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To Robert, for his technical, intellectual and emotional support

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Unit 2: Directed writing

In this unit, we prepare for directed writing by considering audience and style; we focus on diary and letter-writing tasks.

- 1 Discuss the following questions with your partner:
 - a How would you define 'extreme sports'?
 - b What examples can you think of?
 - c What are the dangers associated with them?
 - d What makes them attractive?
- 2 Read the following article. It is a newspaper review of a non-fiction book about an Arctic tragedy.

The big chill

Arctic explorers are a breed apart, ineluctably drawn, it would seem, by tragedy and the poetry of a 'good end'. Consider Shackleton. Having narrowly survived the loss of his ship, the *Endurance*, when it was crushed by ice in the Weddell Sea, he later died aboard the *Quest*, another Antarctic no-hoper, in 1922. Scott, of course, perished just a few miles from his base camp, having failed by a whisker to reach the South Pole. Amundsen, who beat his rival by just a couple of days, went on to die in an Arctic air crash.

Good chaps, each and every one of them. But what was it all about? In *The Ice Master*, an appropriately chilling account of the voyage of the *Karluk*, lead-ship of a doomed Arctic expedition in 1913–14, the motivation of those taking part seems to have been foolhardy at best. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, a Canadian of Nordic extraction, was an anthropologist and ethnologist who, for reasons best known to himself, believed that under the Arctic ice there lay a Lost Continent, a kind of wintry Atlantis, the discovery of which would make him famous. In reality, of course, there is no missing landmass; the Arctic Ocean is just what its name implies. But to the impatient Stefansson, the fact that there was, literally, no solid ground for his belief was defeatist talk.

Hiring a steely skipper, Captain Bob Bartlett, Stefansson ordered the *Karluk* to sea from Victoria in British Columbia on June 17, 1913. Few of his men had real Arctic experience. The 'scientists' on board knew very little of the trials ahead. The ship itself was a retired whaler, made of wood, staggeringly unsuited to its new purpose.

The crew, it transpires, had an eerie premonition of their fate. Stuck fast in the Alaskan flocs, they were 'transfixed' by the diaries of George Washington De Long, another of their breed, who had died, along with all his men, in 1881. De Long's ship, the *Jeanette*, had been crushed by ice in almost exactly the same reach of the Arctic ocean as the *Karluk*. One hundred and forty days passed before cold and starvation claimed the last of the expedition's victims.

Jennifer Niven, formerly a screenwriter, assembles her characters with all the skill of an experienced novelist. Both of the principals are carefully drawn. There is Bartlett, an energetic, skilful mariner, big in every way, with a booming voice and a love for literature and women. Stefansson, by contrast, comes across as an egotist of monstrous proportions. Charming, silver-tongued and handsome, he cared little for those under his command.

Locked together on the diminutive ship, the crew of the *Karluk*, watched and listened in horror as the frozen sea closed in around them. The staff and officers gathered nightly

in the saloon for Victrola concerts, choosing from among more than 200 records. As the gloom grew ever deeper, the lure of the library, with its terrible account of the fate of the *Jeanette*, increased by day.

Stefansson cracked first. Loading up a dog-sledge, he and several others headed off into the night, ostensibly to hunt for food. Others would go to pieces later. Matters came to a head on January 10 when, with a thunderous roar, the ice broke through the ship's hull, forcing the captain to give the order to abandon ship.

In all, 16 men were to die, but Bartlett emerged as the true hero of the hour. Niven's account – always alive to the nuances of human strength as well as weakness – is at its strongest as she recounts his ghastly journey through the Arctic winter in search of help, and his equally determined quest for his lost crewmen when he at last found sanctuary in Siberia. Those who survived long enough for him to find them numbered a lucky 13, including two Eskimo girls and McKinlay, who ever after regarded his captain as 'honest, fearless, reliable, loyal, everything a man should be'.

Stefansson, needless to say, survived as well. Having spectacularly betrayed his comrades, he went on to map and discover several Arctic islands. Collecting a medal for his achievements, he made no mention of the *Karluk*, its crew or the men who were lost.

Source: Adapted from *The Sunday Times*, 19 November 2000

- 3 With your partner, answer the following questions:
- Why are book reviews published in newspapers?
 - Who do you think writes them and why?
 - Who do you think reads them and why?
 - Who benefits from the review and how?
 - Who would be interested in reading *The Ice Master*?
- 4 Publishers promote their new books by printing **blurbs** (brief descriptions) on their back covers. Write a blurb for *The Ice Master*, using three short paragraphs. Think about persuasive language and how to appeal to the intended audience.
- Refer to the background of the expedition and its participants.
 - Describe the crisis situation the book deals with.
 - Refer to specific incidents which make the book sound exciting.

