The Everest Story
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Introduction

Chapter summary
Chapter 1 (The body – 1999) tells how the body of British climber Mallory was found on Everest in 1999. There is a mystery around Mallory and his climbing partner Irvine – nobody knows whether they were the first men to climb Everest.

Chapter 2 (Dangers) explains how Everest is one of the most dangerous places on Earth. It is the highest mountain in the world at 8,850 metres and is between Tibet and Nepal.

Chapter 3 (Through Tibet to Everest – 1921) gives the history of Everest. Until the nineteenth century, nobody in the west knew about the mountain. It was only given its British name in 1865 and was named after a British soldier and map maker called George Everest. In 1921 the first British expedition came to Everest through Tibet.

Chapter 4 (The first attempt – 1922) describes how in 1922 a bigger British expedition returned, this time with oxygen. The climbers included Mallory and two other British men, Somervell and Norton. There were several attempts to climb to the summit but each time there were problems with the weather and harsh mountain conditions. On the last attempt seven Tibetan porters were killed in an avalanche.

Chapter 5 (Saving the porters – 1924) tells of the British expedition which came back to Everest in April 1924. The expedition included 150 Tibetan porters and was led by Norton. The group of twelve included Mallory, Somervell, Odell, and two young climbers called Irvine and Bruce. They encountered repeated difficulties while climbing and the porters became very afraid. At one point, two porters fell and nearly died but were saved at the last minute by Somervell.

Chapter 6 (Somervell and Norton – 1924) continues the story of the 1924 expedition. Norton decided that two pairs of climbers, Mallory and Bruce, and Norton and Somervell would try to reach the summit without oxygen. Mallory and Bruce set off but became ill and decided to come down. Then Norton and Somervell climbed up towards the summit and Norton on his own managed to get to 8,575 metres – higher than any man before him. But he had to turn back before the summit.

Chapter 7 (Mallory and Irvine – 1924) describes the final stages of the 1924 expedition. After his first attempt, Mallory decided to try again to reach the summit, this time with Irvine. They took heavy oxygen equipment with them. One of the other climbers, Odell, saw Mallory and Irvine climbing quickly up on the high ridge close to the summit of Everest. But that was the last time that anybody saw them and they never descended from the summit.

Chapter 8 (To the South Col – 1953) relates the first stages of the 1953 British expedition to Everest, which approached Everest through Nepal. The men were joined by a Nepalese climber called Tenzing Norgay, who had nearly reached the summit in 1952, and two New Zealanders – Edmund Hillary and George Lowe.

Chapter 9 (The South Summit – 1953) continues the story of the 1953 expedition. Two members of the expedition, Bourdillon and Evans, very nearly reached the summit but they didn’t have enough oxygen.

Chapter 10 (On top of the world – 1953) explains how two further climbers, Hillary and Tenzing, reached the summit of Everest at 11.30 on 28 May 1953. Hillary took a photo of Tenzing and they both buried small things on the summit and then made a successful descent. They didn’t find anything which suggested that Mallory and Irvine had been there before.

Chapter 11 (One man alone – 1980). The first person to climb to the summit alone and without oxygen was a man called Reinhold Messner.

Chapter 12 (The final question). In 1999, an expedition set out to discover what happened to Mallory and Irvine. They successfully found Mallory’s body and some of his possessions but they couldn’t find an important object – his camera.
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Pre-reading activity

Crossword

Across:
1 when a group of people go on a journey to do or find something special
4 when you try to do something difficult
8 what you can see from a place or through a window
9 to move easily across something smooth or wet; you can do this across ice or snow
12 very thick strong string; people use it to climb up mountains
13 a place where people live in tents for a short time
14 special things that you need for doing something like climbing or skiing

Down:
2 a gas (O) in the air that people need to live
3 the narrow part around the middle of your body
5 words that you say when you speak to God or to a god
6 a lot of snow and ice that falls quickly down the side of a mountain
7 when you fall down suddenly; perhaps because you are ill or very tired
10 a piece of ground that has one end higher than the other
11 to put a dead body in the ground

To the teacher

Aim: To introduce key vocabulary and encourage students to predict information about the book.
Time: 40–45 minutes
Key: across – 1 expedition, 4 attempt, 8 view, 9 slide, 12 rope, 13 camp, 14 equipment
down – 2 oxygen, 3 waist, 5 prayer, 6 avalanche, 7 collapse, 10 slope, 11 bury
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While reading activity

Spot the mistakes

There are some mistakes in this extract from Odell’s imaginary diary. Can you find them? The first one has been done for you and there are ten others for you to find and correct.

June 8th
I spent the night in a tent at Camp 5 and then climbed up towards Camp 6. On my way, I found some interesting ice which showed me that Everest had once been under the desert.

At 2.50 p.m. the clouds cleared above me. I saw the summit ridge of the mountain and there were two tiny black dots. It was Mallory and Irvine and they were climbing very slowly to the top of a rock step near the summit. Then the clouds suddenly came back and they disappeared. I was surprised because I thought they were a bit early to reach the summit and return before night fall.

Later, I climbed up to Camp 6 and left some oxygen equipment there for them. Then I went up higher towards the summit and I called their names but nobody answered.

I decided to come back down and by 7.00 p.m. I was in Camp 1 and spent the night there.

June 9th
Today I felt very worried about Mallory and Irvine so I climbed back up to Camp 5 with two doctors.

June 10th
This morning I went alone to Camp 6 and then climbed up towards the summit. But I found nothing and I didn’t see any bodies. I returned to Camp 6 and in the end I took out two red sleeping bags. I made the shape of a letter L to show the others that Mallory and Irvine were still alive.

To the teacher
Where: At the end of chapter 7.
Aim: To revise key elements of Mallory and Irvine’s final climb.
Time: 40 minutes
Organization: Ask students what Odell saw and did around the time that Mallory and Irvine disappeared. Then give out the worksheet to each pair of students. See if they can identify some of the mistakes without looking back at the book. Students then look back at chapter 7 to help identify more of the mistakes. Class feedback.
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After reading activity

Famous climbers

Complete the information about the famous climbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Reached Everest through</th>
<th>Year reached summit</th>
<th>Why famous</th>
<th>What they did at the summit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mallory and Irvine</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tibet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary and Tenzing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messner</td>
<td>Italian</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choose one of the climbers. Find out more information about the person and write a short biography about them.

To the teacher

Aim: To revise key information about some of the climbers in the book.

Time: 40 minutes

Organization: Give out one copy of the worksheet to each pair of students. Ask them to complete the table. Tell them that the section about Messner refers to his solo climb. For homework, ask students to find out more information about one of the climbers and write a short biography.

Key: Mallory and Irvine – George and Andrew, British, Tibet, 1924, possibly first people to climb Everest.

Hillary and Tenzing – Edmund and Norgay, New Zealand and Nepalese, Nepal, 1953, first people to definitely climb Everest, took photos and buried objects.

Messner – Reinhold, Italian, Tibet, 1980, first person to climb Everest alone and without oxygen, sat down and took a few photos.