



Ever-Exhilarating Everest

There are always people who like to push the boundaries: people that are determined to achieve the almost unachievable. The adrenaline hunters that thrive on the thrill of a challenge that most of us would run away from (as fast as we could, in the opposite direction!). But the problem with these near impossible tasks is...well, exactly that! They are 'near impossible' for the vast majority of us. Even the most highly-trained professionals, the ones who spend their lives preparing for these daring tasks are not always successful.

One challenge that features on the bucket list of many the thrill seeker is to climb Mount Everest. These adventurers dream of conquering the dizzying heights of the mountain, the summit of which is the highest point in the world at almost 30,000 feet high.

Although those that have survived the precarious climb would most certainly have us all listening agog with the tales of such an adventure, morbid curiosity has many of us keen to hear those stories that didn't go quite to plan. There are so many tales of people battling for survival on their quest to climb the peak of Mount Everest; stories of those that survived against the odds, tales of those that didn't and mysteries where no one will ever know the reality of what happened to the brave adventurers on their journey to the top.

Mystery of 1924

Question: Why do you want to climb Mount Everest?

George Mallory: because it's there!

In 1924, George Mallory and his climbing partner Andrew Irvine went missing on their climb to the top of Everest. The pair were last seen only a few hundred feet away from reaching the summit. Did they ever reach the top? No one knows! For many years, it was as if the two friends had just disappeared into thin air. Until 1999 that is, when Mallory's body was finally found. Although climbers have continued to look, Andrew Irvine's body has never been found – although his climbing axe was spotted not far from Mallory.

The Disaster of 1996

On the 10th May 1996, three groups of climbers were on a mission to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Due to a problem, where the guides failed to set up the climbing ropes in advance, there was a delay in the time that the climbers could ascend to the top. It would have been safest to turn back. With light fading, continuing a climb into the

evening would make the journey back down Everest - towards camp - much more difficult. But the climbers were determined to continue on to the summit, making the decision to battle on – a dangerous decision. Soon, the climbers were put in even greater danger as a blizzard began, causing the ropes to be covered with a thick layer of snow.

Russian Anatoli Boukreev had been the first to summit that day. He had made it back to camp; other climbers were not so lucky. Some found themselves stranded on steps jutting out from edge of the mountain while others were lost and forced to stop and wait in temporary shelters alongside a sheer drop.

When the blizzard eased, Anatoli took the brave decision to hunt for some of the stranded climbers, managing to bring three back to safety.

The following day, guides found two of the men covered in ice and presumed they were dead. Bizarrely, one of these two men gained consciousness, later returning to the camp with his feet frost-bitten and half blind due to the fact his eye had frozen over. Still, he was much luckier than eight of the men who perished on the mountain that night.

Climbing Mount Everest is arguably one of the greatest challenges for any adventurer. Despite the knowledge that not all experienced mountaineers have returned from such a climb, reaching the summit of the highest mountain is a feat that many dream of achieving. Would you take the challenge?

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. In the disaster of 1996, who was first to summit?
2. Where were Mallory and Irvine last seen?
3. What was spotted not far from Mallory's body?
4. In the disaster of 1996, what put the climbers in 'even greater danger'?
5. Why did guides presume that two of the men they were searching for were dead?