

# Desert, Mountain, Sea

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## Introduction

### The stories

*Across the Australian Desert.* This is the story of how Robyn Davidson walked 2,800 kilometres, with some camels, from the middle of Australia across the desert to the western coast.

First she went to the town of Alice Springs to learn all about camels. She worked hard on Kurt Posel's camel farm but lost her job after refusing to work even harder. She then worked for the kind Sallay Mahomet, who gave her some wild camels. After losing and then finding the camels (Zeureka and her baby, Goliath, Bub and Dookie), she started the walk across the desert with her dog, Diggity.

On the journey she mainly ate wild plants and she learnt Pitjantjara, the Aboriginal language. She walked to Areyunga (an Aboriginal village), to a sheep farm, and then to Ayers Rock (an important Aboriginal place) where some wild camels attacked her. Mr Eddie, an old Aborigine with many stories, guided her to Pipalyatjara and Warburton. From here she walked alone across the Gibson Desert. Unfortunately, she had to shoot Diggity, who had become ill from eating poisoned meat. After many months of walking Robyn finally reached the sea.

*Climbing Annapurna.* This is the story of how Arlene Blum, an American mountaineer, led the first all women team to climb Annapurna, a dangerous 8,000 metre mountain in Nepal.

In August 1978, the team of ten women arrived in Kathmandu, Nepal. Arlene decided it was safer to climb with Sherpas, local Nepalese men who could carry heavy loads up the mountain. They walked through the beautiful countryside to the mountain and made Base Camp. For safety reasons the team made five camps on Annapurna.

The most difficult part of the climb was called the 'Dutch Rib', a very narrow route between Camps 2 and 3. Dangerous avalanches were common on Annapurna and once the sherpas ran away, returning only when more money was offered. After nearly six weeks on the mountain, Arlene decided that two teams should try for the summit. The first team of Irene and Vera Karmakova reached the summit, with

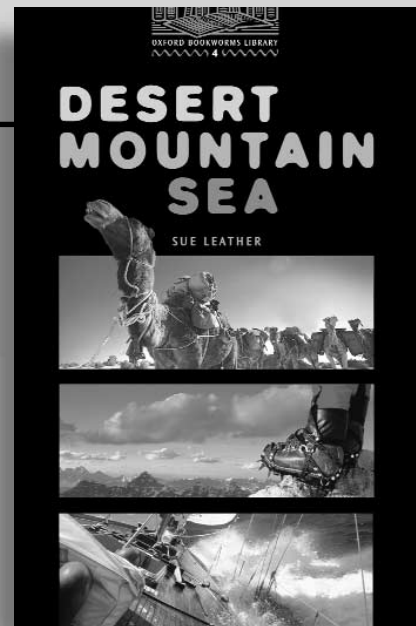
the help of sherpas, on October 15th 1978. Unfortunately, the weather then got worse and the second team of Vera Watson and Alison were found dead several days later, after falling 500 metres. Arlene Blum and the rest of the group were sad at the loss of their friends, but happy they had climbed Annapurna.

*Alone Around the World.* This is the story of how Naomi James, a 28 year old New Zealand woman, sailed around the world single-handed. She was travelling in Europe when she met her future husband, Rob James, who was captain of a yacht belonging to Chay Blyth, the famous British sailor. Naomi worked on the boat with Rob and learnt about sailing. Later, back in New Zealand, she decided to sail around the world on her own. She returned to England, married Rob and began to think about her plan.

Fortunately, Chay Blyth gave her a boat, renamed Express Crusader, and she got sponsorship. She set off on her long journey on 9th September 1977. After thirty days her radio stopped working. Then her cat fell overboard and drowned. Disaster struck when a bad storm damaged the navigation equipment. Naomi had to stop in Cape Town, ending the prospect of a non-stop sailing. She continued around Australia to Cape Horn. The yacht capsized and was badly damaged. In the Falkland Islands the yacht was repaired and she sailed back to England in a record time for a hero's welcome.

### Discussion points

- 1 Would you like to go on any of the journeys in *Desert, Mountain, Sea*? Which one appeals to you most/least? Why?
- 2 The three women in *Desert, Mountain, Sea* were all very brave and determined. What other women have succeeded in the face of great danger?



# Desert, Mountain, Sea

## Pre-reading activity

### Match the words to the story

These are some of the words from three short stories called *Desert, Mountain, Sea*. Which story do you think the words come from? Put them in the appropriate column. The first one has been done for you.

Aborigine, ship, harbour, summit, steer, avalanche, camel, glacier, mast, snow, yacht, saddle, climber, navigate, scorpion, iceberg, oxygen, capsized, altitude, island

Desert	<i>Aborigine</i>
Mountain	
Sea	

What other words do you think you might find in the different stories? Put them in the appropriate column. Some examples have already been done for you.

Desert	<i>Sun</i>
Mountain	<i>rope</i>
Sea	<i>waves</i>

### To the teacher

**Aim:** To pre-teach vocabulary and to help students to predict the contents of the stories

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Organization:** Tell the students that they are going to read a collection of three short stories called *Desert, Mountain, Sea* and give them the information from the back cover of the book to read. Give one copy of the worksheet to each student or each group of students. Go through the words at the top of the page and check any unknown meanings with the class. Alternatively, the students could look up the words in dictionaries. Ask the students to match the words to the appropriate story. When everyone has

finished, go through the answers as a class and ask the students to justify their ideas. Next, tell the students to think of other words that they might find in the stories and get them to write their ideas on the second grid. When everyone has finished they can share their ideas as a class and say why they chose certain words.