▼ **Exam tip!**

Some reading and directed writing questions ask you to respond to two passages by writing a piece of about 250–300 words in a particular style, using the information in the texts. You will be assessed on your ability to ‘use and develop given information in another form.’ You may add, and will be rewarded for, ideas of your own, if they can be inferred from the texts and are relevant to the task.

- 5 Highlight all dates and time references in the article. Then list the events in **chronological** order (the order in which they occurred), together with their date or duration, in a grid as shown below. This will give you a sense of the overall time scheme, which will help you later. An example has been done for you.

Event	Time
<i>Jeanette crushed</i>	<i>1881</i>

- 6 Read the extracts from the diary opposite of the Antarctic explorer Robert Falcon Scott (who is mentioned in the article in Exercise 2). On 16 January 1912, he found that the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen had beaten him to the South Pole.
- 7 With your partner, list the common characteristics of the style of writing used in diaries (also remember the diary extract in Exercise 16 of Unit 1). Diaries are obviously written in the first person – using *I* or *we* – but what can you say about the following?
- tense
 - tone
 - vocabulary level
 - sentence length/type
 - content

Scott's Diary

- 17th Jan: Great God! This is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority. Well, it is something to have got here, and the wind may be our friend tomorrow.
- 18th Jan: Well, we have turned our back now on the goal of our ambition with sore feelings and must face 800 miles of solid dragging – and goodbye to the daydreams!
- 23rd Jan: I don't like the look of it. Is the weather breaking up? If so God help us, with the tremendous summit journey and scant food.
- 18th Feb: Pray God we get better travelling as we are not so fit as we were and the season advances apace.
- 5th Mar: God help us, we can't keep up this pulling, that is certain. Among ourselves we are unendingly cheerful, but what each man feels in his heart I can only guess.
- 29th Mar: It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more. R. Scott. For God's sake look after our people.

- 8 Imagine you are Captain Bob Bartlett, mentioned in the article in Exercise 2. Write three diary entries, with dates, for the period from the beginning of January 1914 to when you decide to set off in search of help after abandoning ship.

Use the time grid from Exercise 5 to help you. Do not simply retell the story. Write about 250 words, in an appropriate style, and refer to the following:

- previous events and the original goal of the expedition
- Stefansson's character and behaviour
- the mood of the crew and their fears
- how the crew passed the time
- what happened to the *Karluk*
- the journey you are about to face
- your thoughts and feelings about the future

▼ Exam tip!

'Directed writing' means writing to the purpose and audience appropriate to the task which has been set. Consider the **register** (level of formality) and style (general expression) required, and adapt your wording rather than simply give a list of points from the text. You will be rewarded for original language.

- 9 The next passage concerns mountaineering. Discuss these questions with your partner:
- a How do you feel about mountains?
 - b What makes some people determined to get to the top of them?
 - c What can go wrong during a climbing expedition?
 - d What do you think the title 'A rock and a hard place' means?



- 10 Read the article below, from a Sunday newspaper magazine, which describes the death of a mountain climber.

▼ *Exam tip!*

When paired passages are given in the Reading and Directed Writing paper, one passage is likely to be non-fiction and the other to be more literary, more personal or more like narrative.

A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Alison Hargreaves faced the toughest decision of her career. It was August 6: she had spent six weeks on K2 and had already failed in two summit bids. Now, should she stay and give it one more try? Or call it a day and go home?

The situation was bleak as could be. Alison was back at base camp, its cluster of red and yellow tents pitched unevenly among the ice and boulders of the Godwin-Austen Glacier. Towering 12,000 ft above was K2 itself, shrouded in grey, wind-tossed clouds. It was bitterly cold and raining and, says the American climber Richard Celsi, Alison was in tears.

By Celsi's account, Alison had changed her mind a dozen times. Now she was utterly torn. She wanted to fulfil her dream of climbing K2, adding it to Everest to become the only British woman to have reached the world's two highest summits. And she desperately wanted to be back with her children, Tom, six, and Kate, four.

The previous night she seemed to have made up her mind to leave. She had packed her equipment and said goodbye to the climbers who were staying. Her porters were due to leave at 7 am and Alison had a flight booked from Islamabad in a week's time. 'It was done,' says Celsi. 'She was going home.'

But early that morning, Alison reopened the question once again, drinking endless cups of coffee with Celsi as she turned it over and over in her mind. 'It was a very emotional thing for her,' says Celsi. 'She really went through a lot of things.' Finally, just 15 minutes before the porters were due to depart, she told Celsi she had decided to

stay, reasoning that since she had been away for so long, one more week wouldn't matter. 'She said it was logical to give the weather a chance to clear.'

