

## Grade VIII - English

### Lesson 5. The Summit Within

Prose

Soul of the Chapter

#### The First Successful Expedition to Mount Everest

HPS Ahluwalia was one of the members of the first ever successful team that reached the top of Mount Everest in 1965. The chapter discusses his emotions and moods on reaching the top of the summit. On reaching the top, HPS Ahluwalia shares his sense of joy and triumph at being among the first ones to reach the top. Besides these two natural emotions, there was also a lot of humility, for they thanked God for making it possible. HPS Ahluwalia was, however, surprised that sadness was also reflected in his sentiments on having accomplished the feat. Even when the joy lasts a lifetime, there was a deep sense of sorrow because the ultimate goal had been attained. There was a certain sense of vacuum and aimlessness that had replaced the earlier objectives. “....and there would be nothing higher to climb and all roads hereafter would lead down?”

#### HPS Ahluwalia Talks about One the Three Qualities that Learns

HPS Ahluwalia asks himself a number of questions. He examines the enthusiasm behind reaching the top. Why one wishes to reach the top and when one has done so, it becomes an event that happened in the past, whose memory would fade away with every passing day. Then, he realises that reaching the top of the mountain helped him to become aware of the second summit(-) “the summit of the mind”. Climbing the mountains means to overcome the obstacles, obstacles that are both physical and mental. One requires endurance, persistence and will power to do so. Mountains are nature at its best and they force you to acquire all these three qualities. Climbing the Everest, which is the highest and the mightiest, every bit of your personality is challenged. It requires great force and power, but according to Ahluwalia, it is also a way for communion or spiritual unity with God. He discusses how the passage onwards and back words are both equally difficult and during every moment when you risk your life, you remember God and thank him for every breath that you breathe.



## **The Smallness of Human beings in the Universe and Concerns fellow Climber**

According to Ahluwalia, climbing up the top is one of the life changing experiences. From the top, one doesn't just see the other smaller peaks but also realises his own smallness vis-à-vis the largeness of the universe. It teaches one the lesson to rise above the usual pettiness. Therefore, the experience is not just physical but emotional and spiritual.

In the fact of death every moment one becomes more and more conscious of life. One erroneous move of a climber can also affect his fellow climber or climbers and the vice-versa. You are, therefore always struggling for your and the life of your fellow climber. You become more and more conscious of the needs of your fellow climbers. You climb or descend always, but usually it enables you to move onwards. "You draw inspiration from each other."

## **Obeisance to God for Enabling to Reach the Summit Within**

Reaching the top, one experiences the ultimate form of reverence for God. Every climber left a picture or a symbol of God on the mountain peak. Ahluwalia left the picture of Guru Nanak, while his companion, Rewat placed the picture of Goddess Durga. Others too similarly left relics or symbols of Buddha, Christ and so on.

HPS Ahluwalia talks of the summit of the mind, which is equally important to be climbed. To become more aware of oneself, to gather more knowledge about the interior workings of our mind and nobody but only we on our own could do it. He discusses how the effects of both the climbs are the same. They teach you lessons that last a lifetime.

**NCERT Folder**

**Comprehension Check - 1**

**1. Standing Everest, the writer was**

- (i) overjoyed. (ii) very sad (iii) jubilant and sad.

**Choose the right item.**

Ans. (iii) jubilant and sad.



**2. The emotion that gripped him was one of**

- (i) victory over hurdles.
- (ii) humility and a sense of smallness.
- (iii) greatness and self importance.
- (iv) joy of discovery.

**Choose the right item.**

Ans. (ii) humility and a sense of smallness.

**3. "The summit of the mind" refers to**

- (i) great intellectual achievements.
- (ii) the process of maturing mentally and spiritually.
- (iii) overcoming personal ambition for common welfare.
- (iv) living the world of thought and imagination.
- (v) the triumph of mind over worldly pleasure for a noble cause.
- (vi) a fuller knowledge of oneself.

**Mark the items (s) not relevant.**

Ans. The summit of the mind not refers to

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**Working with the Text**

**1. Answer the following questions.**

**(i) What are the three qualities that played a major role in the author's climb?**

The three qualities that played a major role in the author's climb were endurance, persistence and will power.

**(ii) Why is adventure, which is risky, also pleasurable?**

The adventure, though risky, gives pleasure because man takes delight in overcoming obstacles and doing what is difficult.



