

*In Mountains of the Mind, Robert Macfarlane gives an account of his adventures in the mountains. In this extract, he sums up why he finds mountains challenging and inspiring.*

## **Beyond the Mountain**

Why are millions of people drawn to mountains every year? Perhaps it is because mountains challenge our belief that the world has been made for humans by humans. Mountains remind us that there are places which do not respond to the flick of a switch or the push of a button, as I discovered one day in late January.

Three friends and I went climbing on a mountain near Loch Laggan in Scotland. The day began magnificently. Clouds sailed in the sky, racing across the blueness. The sunshine was hard and bright, the whiteness of the snow reflected by its light. The forbidding cliffs of the mountain were dense with ice, which flashed and glittered in the sunlight. Despite the coldness of the air, I could feel the blood pulsing warmly in my toes as we 'roped up' ready to climb.

We began to ascend one of the east-facing ridges of the mountain. As we climbed, the weather changed its mood. The clouds thickened and slowed in the sky. The light changed from silver to dirty grey. After an hour of climbing, it began to snow heavily. Approaching the top of the mountain, we were in near white-out conditions: the snow was falling so heavily that it was difficult to separate the air and the land. It had also become much colder. My gloves had become frozen shells, which clunked hollowly when I knocked them together.

A few hundred yards from the summit, the ridge flattened out and we were able to unrope safely. The others stopped for something to eat but I moved on ahead, wanting to enjoy the solitude of being lost in the snow. Millions of particles of snow dust streamed just above the ground in a continuous flow. Rounded chunks of old hard snow skidded over the surface of the ridge. And the big soft flakes which were falling from the sky were being driven into me by the wind. They walloped almost soundlessly against my clothing and I built up a thin fur of snow on one side of me. It seemed as though I were wading in a loose white river. I could see no more than a few metres in any direction, and felt utterly and excitingly alone. The world beyond the whirling snow became unimportant, almost unimaginable. I could have been the last person on the planet.

After several minutes' walking, I stopped. A few paces away, sitting and watching me, resting on its huge hind legs, its tall ears twitching, was a snow hare. It seemed curious at seeing me on its territory, but not alarmed. The hare was gleaming white all over except for its black tail, a small patch of grey on its chest and the two black rims of its ears. For half a minute we stood there in the strange silence of the snow storm: me with my thin layer of fur and the hare with its magnificent white coat and polished black eyes. Suddenly, the hare

kicked away and zigzagged off into the blizzard, its black tail bobbing long after its body disappeared.

Crossing paths with the snow hare reminded me that it had its own path too, as much as I had mine. I was also reminded that the true blessing of mountains is not that they provide us with a physical challenge, something to be conquered and controlled. It is much more than this. Mountains encourage us to recognise what is marvellous, unchanging and inspiring in the world, while also making us aware of our own unimportance. I thought of the snow falling across range after range of invisible hills, and I thought that there was nowhere at that moment I would rather be.



1. In paragraph 1, the writer explores why people are drawn to mountains. Which **two** of the following statements best describe why the writer thinks people are drawn to mountains? Tick **two** of the sentences:

\_\_\_\_\_ mountains make people realise that they do not control the world

\_\_\_\_\_ mountains can be exciting for people to climb

\_\_\_\_\_ mountains allow people to test their physical skills

\_\_\_\_\_ mountains make people see the world in a different way

(1 mark)

2. Identify one word from paragraph 2 which suggests that the mountain does not look welcoming.

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(1 mark)

3. In paragraph 3, the weather changes its mood. How does the description of light in paragraph 3 show this change of mood?

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(1 mark)

4. How does the writer's choice of language in paragraph 4 show that he is completely surrounded by snow? Refer to specific words and phrases from paragraph 4 and comment on them.

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(3 marks)



## Rescued

Imagine you are an explorer who travels to faraway places. On your last trip, things went wrong and you lost contact with the outside world. After two weeks you were found, and now a magazine wants you to write about your experience.

Below is what the magazine asks for:

Start at the point when you knew things were going wrong. Include details about:

- The difficulties you faced before you were found
- How you felt at each stage
- How the whole experience has affected you

Write the story of your experience, from the point when things went wrong to when you were found.

(30 marks)

Please use the lined paper to write your story.