt Ollivier in New Zealand.

Then World War Two broke out. Edmund Hillary was a pacifist and did not want to fight in the war, but by 1943 there was such a threat to his country's safety that it was made compulsory for young men to join the military. He joined the New Zealand Royal Air Force. He was sent to Fiji and the Solomon Islands, but he was badly burned in an accident so was sent back home.

After the war was over, he climbed the highest mountain in New Zealand, Mount Cook. It is 3,724 metres high. There's a ridge on this mountain which has been named Hillary Ridge in honour of him.

In 1953 he joined a British expedition to climb Mount Everest in Nepal. This is the highest mountain in the world. There were over 400 people in the expedition team. There were other climbers, as well as 362 porters who carried over 4500 kilograms of equipment and luggage.

The porters were Sherpas – the people who live in the remote region of Mount Everest. Because they live so high up in the Himalaya Mountains, they are famous for being expert mountaineers and guides. They are used to the thinner air of the high mountains and are often incredibly fit and strong. They know and love the mountains of their region, including Mount Everest, which is called Chomolungma (meaning Goddess Mother of Mountains). The most famous Sherpa to have climbed Mount Everest was Tenzing Norgay, who was on the same expedition as Edmund Hillary in 1953.

Their team made a base camp in March, and by May they made a final camp high up on the mountain. Two climbers – Hillary and Tenzing – were chosen to go even further and get to the top. The next morning Hillary's boots were completely frozen. He warmed them up, and they set off. At 11.30 in the morning on May 29th 1953, he was standing at the highest point on our planet. What an amazing feeling!

Hillary said that his first sensation when he reached the summit was “one of relief”. The two men did not stay long on the ‘top of the world’ because it was freezing and the air was so thin that they needed oxygen tanks to help them breathe. It was not a place to hang around. However, Tenzing had time to make a little hole in the snow to place some small offerings of food as a gift to the gods of Chomolungma, and Hillary put a cross next to the food offering. Then there was just time for Hillary to take a quick photo of Tenzing, but he wasn’t sure if Tenzing had ever used a camera before, and didn’t think that the summit of Mt Everest was a good place for a lesson – so there is no photo of Hillary himself at the summit. It was a long time before the invention of the ‘selfie’!

There were no satellite phones either, no mobile networks and no internet. So the news of their triumph did not reach the outside world until four days later. This was the day that the Queen was being crowned in England. All the newspapers said that the British team’s success was a ‘gift’ for the new Queen. In return the successful climbers were given a special medal from the Queen.

After reaching the top of Mount Everest, Hillary went home to New Zealand. He said about himself and his mountaineering, “I am a lucky man. I have had a dream and it has come true, and that is not a thing that happens often to men.” However, his adventures did not end with his Mount Everest climb. He climbed many other mountains, including ten other peaks in the Himalayas. He travelled the whole length of the River Ganges in India. He went to Antarctica several times. He visited both the South and the North Pole. He also got married and had three children, but tragically his wife and one of his daughters were killed in a plane crash in Nepal. He later married again, and his son Peter climbed Mount Everest too, in 1990, following in his father’s famous footsteps.

Edmund Hillary always loved Nepal, where he had so many adventures in the mighty Himalaya Mountains, and he came to especially admire and respect the Sherpa people. He set up an international charity to help the Sherpas in Nepal by building schools and medical clinics in remote areas. He always said that these were the most worthwhile things he had done – more than his climbing and expeditions..

However, he never forgot his home. He said that it was always good to be going home to New Zealand, no matter what adventures he’d had, and that he wanted to end his days in Auckland.

Edmund Hillary died in 2008, in Auckland.

Alex Swinton

Edmund Hillary

What do these words mean? Match them with the correct definition. (AF2)

stamina	success
pacifist	extremely
compulsory	emotion, feeling
incredibly	required, something that you MUST do
triumph	someone who loves peace
sensation	strength, endurance

WHEN and WHERE was Edmund Hillary born? (AF2)

What is interesting about the books Hillary liked to read as a child? (AF3)

Underline the connectives in this paragraph: (AF4)

At school, he was small for his age, as well as very shy. He enjoyed reading and his favourite books were adventure stories. He had a long train journey to school each day so he spent the time reading and day-dreaming about his own adventures.

Was Edmund Hillary keen to join the air force during World War Two? (AF2)

Name THREE mountains that Hillary climbed. (AF2)

“There’s a ridge on this mountain called Hillary Ridge *in honour of him.*”

Underline the phrase below which most closely matches the meaning of “in honour of him.” (AF2)

- ...to remember his achievements by
- ...to make him seem clever
- ...to make people like him

Why, according to the text, are the Sherpa people such good mountain guides? (AF2)

Why do you think there were so many people in the expedition team? (AF3)

Find three FACTS in the text about the Everest expedition of 1953. (AF2)

Why is there an exclamation mark (!) at the end of the sentence “What an amazing feeling!”? (AF4)

It says in the text that Hillary’s first emotion when he got to the summit was “relief.” What do you think he was relieved about? (AF3)