**(iii) What was it about Mount Everest that the author found irresistible?**

The author finds it difficult to answer this question in its entirety. One reason quite obviously was because the Everest is the highest and the mightiest and the earlier attempts to reach its top had failed.

Also, the author found in climbing mountains a way to have a communion with God and nothing could be better than the Everest.

**(iv) One does not do it (climb a high peak) for fame alone. What does one do it for, really?**

According to the author, one doesn't just climb the highest peak for fame or because of the undying love that man has for adventure.

He does so also to lift himself above his immediate surroundings, to rise above the pettiness of life. Climbing the mountains is a life changing experience and it teaches you a lesson that lasts a lifetime.

**(v) "He becomes conscious in a special manner of his own smallness in this large universe."**

**This awareness defines an emotion mentioned in the first paragraph. Which is the emotion?**

Humility, according to the author, climbing the mountain peak makes you really humble. Looking from the mountain peak, one finds his surroundings really small and one's position in that surroundings further smaller. This makes you aware of your nothingness.

**(vi) What were the "symbols of reverence" left by members of the team on Everest?**

Every climber left a symbol of reverence or what they associated with God. These "symbols of reverence" were a picture or an idol of God, a relic or an emblem of God they worshipped.

Therefore, Ahluwalia left a picture of Guru Nanak. Whereas Rawat left a picture of Goddess Durga. Phu Dorji left a relic of Buddha and Edmund Hillary buried a cross.

**(vii) What, according to the writer, did his experience as an Everest climber teach him?**

The author learnt various lessons as an Everest climber. The first lesson he learnt was endurance, persistence and will power. To be able to reach the top and not leave the venture half way, one needed all three. The second lesson learnt was of teamwork and helping your fellow climbers.

Each one's life was deeply entangled with the actions of the other climbers. You could not risk the life of others due to your errors and also teamwork could help others emerge out



of their difficulties too. The third lesson was of humility and gratitude. You thank God for every breath that you breathe.

**2. Write a sentence against of the following statements. Your sentence should explain the statement. You can pick out sentences from the text and rewrite them. The first one has been done for you.**

- (i) The experience changes you completely. (i) one who has been to the mountains is never the same again.
- (ii) Man takes delight in overcoming obstacles.  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- (iii) Mountains are nature at its best.
- (iv) The going was difficult but the after-effects were satisfying.  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- (v) The physical conquest of a mountain is really a spiritual experience\_\_\_\_\_.

- Ans. (ii) It is the eternal love for adventure in man.
- (iii) The beauty of nature is found best in the mountains.
- (iv) When the summit is climbed, there is the exhilaration, the joy of having done something, the sense of a battle fought and won.
- (v) Mountains are a means of communion with God.

### Working with the Text

**1. Look at the italicised phrases and their meanings given in brackets.**

Mountains are nature at its best	(nature's best form and appearance)
Your life is at risk	(in danger; you run the risk of losing your life).
He was at his best worst in the last meeting	(it was his best / worst performance)

**Fill in the blanks in the following dialogues choosing suitable phrases from those given in the box**

at hand      at once      at all      at a low ebb      at first sight

- (i) Teacher. You were away from school without permission. Go to the principal.....and submit



your explanation.

Pupil: Yes, Madam. But would you help me write it first?

(ii) Aun: Are you unwell?

Ila: No, not \_\_\_\_\_ Why do you ask?

Arun: If you were unwell, I would send you to my uncle. He is a Doctor.

(iii) Mary: Almost every Indian film has an episode of love \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Asif: You look depressed. Why are your spirits \_\_\_\_\_ today? (Use such in the phrase)

Ashok: I have to write ten sentences using words that I never heard before.

(v) Shieba: Your big moment is close \_\_\_\_\_.

Jyoti: How should welcome it?

Shieba: Get up and receive the trophy.

Ans.

(i) at once

(ii) at all

(iii) at a first sight

(iv) at a low ebb

(v) at hand

**2. Write the noun from of the following words adding -ance or -ence to each.**

(i) Endure \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Persist \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Signify \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Confide \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Maintain \_\_\_\_\_

(vi) abhor \_\_\_\_\_

Ans. (i) Endurance

(ii) Persistence

(iii) Significance

(iv) Confidence

(v) Maintenance

(vi) Abhorrence

**3. (i) Match words under A with the meanings under B.**

A	B
Remote	difficult to overcome
Means	most prominent
Dominant	be overcome / overpowered
Formidable	method(s)
Overwhelmed	far away from

A	B
Remote	far away from
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(ii) Fill in the blanks in the sentences given below with appropriate words from under A.

