

We turned off our oxygen. Even there on top of the world it was possible to live without it, so long as we were not exerting ourselves. We cleared away the ice that had formed on our masks, and I popped a bit of sweet into my mouth. Then we replaced the masks. But we did not turn on the oxygen again until we were ready to leave the top. Hillary took out his camera, which he had been carrying under his clothing to keep it from freezing, and I unwound the four flags from around my ax. They were tied together on a string, which was fastened to the blade of the ax, and now I held the ax up and Hillary took my picture. Actually he took three, and I think it was lucky, in those difficult conditions, that one came out so well. The order of the flags from top to bottom was United Nations, British, Nepalese, Indian; and the same sort of people who have made trouble in other ways have tried to find political meaning in this too. All I can say is that on Everest I was not thinking about politics. If I had been, I suppose I would have put the Indian or Nepalese flag highest—though that in itself would have been a bad problem for me. As it is, I am glad that the U.N. flag was on top. For I like to think that our victory was not only for ourselves—not only for our own nations—but for all men everywhere.

Tenzing Norgay

(1914–1986)



At 11:30 on the morning of May 29, 1953, Tenzing Norgay changed the course of his destiny—and began a

journey toward international fame. At that moment, he and Edmund Hillary stood on the summit of Mount Everest in Nepal—a place where no man or woman had ever stood before and where few have stood since!

Norgay was born into a family of Sherpa farmers—Nepalese people of Tibetan descent. Norgay started guiding climbers at the age of fourteen. In 1953, he joined a Mount Everest expedition led by Sir John Hunt. Although all the other members of the expedition eventually turned back, Norgay and Hillary struggled on and fulfilled their dreams of being the first people ever to reach the summit.

Review and Assess

Thinking About the Selection

- Respond:** Whose account of climbing Everest was more appealing to you—Hillary's or Norgay's? Why?
- (a) Recall:** How does Norgay say that Hillary describes him when he reaches the top of the crack? **(b) Connect:** Does Norgay feel that this description is accurate? Why or why not?
- (a) Evaluate:** What qualities does Norgay possess that helped contribute to his success? **(b) Infer:** What does Norgay's criticism of Hillary's account tell you about Norgay?
- (a) Analyze:** Why do you think Norgay is so concerned with the "prestige of Everest"? **(b) Analyze:** What does he mean by "Everest and the truth"?
- Evaluate:** Norgay calls Hillary his friend at the beginning of this excerpt. Do you think that was a sincere compliment? Why or why not?
- Infer:** What do you think Norgay's purpose was for writing this account? Cite examples to support your answer.
- (a) Extend:** What drives people like Hillary and Norgay to tackle the challenge of climbing Everest? **(b) Evaluate:** Do you think that climbers use sound judgment when they make the decision to climb Everest? Why or why not?

Review

Literary Analysis

Author's Perspective

- List three details that are not included in the text.
- List two details that are not included in the text.
- How do you feel about the author's perspective?

Comparing Literature

- Using the text, compare the two accounts of the final ascent.

Hillary's Account

- (a) What kind of person do you think Hillary is? Describe the account of his climb.
- Compare the two accounts of climbing the mountain.

Reading Strategies

Distinguishing Perspectives

- Review each account and write an opinion about the author's perspective.
- Hillary describes the climb as a "tragic" event. Explain why you agree or disagree.
- List two examples of events. Write an opinion about each.

Extend Understanding

- Science class is studying the effects of altitude on the human body. Write a short story about a climber who experiences these effects.