

# HIMALAYAN TRUST EDUCATION PACK

## BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

These background notes for teachers aim to provide general information and further context where needed to support the activities in the education pack.

For topics where the resources are self-explanatory, we have provided some useful links for further research if desired.

We welcome your feedback. Please get in touch at [info@himalayantrust.org](mailto:info@himalayantrust.org) if there are any gaps in the information or unanswered questions that you would like us to add to this background document, so we can continually improve the resource.

### INTRODUCTION

Sir Edmund Hillary (20 July 1919 – 11 January 2008) was a New Zealand mountaineer, explorer and philanthropist.

On 29 May 1953, Ed Hillary and Tenzing Norgay became the first climbers to reach the summit of Mount Everest. His 1953 ascent of Mt Everest brought Ed worldwide fame – literally overnight. He is very probably the best known New Zealander to have ever lived.

Ed is famous around the world for his ascent of Everest and his adventures. Yet for Ed, his greatest achievement was his work to help the people of Nepal.

Ed and his first wife Louise founded the Himalayan Trust in the 1960s. Since then, New Zealanders have felt inspired to give their time, money and support to help the people of Nepal through the Himalayan Trust.

As Jan Morris, the writer, journalist and last surviving member of the 1953 Everest expedition said: “You in New Zealand are lucky that your greatest hero is great because he is good.”

This education resource aims to encourage our young New Zealanders to be as proud of Ed’s generosity and his Kiwi “can-do” attitude towards helping others as we are of his spirit of adventure.

### ED’S AID WORK IN NEPAL

It all began in the early 1960s when Ed asked a Sherpa: “If there was anything I could do for the Sherpa people, what do you think that would be?”

The Sherpa replied: “Our children have eyes but they are blind and cannot see. We would like you to open their eyes by building a school in our village.”

Ed set about building the first school in the region in the village of Khumjung.

Ed went on to set up the Himalayan Trust in the early 1960 and built a further 26 schools, two hospitals, 13 health clinics, as well as bridges, water supplies and the airport in Lukla.

You can read more about Ed on our website <http://himalayantrust.org/about-sir-ed/>

### THE HIMALAYAN TRUST’S ONGOING WORK

The Himalayan Trust has grown from one man’s love of the mountains and its people into a small but dynamic organisation that continues to work with mountain communities of the Everest region to reduce poverty and realise their goals.

Today, the Himalayan Trust supports a total of 67 schools. All the staff at these schools, as well as at the two hospitals and the health clinics that the Himalayan Trust supports, are now Nepali. Education has enabled the children of illiterate parents to become doctors, nurses, dentists, environmentalists, teachers and business owners. Many of the doctors and teachers in the region began their education at a school built by the Himalayan Trust.

The Himalayan Trust continues to work with local partners in Nepal to bring quality education, safe water, and better healthcare to communities living in the mountainous Everest region of Nepal.

The Himalayan Trust supports quality education in the region with an aim to provide opportunities for young people as a step out of poverty, and to provide alternative employment options to portering in the mountains, which can be very dangerous

Many schools in the region were damaged in the 2015 earthquakes, and schools here in New Zealand were instrumental in helping fund the Himalayan Trust's biggest ever programme to rebuild damaged classrooms. The Himalayan Trust has now rebuilt 150 seismic-strengthened classrooms at 36 schools, including some of the first schools built by Ed.

Find out more about the Himalayan Trust's current work at <http://himalayantrust.org/our-work/>

## THE PEOPLE OF EVEREST

Many different ethnic groups now live in the Everest region, including the Sherpa, *Rai*, and *Newar*.

One of the first ethnic groups to settle in the region were the Sherpa (pronounced "shar-wa" by the Sherpa themselves). The word Sherpa means "person of the east". In the 16th Century, the first Sherpa people are believed to have walked from eastern Tibet across the mountains to Nepal.

The Sherpa are an ethnic group with a distinct language, history and culture. Many Sherpa follow the Buddhist religion and most Sherpa now speak Nepali as well.

Sherpa people are renowned for their strength and skill in mountaineering and the term "Sherpa" is now synonymous with (and often confused with) the role of a porter or trekking guide for mountaineering expeditions.

Many Sherpa people now make a living out of helping visitors to Nepal climb and trek in the Himalayan mountains. For Sherpa people, the highest mountain peaks are the homes of the gods and should be respected. Though it was once considered blasphemous to climb a sacred mountain, most Sherpas now regard their role as mountaineering guides with considerable pride.