- (a) There were \_\_\_\_\_ obstacles on the way, but we reached our destination safely.  
 (b) We have no \_\_\_\_\_ of finding out what happened there.  
 (c) Why he lives in a house \_\_\_\_\_ from any town or village is more than I can tell.  
 (d) \_\_\_\_\_ by gratitude, we bowed to the speaker for his valuable advice.  
 (e) The old castle stands in a \_\_\_\_\_ position above the sleepy town.

Ans.

- (a) formidable (b) means (c) remote (d) overwhelmed (e) dominant

### Speaking and Writing

1. Write a composition describing a visit to the hills, or any place which you found beautiful and inspiring.

Before writing, work in small groups. Discuss the points given below and decide if you want to use some of these points in your composition.

Consider this sentence

Mountains are a means of communion with God.

Think of the act of worship or prayer. You believe yourself to be in the presence of the divine power. In a way, you are in communion with that power.

Imagine the climber on top of the summit - the height attained: limitless sky above: the climber's last ounce of energy spent: feelings of gratitude, humility and peace.

The majesty of mountains does bring you close to nature and the spirit and joy that lives there, if you have the ability to feel it.

Some composition may be read aloud to the entire class afterwards.





**Ans.** Last vacations I went to Mussouri with my family and friends. The cottage where we stayed was very close to the river and the mountains. Everyone was having good fun, when I proposed climbing up the mountains.

The purity up the air, the delight at seeing the early morning rays of the sun are just the mountains.

But everyone was resistant and too lazy for a trek. I, however, could not resist the temptation of going up the mountains and enjoying the purity of air, the sight of the early morning rays of the sun; these feelings are just indescribable.

The peace that one attains in the mountains cannot be matched elsewhere. I automatically began to chant the name of God as I was climbing up.

With every foot forward you come closer to God, for you begin to value life, something that we take for granted in the rush of city life. The beauty around made you admire the craft of the master creator, God, who has invested so much in creating life on Earth.

The vibrant colours, the fragrance of flowers, the sound of birds chirping, all overpower your senses and your own achievements begin to diminish in front of these. You really begin to attain God in the grace.

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## Chapter Practice

### Very Short Answer Type Questions

**1. In which year did HPS Ahluwalia undertake the expedition to Everest?**

HPS Ahluwalia undertook the expedition to Everest in 1965.

**2. Which was the most dominant emotion that he experiences on reaching the top?**

Humility.

**3. According to Ahluwalia, why do people climb mountains.**

According to HPS Ahluwalia, people climb mountains because they wish to face challenges and overcome obstacles.

**4. During the climb up to the mountains, who inspires the climbers.**

While climbing up the mountains, the fellow climbers inspire each other.

**5. What does Ahluwalia have to say about the relationship between mountain climbing and life?**





According to HPS Ahluwalia, there is a very close connection between these two journeys.

His experience as an Everest gave him the inspiration to face life's ordeals with great confidence.

6. How does the author view himself in the light of his surroundings, as he reaches the summit?

The author becomes more and more conscious of his smallness as he sees the universe from the mountain peak.

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### Short Answer Type Questions

**1. Why does the author become sad on reaching the top of the mountain?**

On reaching the top of the mountain, the author becomes sad because their goal had been attained and now a certain vacuum had overcome in the absence of an aim. Also, the highest that from here on the journey would only lead downwards.

**2. Why does HPS Ahluwalia compare climbing the mountain to a battle?**

While climbing the mountain, one faces many obstacles and hindrances which consume every bit of the climber's energy.

The passage back is also as difficult as the passage forward and it exhausts you entirely.

Just like in a battle it is a matter of life and death similarly in mountain climbing, the climbers are always putting their life at stake with every single movement that they make.

**3. Why does the author not abandon the climb halfway?**

Even in moments of sheer exhaustion, the author refuses to abandon the climb because climbing the mountain is all about team work and the companions are always a source of inspiration.

They keep pushing the limits, "another fifty feet or hundred may be." Also, there is something unexplainable that does not allow the author to reach the top, perhaps because they were the first ones who would have done it.

**4. Was reaching the top of the Everest the last challenge that the author wished to face?**

No, the author is inspired by the beauty of nature and mountains being the best example of that.



On reaching the top of the Everest, the author sees another silvery peak, which the author felt was drawing his attention and calling him. So, having had climbed the highest did not put an end to the author's expeditions.

