

The Last Expedition

Read the text, which is a news item from August, 1995, and then look at the instructions on the next page.

She had already been to the top of the world. Alison Hargreaves, a 33-year-old Scot, last May became the first woman to climb Mount Everest alone and without oxygen tanks. But she had her sights set on the two other Asian peaks—Mount Godwin-Austen (K2) in Pakistan this summer, and then Mount Kanchenjunga in India later this year—that would earn her a rare mountaineering trifecta. Because of its unrelenting steepness and treacherously sudden storms, K2, known as the “Killer Mountain”, is a formidable challenge for even accomplished climbers. Of the thousands who have tried to climb it, only 113 have reached its 8,611 metres high summit, and 38 have died on its slopes. Last week Hargreaves added to those grim statistics. Some 600 metres into her descent from the peak, she was overcome by an avalanche that is believed to have also killed six other climbers.

Hargreaves, who began climbing professionally at 18, believed she could

manage the risks. “If I thought it was desperately dangerous, I wouldn’t do it,” she told a reporter before leaving for K2 last June. The mother of two, she brushed off critics who claimed she was selfish for indulging in such a perilous activity. When she reached the summit of Mount Everest, the first radio message she sent was to her two children: “I am on top of the world, and I love you dearly.”

Hargreaves’ husband Jim Ballard quotes a favourite saying of hers: “It is better to have lived one day as a tiger than a thousand as a sheep.” She clearly lived by that rule to the end. “She was actually where she wanted to be,” says Ballard. “She was on her way down. At least inside she would have had the happiness of reaching the summit.” Because a recovery attempt would be too dangerous, the bodies of Hargreaves and the others will forever remain on the mountain that they climbed but could not completely conquer.



Tasks for The Last Expedition

I Answer the following questions about the text. Give short answers. For each question 2–6 words should be enough.

- 1 After Mount Everest, what mountains remained for Alison Hargreaves in order to crown her climbing career? _____
- 2 During what part of the K2 expedition did the tragedy happen?

- 3 When did mountaineering become an essential part of Alison Hargreaves' life?


- 4 Who were Hargreaves' closest family?

- 5 What did Alison Hargreaves say was the limit for her risk-taking?

- 6 What did her husband try to see as a positive thing in the tragedy?

II Explain the following six words or phrases from the text. They are in **bold print**. Write only ONE word in order to complete the sentence. You may find suitable words in the text that you can use.

- 7 If you face a **formidable** challenge there is reason to feel quite _____
- 8 From the expression **those grim statistics** we can understand that a lot of people have actually _____
- 9 Another way of saying the **summit** of a mountain is to use the word _____
- 10 Since a recovery **attempt** of the victims was considered impossible, no one even wanted to _____
- 11 If you **brush off** criticism, it means that you don't want to _____
- 12 Since mountaineering involves many **perilous** activities, this sport is considered both challenging and _____

Points

12