Why did they leave food for the gods and a cross on the top of Mount Everest? What does this show that the two men have in common? (AF7)

Most people nowadays want photos of themselves when they’ve achieved something special. Explain in your own words why there is no photo of Hillary standing on the summit of Mount Everest. (AF3/AF7)

Find a SIMPLE sentence in paragraph 9. Write it down. Why do you think the writer uses such a short sentence here? (AF4)

What was different about adventures and travel in 1953 compared with today? (AF3)

Why did the climbers receive a special medal from the Queen? (AF2)

Find and copy a phrase which proves that Hillary was a kind man as well as a good mountaineer? (AF3)

It is always sad when someone who has achieved a lot dies. But in what way was Hillary’s death a ‘good’ one? (AF3)

Edmund Hillary described himself as “a lucky man”. Do you agree? Use the text to help you explain your answer. (AF3/AF6)

Edmund Hillary

What do these words mean? Match them with the correct definition. (AF2)

stamina	success
pacifist	extremely
compulsory	emotion, feeling
incredibly	required, something that you MUST do
triumph	someone who loves peace
sensation	strength, endurance

WHEN and WHERE was Edmund Hillary born? (AF2) **Auckland, New Zealand, 1919.**

What is interesting about the books Hillary liked to read as a child? (AF3) **He liked to read adventure books although he was very shy. His reading influenced his later life perhaps, and he became an adventurer.**

Underline the connectives in this paragraph: (AF4)

At school, he was small for his age, as well as very shy. He enjoyed reading and his favourite books were adventure stories.

He had a long train journey to school each day so he spent the time reading and day-dreaming about his own adventures.

Was Edmund Hillary keen to join the air force during World War Two? (AF2) **No – he was a pacifist, and only joined up when it became compulsory.**

Name THREE mountains that Hillary climbed. (AF2) **Mt Ollivier, Mt Cook, Mt Everest.**

“There’s a ridge on this mountain called Hillary Ridge *in honour of him.*”

Underline the phrase below which most closely matches the meaning of “in honour of him.” (AF2)

...to remember his achievements by

...to make him seem clever

...to make people like him

Why, according to the text, are the Sherpa people such good mountain guides? (AF2) **They know the mountains very well. They’re used to thin air at high altitudes. They’re very fit and strong.**

Why do you think there were so many people in the expedition team? (AF3) **Because it would have been an impossible task to accomplish without the support of a team.**

Find three FACTS in the text about the Everest expedition of 1953. (AF2) **There were over 400 people in the expedition team. There were 362 porters. They carried 4500kg of luggage. They made a base camp in March. Hillary and Tenzing stood on the summit at 11.30am on 29th May.**

Why is there an exclamation mark (!) at the end of the sentence “What an amazing feeling!”? (AF4) **To convey a feeling of excitement.**

It says in the text that Hillary’s first emotion when he got to the summit was “relief.” What do you think he was relieved about? (AF3) **Reward any sensible response. That he hadn’t let anyone down. That he was safe. That he had achieved what he set out to do. That he could have a rest/there was no more ascent!**

Why did they leave food for the gods and a cross on the top of Mount Everest? What does this show that the two men have in common? (AF7) **It shows their faith and their respect for the mountain. Even though the things they leave represent different faiths (Buddhism and Christianity), they are linked by the fact that at this moment they both feel there’s something sacred about the place they’re in. (L5 readers may not be able to express it like this, but should be able to express something similar! If not, an opportunity for teacher-led discussion on links to culture/tradition - AF7)**

Most people nowadays want photos of themselves when they’ve achieved something special. Explain in your own words why there is no photo of Hillary standing on the summit of Mount Everest. (AF3/AF7) **He didn’t think it was that important in comparison with getting down safely. He didn’t think it was a sensible place for a photography lesson and he didn’t know if Tenzing knew how to use a camera. He wasn’t vain!**

Find a SIMPLE sentence in paragraph 9. Write it down. Why do you think the writer uses such a short sentence here? (AF4) **“It was not a place to hang around.” The short sentence is used to create an impact on the reader and to show how dramatic the moment was. It’s also short because the whole point of the sentence is that they had a SHORT time to spend on the summit. There’s a sense of urgency.**

What was different about adventures and travel in 1953 compared with today? (AF3) **There was none of today’s technology.**

Why did the climbers receive a special medal from the Queen? (AF2) **Because news of their success reached England on the day of the Queen’s coronation and was seen in some way as a present for her, and as something the whole nation could be proud of.**

Find and copy a phrase which proves that Hillary was a kind man as well as a good mountaineer? (AF3) **“He set up an international charity...”**

It is always sad when someone who has achieved a lot dies. But in what way was Hillary’s death a ‘good’ one? (AF3)

Because he said he wanted to die at home in Auckland, and he got his wish. He lived a long life.

Edmund Hillary described himself as “a lucky man”. Do you agree? Use the text to help you explain your answer. (AF3/AF6)

Personal response – but a solid answer should refer to the text.