

How did the climbers spend the night?

Reading Check

aperture (ap' er chər) n.
opening in a camera
through which light passes
into the lens

ample (am' pl) adj. more
than enough; abundant

The setting sun bathed the giant peaks of Makalu and Lhotse¹ in warm red light. They seemed almost close enough to touch. Far below fleecy clouds floated above gloomy valleys. I

joined Tenzing in the tent where he was cooking chicken noodle soup. Astonishingly for this height, we were really hungry. Out came all our delicacies, with the tinned apricots being a special treat. We also

drank ample liquid. It was very cramped inside, particularly when we tried to crawl into our sleeping bags. I have such big feet that I decided to remove my boots for the night. Tenzing left his footwear on, while I used mine to prop the toe of my sleeping bag off the ice.

Tenzing lay on the bottom ledge, almost overhanging the slope, while I stretched out on the top ledge with my legs across Tenzing in the bottom corner of the tent. We started getting the odd fierce gust of wind and I had some concern as to whether the tent would remain in place, but when I started our oxygen flowing we quickly warmed up and dropped off to sleep peacefully on and off for four hours and then

At 4 a.m. I looked out the tent doors and could already see signs of the early morning light. Tenzing peered over my shoulder and then pointed and said, "Tengboche," and there, sure enough, was

Tengboche Monastery,² 15,000 feet below us. The temperature was -27°C, chilly enough in our flimsy tent. We made our slow preparations for departure, eating well and consuming plenty of vital fluid. My boots were frozen solid and I cooked them over the primus stove until they were soft enough for me to pull on. We were wearing every piece of clothing we possessed and I checked my camera for the last time, setting it at a standard aperture and then placing it carefully inside my clothes and zipping up my windproofs. At 6:30 a.m. we crawled out of our tent and were ready to go.

1. Makalu and Lhotse mountains in the Himalayas in Nepal.

2. Tengboche Monastery Buddhist Monastery in Nepal that lies on the main route to the base camp of Mount Everest.