**Key:** Desert: *Aborigine, camel, saddle, scorpion*.  
Mountain: *summit, avalanche, glacier, snow, climber, oxygen, altitude*.

Sea: *ship, harbour, steer, mast, yacht, navigate, iceberg, capsized, island*.

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## After reading activity

### Different opinions

*These letters appeared in a national newspaper soon after Arlene Blum's expedition to climb Annapurna. Do you agree with any of the opinions in these letters?*

*Write your own letter to the newspaper, commenting on the expedition.*

October 25th 1978

Dear Sir

I read with interest your front page article about the team of ten women who have climbed Annapurna – one of the highest mountains in the world. It was a great day for all women – Arlene Blum and her team have shown that women are truly equal to men and that they are capable of achieving great things in the face of extreme danger. We should no longer talk of women as 'the weaker sex', this expedition has proved that we can be just as strong, brave and determined as men. We should all congratulate Arlene and her team on their success!

Yours faithfully

*Tanya Garton*

October 24th 1978

Dear Sir

I read with horror your front page article about Arlene Blum who has led a group of ten women to the top

of Annapurna. I do not understand why anyone, especially a group of women, would want to climb such a dangerous mountain. Out of the seventeen men who had climbed Annapurna before, only eight survived. Surely Arlene Blum should have considered this before she organised such a dangerous expedition which cost the lives of two women? I do not believe that it was a brave thing for these women to climb this mountain. What was Arlene Blum trying to prove? Somebody has already been to the top of Annapurna. Couldn't she have found a less dangerous mountain to climb?

I think that many women nowadays are doing dangerous things just to prove they are equal to men. Surely, they should accept that men are stronger than women and better at some things like climbing.

I hope that we do not see any more expeditions like this in the future.

Yours faithfully

*Thomas Brown*

October 26th 1978

Dear Sir

I read your article about Arlene Blum's expedition to Nepal. I think it was a fine achievement for Irene Miller and Vera Karmakova to reach the top of Annapurna but I am worried about the ever increasing cost of these expeditions. This trip to Nepal cost over 80,000 dollars and I wonder if this money could have been spent on other things. The people of Nepal are very poor and they need money to improve their health services. Surely this 80,000 dollars could have paid for some doctors to visit the villages of Nepal and help the sick people there?

I hope that other people who are thinking of going on expeditions to poorer countries might give their money to charity instead.

Yours faithfully

*Jane Lewis*

### To the teacher

**Aim:** To encourage students to express opinions about *Annapurna: A Woman's Place*

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Organization:** Give each student a copy of the worksheet. Ask them to read the letters about the expedition which appeared in a national newspaper and consider which opinion they agree with. You may need to go through the main points of the arguments and ask some simple questions to check that the students have understood the texts.

Then, put the students into groups of three. Each person must take the point of view of one of the letter writers and try to convince the other two students of their opinion. When everyone has finished you can ask the students to write a letter to the newspaper, expressing their real opinions about the expedition. Their opinions may be similar to the ones in the letters or their ideas might be quite different. When they have finished the students could read each other's letters and say if they agree with

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## After reading activity 2

### Spot the mistakes

There are some mistakes in this newspaper article about Naomi Power. The first example has been done for you. Can you find the ten other mistakes and correct them?

#### HOME AT LAST!

*New Zealander*

~~Australian~~, Naomi Power arrived in Dartmouth Harbour yesterday, after sailing non-stop around the world with her husband Rob. Famous yachtsman, Chay Blythe, allowed Naomi to use one of his yachts for her trip. *The Spirit of Cutty Sark* left Dartmouth on 2nd September last year and beat the world record set by Sir Francis Chichester for a round the world voyage. Naomi, who has been sailing since she was a little girl, had many adventures on board.

During the voyage the yacht capsized three times and her radio broke down. She sadly lost her little dog Boris over the side of the yacht and a large ship also crashed into her near the Channel Islands. When Naomi arrived in Dartmouth, there were only a few people to meet her. She said that she felt very happy to be back and that she wasn't going to miss the sea at all.

#### To the teacher

**Aim:** To focus students' attention back on the events of *At One With The Sea*

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Organization:** Give each student or group of students a copy of the worksheet. Tell them to read the newspaper article, find the ten mistakes in the text and then write in the correct answers. The first example has been done for them. When everyone has finished, go through the correct answers as a class. The students could then write their own short newspaper article, based on one of the other two

stories in *Desert, Mountain, Sea*.

**Key:** Australian: *New Zealander*; Non-stop: *Naomi did have to stop on her voyage*; Husband Rob: *She sailed alone*; *The Spirit of Cutty Sark*: *Express Crusader*; 2nd September: *9th September*; Sailing since she was a little girl: *Sailing for a couple of years*; Yacht capsized three times: *Capsized once*; Lost her dog: *Lost her cat*; Large ship crashed into her: *No ships crashed into her*; A few people to meet her: *A lot of people to meet her*; She wasn't going to miss the sea: *She was going to miss the sea*.