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### Long Answer Type Questions

#### 1. Why is important to climb the 'summit within'?

According to the author, just like the physical mountains have lessons to teach, similarly the mountain peaks within have lessons to teach too.

They teach us life changing and everlasting experiences. Both the climbs are equally difficult, but once attained they change us forever.

They enable us to become more humble, gentler and more grateful and also help us to get closer to God. These lessons also instil us to face life's challenges with great confidence.

#### 2. Describe the scene that offers delight to the author as he reached the top of the Everest.

From the summit, the author could see other silvery peaks, which gave him a lot of pleasure. He could also see other peaks through the clouds giving the eye glimpses of great picturesque beauty. The sun rays created an illusion of a jewelled necklace around the neck of the summit. A little below the mountains were various sloping valleys that added to the beauty on the place. Also, as one looked down, it appeared as if the ultimate work ship to God was being offered.

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### Value Based Questions

#### 1. Discuss the importance of the records left by famous climbers.

The records left by famous climbers primarily discuss and share their experiences and difficulties at having made it to the top. These records equip the future climbers with knowledge to deal with similar difficulties and overcome those obstacles.

These records are also stories of inspiration. They inspire the future climbers to not abandon their climb midway, nor get depressed because of the difficulties.

They, on the other hand, are enthused with optimism on remembering these stories.



## 2. Discuss the significance of leaving religious or spiritual symbols on mountain tops.

Firstly, leaving the pictures or symbols of God on the mountain top is a way of expressing gratitude for having attained that point and being safe and healthy. The author also discusses how reaching the mountain top is symbolic of attaining God; this act makes attaining God on reaching the top both literally and metaphorically true.

### Extract Based Questions

#### Extract 1

**Directions (Q.NoS.1- 6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.**

“The experience of having climbed to the summit changes you completely. There is another summit. It is within yourself. It is in your own mind. Each man carries within himself his own mountain peak. He must climb it to reach a fuller knowledge of himself. It is fearful and unscalable.”

**1. Name the mountain that the writer had climbed.**

- (a) Mount Everest    (b) Kanchenjunga    (c) Nanda Devi    (d) Kamet

**Ans. (a) Mount Everest**

**2. Which is the other?**

- (a) The summit of the Mount Everest    (b) The summit of the Mind  
(c) The summit of Kanchenjunga    (d) The summit of Desires

**Ans. (b) The other summit is the summit of the mind.**

**3. How does the experience of the summit change one completely?**

- (a) It makes the writer more conscious and aware  
(b) It makes the writer proud  
(c) It makes the writer jubilant  
(d) It makes the writer compassionate

**Ans. (a) Attaining the second summit makes the writer more conscious and aware.**

**4. Chose two adjectives from the passage.**

Fearful and unscalable.

**5. Identify the recurrent metaphor used in the chapter.**

The mountain peak is both literally and metaphorically used in the chapter.



## 6. Why is the summit fearful and unscalable?

The other summit is fearful and unscalable because one may never emerge from the depths of the mind. The mind is complex and layered.

### Extract 2

**Directions (Q.Nos.1- 6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.**

"Man takes delight in overcoming obstacles. The obstacles in climbing a mountain are physical. A climb to a summit means endurance, persistence and will power. The demonstration of these physical qualities is no doubt exhilarating, as it was for me also".

#### 1. What are the three necessary qualities to reach the summit?

- (a) Endurance, persistence and will power
- (b) Endurance, persistence and obstacles
- (c) Hindrance, obstacles and blockage
- (d) Courage, jubilation and hard work

**Ans. (a) Endurance, persistence and will power are the three necessary qualities to reach the summit.**

#### 2. The obstacles in climbing a mountain are.....

- (a) Mental
- (b) Physical
- (c) Financial
- (d) Psychological

**Ans. (b) physical**

#### 3. Give the synonym of obstacles.

- (a) Hindrance
- (b) summit
- (c) Peak
- (d) Endurance

**Ans. (a) Hindrance**

#### 4. Why does man take delight in overcoming obstacles?

Man takes delight in overcoming the obstacles because it is fulfilling and gives him a sense of confidence.

#### 5. What could be the obstacles in climbing the second summit?

The obstacles in climbing the second summit could be many, like a busy schedule, lack of awareness and so on.



**6. What all emotions does the author experience on realising both the summit?**

The author experiences a number of emotions on realising both the summits. He feels jubilant and triumphant; at the same time he also experiences humility and sorrow. He gains confidence and becomes more conscious of the second summit.

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