The Sherpa are famous for their strength at high altitude. Research and studies have found that the Sherpas have undergone genetic adaptations after living in one of the world's highest regions for thousands of years. Research has found Sherpa are capable of using oxygen more efficiently and generating energy more efficiently. This gives them an advantage when in high altitudes with low oxygen.

When Ed first visited the region he made strong friendships with the Sherpa people. However, children and families from all ethnic groups benefit from the schools and hospitals that Ed built through the Himalayan Trust.

## EMPLOYMENT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Traditionally, people in the region worked as yak herders and farmers on small family farms growing potatoes and other crops.

Today, farming, construction, carpentry and portering are typical jobs in the region, as well as jobs in the tourist industry such as guides or working in the lodges and restaurants.

Working as a high altitude porter or mountain guide is dangerous work but comparatively well paid. Sometimes children as young as 11 years old carry heavy loads as porters to earn money for their family.

## EDUCATION IN NEPAL

Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in the world.

In 1951 Nepal established an education system with free primary education for all. The government is committed to providing education for all but it is still not compulsory.

Approximately 71 percent of men in Nepal are literate. Women lag behind with only 44 percent able to read and write. The literacy rates are lower in rural areas.

Schools in rural areas are often inadequately resourced, and staffed by untrained or poorly-trained teachers who use rote learning methods.

Children are eligible to attend school from six years old, but many don't go until later.

Some children in Nepal aren't lucky enough to go to school. Some children don't attend school because they live too far from school. Some schools have hostels attached where children can stay during term time (see Pasang's case study in Topic 7).

Some children walk several kilometres to school every day, often along difficult terrain (also discussed in Topic 7). Sometimes the family need children to stay home and work. Some schools in the region still don't have electricity, toilets and running water.

## TOPIC 1 & 2: EXPLORING THE HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS

### Mt Everest facts

Mount Everest Fun Facts <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqkgKHu1gt0>

Everest facts <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqkgKHu1gt0>

<http://www.alanarnette.com/kids/everestfacts.php>

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/why-is-mount-everest-so-tall-michele-koppes>

### Views of Mt Everest

The Himalayas from 20,000ft <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hTVNidxg2s>

View from the top of Everest <http://www.airpano.ru/files/Everest-Top-View/2-2>

Everest from 20,000 ft <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hTVNidxg2s>

### Creating a Google My Map

Google My Maps is a great web tool for creating and customising maps, and as it is integrated with Google Drive, students are able to instantly create, manage and share their maps from their Google Drive account. Students are able to search for and add places to their map, draw lines and shapes to illustrate locations, add colours, markers, icons and labels to their maps.

Angela, a teacher and Himalayan Trust supporter, has produced a short video to help teachers get started and navigate the basics of Google My Map. To watch visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFEULZKt1SE>

We have provided a Google My Map worksheet that gives students some suggestions and ideas for customising their map. However, encourage your students to add as much information as they can to track and reflect their learning as they progress through the topics.

You can also read more about creating a Google My Map online at

<https://www.educatorstechnology.com/2015/08/excellent-google-maps-tutorials-for-teachers.html>

[https://support.google.com/mymaps/answer/3024454?hl=en&ref\\_topic=3188329](https://support.google.com/mymaps/answer/3024454?hl=en&ref_topic=3188329)

[https://support.google.com/mymaps/answer/3024925?hl=en&ref\\_topic=3024924](https://support.google.com/mymaps/answer/3024925?hl=en&ref_topic=3024924)

## TOPIC 3: ED'S JOURNEY TO THE TOP OF THE WORLD

The following information provides more detail and context for Activity 1, the photo story of the Everest expedition.

### Photo 2: Conquering Mount Everest

For over 30 years, explorers had been attempting to conquer Mt Everest without success. At the time, it was considered the last great challenge on earth. The fact that it was conquered by a Nepali and a beekeeper from New Zealand was heralded around the world as a win for the underdogs.

### Photo 3: First to the top

Both Ed and Tenzing were often asked about who stepped on the summit first. Both would reply that they reached the summit together. Ed would often add that it did not matter who got there first, as neither man could have reached the top without the other's help. The two of them had worked very closely together, alternately taking lead steps, always helping one another. The truth was that one could not have reached the summit without the other. They agreed to tell everyone they reached the summit together at the same time and they stuck to that story.

At one point during the expedition Hillary and Tenzing were tied to the same climbing rope when Ed took a giant leap onto an ice block. The ice block broke off and took him with it. Tenzing's quick thinking and quick work with a rope saved Ed from disaster. Afterwards Ed said: "Without Tenzing I would have been finished today."

Ed and Tenzing continued to be friends for the rest of their lives.

