

# Reading Comprehension — To the Top of the World

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## To the Top of the World

On the morning of 29 May 1953, two exhausted climbers took the final steps to the summit of Mount Everest, the highest mountain on Earth. No one had ever stood there before. One of them was a beekeeper from New Zealand named Edmund Hillary; the other was Tenzing Norgay, an experienced Sherpa mountaineer from the Himalayas.

Reaching the top of Everest was one of the greatest challenges imaginable. At nearly 8,850 metres, the air is so thin that climbers can barely breathe, and the cold and wind are deadly. Many had tried before and failed; some had died in the attempt.

Hillary and Tenzing climbed as a team, depending on each other completely. They spent that night in a tiny tent high on the mountain, then set out before dawn. The last stretch included a steep wall of rock and ice, now called the 'Hillary Step'. At last, they stood on the summit — the first people ever to do so. They stayed only fifteen minutes, took photographs, and began the dangerous climb back down.

When the news reached the world, Hillary became famous. But he never forgot the mountain people who had helped him, and he spent much of his life building schools and hospitals for the Sherpa communities of Nepal.

Edmund Hillary remains one of New Zealand's greatest heroes — remembered not only for reaching the top of the world, but for what he did afterwards.

## Questions

1. On what date did Hillary and Tenzing reach the summit? (1 mark)
2. What had Edmund Hillary's job been? (1 mark)
3. Who was Tenzing Norgay? (1 mark)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 2 meaning "impossible to imagine being greater." (Accept a close phrase.) (1 mark)
5. Why is climbing Everest so dangerous? (2 marks)
6. How do we know Hillary and Tenzing worked as a team? (2 marks)
7. What did Hillary do for the Sherpa communities afterwards? (2 marks)
8. Summarise why Edmund Hillary is remembered as a hero. (3 marks)

## Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. 29 May 1953.
2. A beekeeper.

- 3.** An experienced Sherpa mountaineer from the Himalayas.
- 4.** "greatest challenges imaginable" / accept reference to 'imaginable'.
- 5.** The air is so thin climbers can barely breathe, and the cold and wind are deadly.
- 6.** They depended on each other completely, shared a tent, and climbed the final stretch together.
- 7.** He spent much of his life building schools and hospitals for the Sherpa communities of Nepal.
- 8.** He was the first, with Tenzing Norgay, to climb Everest in 1953 — but he is also remembered for helping the Sherpa people with schools and hospitals afterwards.