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## The Tallest Mountain

Justin and Whitney hiked up to the top of a small peak in the Rocky Mountains. After their ascent, they sat at the top, munching on snacks while enjoying the view.

“Look at that mountain over there,” said Whitney, pointing with her bare finger. That’s the tallest mountain I’ve ever seen. It is covered with snow all year. You can’t climb it unless you have ropes and ice axes. I believe we’ve spotted Mount Everest. Mount Everest is the tallest mountain in the world. It is just over 29,000 feet tall. Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay made the first successful **ascent**. That was on May 29, 1953. Hillary was from New Zealand. He was a beekeeper. That was a good profession for a climber. He could work with his bees in the summer. Then, in the winter, he could climb. In his autobiography, Norgay said he was born in Nepal. Norgay was a guide on a lot of Everest expeditions.

“The two didn’t linger at the top,” continued Whitney. “They stayed for only 15 minutes. Then they started their descent. That’s because they were in the death zone. The death zone starts at an altitude of 8,000 meters. It’s called the death zone because people can’t survive at that altitude for long. The air is too thin. People can’t get enough oxygen. Hillary and Norgay climbed with bottled oxygen. They had to start their descent before they ran out of oxygen.



**Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay**

“Their final camp was at 25,900 feet. Snow and wind trapped them there for two days. Then they climbed to 27,000 feet and pitched a tent. They planned to start their final ascent in the morning, but they were delayed by two hours.”

“Why?” asked Justin as he rolled up his shirtsleeves.

“That’s how long it took Hillary to put on his boots.”

“How can it take two hours to put on a pair of boots? Why would it take so long?”

“It’s really cold on Everest. The average summit temperature in May is about -25°C. Hillary’s boots were frozen solid! It took him two hours to warm them and make them supple enough to put on!”

Justin said, “You taught me a lot about Everest, but I think there is one thing I can teach you.”

# The Tallest Mountain *(cont.)*

What one thing does Justin know that Whitney doesn't? It is time to check facts.

## Thesaurus



1. Write two synonyms for *ascent*.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Write two antonyms for *ascent*.

\_\_\_\_\_

## Image Search

Key Words:  *Nepal flag*



How is Nepal's flag shaped differently than your country's flag. Use complete sentences in your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Metric Converter

Hillary and Norgay's final camp was at 25,900 feet. They spent one night at 27,000 feet. The death zone starts at 8,000 meters.



1. Death Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ feet = 8,000 meters

2. Final Camp: 25,900 feet = \_\_\_\_\_ meters

3. Camp for the Night: 27,000 feet = \_\_\_\_\_ meters

4. Which location(s) was in the death zone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Atlas



1. In which two countries are the Rocky Mountains? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In which two countries is Mount Everest? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## In Your Own Words

Do you think Justin and Whitney are in the death zone? Write a paragraph in which you state your position, define the death zone, and then defend your position with details from the story. Use a separate piece of paper.



## Train-Stopping Grasshoppers

Ray said, “Libby, read this newspaper article. I can’t believe it is true. This could have never happened.”

Libby picked up the newspaper article. It had turned yellow with age. She read it carefully.

*Sacramento, California 1748*

### **Grasshoppers Stop Train**

*The Transcontinental Railroad train left New York. Traveling east, it arrived in the state of Nebraska on time. It did not arrive in the state of California on time. A blizzard did not cause the delay. A herd of buffalo on the tracks did not cause the **delay**. A train robbery did not cause the delay. Grasshoppers caused the delay!*

*The conductor Ernest Hardy said, “It was early morning. I came around the bend, and the tracks were just covered in grasshoppers. I had to run over them. I had the steam engine going full blast because I had to get up speed for the steep grade ahead. I was shocked when the train wheels began to slip! We couldn’t make it up the grade! The squashed grasshoppers had made the wheels and tracks too slippery!”*

*A government man said, “As cold weather comes on, the grasshoppers collect in warm spots. The rails are heated up by the sun during the day. The grasshoppers collect on the rails and stay there all night. In the morning they are stiff and numb and unable to move.”*

When Libby finished reading the article, Ray said, “Have you ever heard of anything so outlandish? There is no truth to this story at all.”

“Actually,” Libby said, “Events like this did happen. Trains were stopped and delayed by Rocky Mountain locusts. Locusts are a type of grasshopper. These locusts are now extinct. Before they became extinct, they would travel in huge swarms. The swarms were so big they would blacken the sky. The locusts ate every green leaf. They ate millions of dollars worth of crops.”

“So this is a real newspaper article,” Ray said with excitement. “History is filled with amazing events.”

“History is filled with amazing events,” Libby agreed, “but the sequence of events in this article doesn’t add up. I’m sorry, but it can’t be real.”

# Train-Stopping Grasshoppers *(cont.)*

What does Libby know that Ray doesn't? It is time to check facts.

## Thesaurus



1. What are two synonyms for *delay*? \_\_\_\_\_
2. If something is delayed, most likely it will be \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) early                      (B) late                      (C) slippery                      (D) dry

## Atlas



1. Which direction would a train go if it went from New York to Nebraska to California?  
(A) north                      (B) east                      (C) south                      (D) west
2. Name one state that touches Nebraska in each of these directions:  
north: \_\_\_\_\_ east: \_\_\_\_\_  
south: \_\_\_\_\_ west: \_\_\_\_\_

## Search Engine/Encyclopedia



Write **True** or **False**. If your answer is **False**, cross out the incorrect word(s) and write the correct word(s) on the line.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Nebraska became a state on March 1, 1868. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. California became a state after Nebraska. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The Transcontinental Railway was finished in 1869. \_\_\_\_\_

## Image Search



Key Words:  *Rocky Mountain locust*

Does this insect look like a grasshopper? Give reasons why or why not.

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## In Your Own Words

On a separate piece of paper, write a paragraph in which you explain why someone might not believe that grasshoppers could stop trains. Then tell exactly what is in the newspaper article that doesn't make sense.