### Photos 4–6: Nepalese involvement in the 1953 expedition

Ed and Tenzing were part of a British-led team of 12. There were several strong climbers among the team who could have been chosen to make the final summit attempt.

The expedition team also had a huge amount of support from Nepali climbers and local people as well. There were about 28 Nepali high-altitude porters who carried very heavy loads to high up on the mountain, including the high altitude camps. A further 600 Nepali porters carried loads for several weeks across the region into the climbing area. It was truly a team effort.

The hard-work, strength and cheerful attitude of the Nepali porters, many of whom were carrying more than 30kgs on their backs, made a strong impression on Ed.

### Photo 7: The summit photo

Ed took the famous photo of Tenzing on the summit. Why isn't there a photo of Ed on the top of Everest? Aside from the fact that would have been keen to descend and not waste more oxygen than absolutely necessary, Tenzing said he had never used a camera before – and he didn't think standing at the top of Everest was a good place to learn. For Ed, the photograph was proof enough that the team expedition to reach the summit of Everest had been successful.

### Photos 8–9: Hillary returns

As soon as the news was out that Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay had reached the summit of Everest, Ed was famous. Overnight, this beekeeper from New Zealand, became one of the most famous people in the world.

Today, with modern technology, someone on the summit of Everest can make a phone call to loved ones on the other side of the world to tell them about a successful climb. But in 1953, a runner carried the message by hand across the rugged mountains all the way back to Kathmandu.

The news that Everest had been conquered reached the world at the same time as the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in England on June 2, 1953. Queen Elizabeth II came up with the idea of linking the two special events together. The climbers were awarded Coronation medals.

### Videos

Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climb Everest [www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4egTHmDYho](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4egTHmDYho)

Hillary returns (watch 0.00 to 1.39 min) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7FC9L56nmU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7FC9L56nmU)

Hillary & Tenzing: Climbing to the Roof of World [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKGwju907KQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKGwju907KQ)

## TOPIC 4: ARE WE THERE YETI

A lifetime of adventure was just beginning for Ed. A few years after climbing Everest, Ed went on a trip to drive tractors to the South Pole.

Then in 1960, Ed returned to the Everest region to lead an expedition with two very different goals:

- to carry out research into what happens to the human body at high altitude, and
- to search for legendary Yeti or Abominable Snowman that is believed to live in the Himalayan Mountains.

In 1951, a British explorer named Eric Shipton looking for an alternative route up Mt. Everest found a huge footprint in the snow. He took a photo, and the mystery of the Yeti—a Sherpa word for “wild man”— cast a spell over the world.

Shipton was one of the most highly respected Everest explorers, so nobody questioned the legitimacy of photo – there was no cry of hoax as there might be today.

British mountaineer Tom Bourdillon (who also took part in the 1953 expedition) during an expedition on Everest wrote in a letter home in which he stated: “The Abominable Snowman is not a myth.”

Watch the Nat Geo YouTube clip on early Yeti sightings: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZnAo\\_2cpYY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZnAo_2cpYY)

### ED AND THE YETI

Ed had heard stories about the Yeti – a half-man, half-ape creature – from his Sherpa friends. He’d also come across large footprints and was fascinated by the idea of a large, wild creature left behind by evolution existing in the remote mountains. In 1960, Ed persuaded an American encyclopaedia company to sponsor an expedition in search of the Yeti and to provide funding for the research on the impact of high altitude on the body.

On the Yeti hunt, Ed explored the high mountain valleys of the Himalayas, examined suspicious-looking large footprint tracks and looked at unusual skins and furs thought to be from the Yeti. They even took what was believed to be a Yeti skin and a scalp to America, France and England for further investigation. Scientists examined the scalp and decided it had been shaped from the skin of a Himalayan serow, a goat-antelope that is native to the eastern Himalayas. What was thought to be a Yeti skin was in fact skin from a Tibetan blue bear.

Though Ed failed to find a Yeti and ended up believing that they were very probably mythical, the legend of the Yeti continues to live on to this day.

### MORE NEWS STORIES ON THE YETI

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/05/28/does-the-yeti-exist-scientists-use-dna-evidence-in-bid-to-solve/>

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/08/yeti-abominable-snowman-bear-daniel-taylor/>

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/science/99571219/dna-analysis-solves-yeti-mystery-theyre-bears>

<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2016/jun/01/the-documentary-that-will-prove-the-yeti-exists-almost-certainly>

### A NEW ADVENTURE

This 1960 expedition launched the beginning of Ed’s greatest adventure – building of schools and hospitals for the people of Everest as a way of giving back to the people of Nepal.

Despite their friendly, kind and hard-working nature, the people of the Himalayas had very little to make their lives easier. They lived in houses made of mud and wood with no electricity, heating or

running water. They ate a limited diet of yak meat, milk and butter with potatoes and barley. They worked as farmers growing potatoes or other crops, or herded yak. The strongest few might find work as porters for mountaineering expeditions, though these opportunities were very limited at the time. As Dawa says in her story, as a young girl it was her job to find sticks for fuel.

During the 1960 expedition, sitting around the campfire one evening, Ed asked his Sherpa friend: “If there was anything I could do for the Sherpa people, what do you think that would be?” His friend said: “Our children have eyes but they cannot see. We would like you to open their eyes by building a school in our village.”

Ed agreed. With an education, the children and young people in the mountainous region would have more opportunities in the world. People would be able to manage their lives better, improve their farms, and learn to provide good healthcare.

Ed secured funding and support from New Zealand, America and India. Then with the help of his Sherpa friends, he set about building a school in the village of Khumjung – the first school in the region.

## TOPIC 5 BURRA SAHIB

Ed then went on to build 26 more schools in the area. He also built two hospitals, 13 health clinics, several bridges, an airport, and installed water pipes in a many villages. The people of Everest referred to Ed as the *Burra Sahib*, which means the great man. Ed continued to visit his projects in Nepal every year up till the year of his death in 2008.

### LUKLA AIRPORT

To make transport of building materials easier, Ed decided to build an airstrip, not an easy proposition in a mountain landscape. The site finally chosen was beside the tiny village of Lukla.

In 1964 shovels were all they had for earth-moving, but with a team of more than 100 people on the job for two solid weeks the airfield began to take shape. A huge piece of timber was dragged back and forth up and down the field compacting and levelling the ground. Then two days of vigorous Sherpa partying and dancing further compacted the earth.

What was once a tiny airstrip is now known as the Lukla Hillary-Tenzing airport – the second busiest airport in Nepal after the capital Kathmandu.

### HOSPITALS

In 1966 Ed fulfilled another ambition when he built a small hospital at Khunde and staffed it with New Zealand and Canadian volunteer doctors.

A landmark achievement at Khunde Hospital came in 2002 when a local man Kami Temba qualified as a doctor and became the Doctor-in-Charge at the hospital. Dr Kami began his education at the school built by Ed in the small, remote village of Thame. Today the Khunde Hospital is fully staffed by Nepali medics.

Meet Dr Kami <http://himalayantrust.org/scholarships/meet-dr-kami-temba/>

The building of Phaplu Hospital followed in 1975. Tragically, Ed’s beloved wife Louise and younger daughter Belinda were killed in a plane crash the same year as they were flying in to be with Ed for the building project. Louise had been a huge driving force behind the fundraising for the schools and hospitals as well.

## TOPIC 6: LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS

### PEMBA'S PHOTO STORY

Pemba's family moved to Lukla village after the 2015 earthquakes after their previous home was destroyed.

The house is a typical small family home, with an open fire for cooking in the living space. Cooking on an open fire indoors does produce indoor pollution that can cause health problems such as lung disease and pneumonia. The government has launched initiatives to try to cut down on the use of indoor fires, but the alternatives are costly and out of the reach of many households.

There is one large room for cooking, playing, living, and eating. Perhaps students will notice there's no TV - no screens! Pemba's mother also works in this room weaving baskets.

The only other room is a small bedroom for the parents. Families in the region believe that living in one room together helps build and maintain close family relationships.

### FURTHER NOTES FOR THE WORKSHEET

**Photo 2: What do you think this area of Pemba's home is used for? Why do you think Pemba and her brother are playing here?**

This is the open fire for cooking and heating the home. The open fire is usually the only source of heating so this will be the warmest part of the house.

**Photo 3: What is Pemba's mum doing? What else can you see in the room?**

Pemba's home is typical for this region with one large room for cooking, playing, living, eating and sleeping. Pemba's parents have a separate bedroom, but many families will all sleep in one room. Pemba and her siblings all sleep together in this room. Pemba's mum is weaving baskets to sell at the market.

**Photo 6: What do you think Pemba's sister is doing in this photo?**

Pemba's 15-year old sister helps collect water in the morning. In 2014, the Himalayan Trust helped Lukla village install a water system that supplies most homes in Lukla. This home doesn't have the water supply to the house but there is a tap nearby that the family can use to collect safe water. Many families in other villages aren't so lucky and need to walk several kilometres to the nearest water source, which is often not reliable or clean.

**Photo 9 and 10: Pemba is walking to school - do you think she could travel by car or by bus?**

There are no roads in the area just cobbled and dirt tracks, so people must travel on foot. Goods must also be carried either on foot by a porter or by yaks or mules.

**Photo 11: Why do you think they are having assembly outside?**

The schools are usually a cluster of small classroom buildings. It is unusual for a school in the region to have an assembly hall or a room big enough for the whole school to fit into.

## TOPIC 7: SCHOOL HOUSE IN THE CLOUDS

There are no major roads in the mountains as it's too steep, so all children have no choice but to walk – often for an hour or more each way. For children who live too far from school, there is an option to stay at a hostel, if the school has one. There is a case study in this topic about Pasang, a boy who stays at a hostel.

There are also a series of photos in this section about play time at school, including soccer, volleyball and table tennis. Most children in the region will not have access to a TV, tablet, computer or phone – no screen time!

In Pasang's case study he mentions he wants to be a helicopter pilot and Pemba wants to be a teacher. These are two visible employment opportunities for children in the region. Helicopters are used widely in the region for transporting goods and tourists.

Other typical jobs in the region include construction, carpentry, farming and portering, as well as jobs in the tourist industry such as mountain guides or working in the lodges and restaurants.

Working as a high altitude porter or mountain guide is dangerous work but comparatively well paid.

Very few schools have computers and most won't have any internet access. Some of the main villages along the main Everest trekking route now have limited internet coverage.

## TOPIC 8: WHAT MAKES A HERO?

### EXTRA ACTIVITY: KHATA

A khata is a ceremonial scarf. The khata is usually white, though it's quite common to find yellow-gold khata as well. The khata originated in Tibetan culture and the practice of presenting the khata to guests at ceremonial occasions is common throughout the Everest region of Nepal. When presenting a khata, you place it directly around the receiver's neck.

For more information see: <https://stbcportland.wordpress.com/dharma-etiquette/how-to-offer-a-khata/>

## TOPIC 9: DO SOMETHING

### EXTRA ACTIVITY: PRAYER FLAGS

Prayer flags are hung across high places such as mountain passes. Prayers or mantras are printed on the flags. These prayers will be blown by the wind to spread the good will and compassion into all the space around. People believe that placing prayer flags brings luck, happiness and a long life to all around.

Traditionally, prayer flags come in sets of five: one in each of five colours. The five colours are arranged from left to right in a specific order: blue, white, red, green, and yellow. The five colours represent the five elements. Blue symbolises the sky and space, white symbolises the air and wind, red symbolises fire, green symbolises water, and yellow symbolises earth. It is believed that health and harmony are produced through the balance of the five elements.

The best time to put up new prayer flags is in the morning on sunny, windy days.

It is believed that when raising prayer flags it is important to have a good motivation – and no selfish thoughts. When hanging prayer flags you should wish that all beings everywhere will benefit and find happiness.

To make prayer flags see <http://www.bodhikids.org/prayer-flag-activity/> or <http://thepeaceflagproject.org/workshops/how-to-make-peace-flags/>

## TOPIC 10: THE SUMMIT CHALLENGE

Talk to your students about ideas for a teamwork challenge that will help others at the same time. The challenge you decide on should be about demonstrating effort rather than winning. Ask students to think about: “How can I challenge myself and help others like Ed did.”

Students could volunteer their time, or write a petition, or take on a challenge to raise funds for the Himalayan Trust’s work in Nepal or a local charity that’s of interest to the students.

If students would like to fundraise for the Himalayan Trust you can find a list of fundraising activity ideas on our website.

### 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SUMMIT OF EVEREST

The 65th anniversary of Ed Hillary and Tenzing Norgay’s historic ascent of Mt Everest falls on May 29, 2018. We would love to encourage schools to consider doing their School’s Summit Challenge around this time to help celebrate this special anniversary.

There will also be a **Himalayan Trust Summit Challenge**, which is open to everyone, taking place all around the country in May 2018. The challenge is to ascend the height of Everest (8848m) during the month of May, either by running, walking, cycling or climbing. However, to make the challenge as inclusive as possible, participants may adapt the concept and find alternative ways to do “8848 for Nepal” – swimming 8848m, climbing 8848 steps, running 8848m, or even baking 8848 cupcakes to sell during the month!

### LET US KNOW

Before you start your challenge, let us know at [info@himalayantrust.org](mailto:info@himalayantrust.org) what you and your students have decided to do so we can share it online and celebrate the difference that schools across New Zealand are making thanks to Sir Edmund Hillary’s inspiration!