Alison hugged Celsi and thanked him profusely for his help. In some haste, her equipment was retrieved. Celsi himself was leaving, and Alison gave him some letters and a fax saying she had decided to give K2 'one more try'.

As he set off down the glacier, Celsi turned to look back at Alison, and saw her waving to him through the drifting rain. 'She seemed in good spirits,' he recalls. 'She had made her decision.'

Four days later Alison and a group of climbers left base camp for their summit bid. By August 12, they had reached Camp Four on a sloping snowfield known as the Shoulder, 2000 ft below the summit. They set off before dawn the next morning, climbing a steep gully called the Bottleneck, passing beneath an unstable wall of ice pinnacles and finally emerging on the summit ridge.

At 6.30 pm the climbers in base camp received a radio call from the summit. Alison and three others had reached the top, and another two were about to arrive. The caller, a Spanish climber, added that there was no wind but it was bitterly cold, and they were about to start their descent. There was no further word.

An hour later the upper reaches of K2 were hit by hurricane-force winds. As they edged their way back down the summit ridge, Alison and her companions stood no chance. She was plucked from the ridge by the wind and hurled down K2's monumental South Face.

The next morning two Spanish climbers, Pepe Garces and Lorenzo Ortas, who had survived the storm at Camp Four, were descending the mountain suffering from frostbite and exhaustion. Some 3000 ft below the summit they found a blood-stained anorak lying in the snow. They also saw three slide-marks leading towards the edge of an ice cliff. But above the cliff, some 600 ft away, they saw a body resting in a hollow. 'I recognised the red clothing,' Ortas says. 'I knew it was Alison.'

* * * * *

At 33, after a mercurial climbing career, Alison had become an icon – a symbol of what women could achieve. For some her death represented a betrayal of motherhood, for others a paradigm of the dilemmas faced by mothers seeking a career.

Alison had been bemused by the publicity her Everest climb attracted, saying: 'The whole thing is much bigger than I can handle.' But she was worthy of her acclaim. Her Everest ascent in May – alone and without using supplementary oxygen

or porters – was a supreme moment of the sport. Just 5 ft 4 in and with an easy smile, she impressed people with her friendliness, modesty and charm. Some, accustomed to the ruthless egos of some leading male mountaineers, were relieved to find her so *normal*.

Yet Alison was far more complex than her image revealed. The climber who exulted in her triumph on Everest could be racked with doubt. She could be talkative and outgoing – or reticent and closed. She was eager to show that she was self-sufficient, yet ardent for approval and acclaim. And while her motherhood attained symbolic status, her marriage was deeply troubled.

The most profound contradiction lay in her replies when asked the perennial question of why she climbed. She said she did so because she had something to prove – then added that after each summit, she felt she had to prove herself again. So what was Alison trying to prove, and why was she never satisfied? And is it true that her ceaseless quest led inevitably to a reckless death?


Source: *The Sunday Times*, 3 December 1995

- 11 With your partner, work on the following tasks:
 - a Think of and list adjectives which describe the character of Alison Hargreaves.
 - b Agree on and list the characteristics of the writing style commonly used for informal letters.
- 12 Write Alison Hargreaves' last letter home, in an appropriate style, using about 250 words. Begin *Dear Mum and Dad...* Refer to the following:
 - her difficult decision and how she made it
 - conditions on K2
 - her ambitions and expectations
 - her fellow climbers
 - her feelings about her family
- 13 What do the experiences of the crew of the *Karluk* have in common with those of the K2 climbers? List the points you would use in responding to this question, after you have underlined the key words in the question.

▼ *Exam tip!*

You must understand exactly what a task requires, and cover all the material needed for a question with more than one part. It's a good habit to underline the important words in an exam question and to check that you have followed the instructions exactly. For instance, a word like *what*, which is different from *why* or *how*, gives focus to summary, directed writing and continuous writing responses.

- 14 Read the leaflet, which gives information about a youth programme. It is called 'The Duke of Edinburgh's Award' in the United Kingdom and 'The Award' internationally.



What is it?

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a voluntary, non-competitive programme of practical, cultural and adventurous activities, designed to support the personal and social development of young people aged 14–25, regardless of gender, background or ability. It offers an individual challenge and encourages young people to undertake exciting, constructive, challenging and enjoyable activities in their free time.

What does the Programme consist of?

It is a four Section programme with three progressive levels:

- **Bronze** (for those aged 14 and over)
- **Silver** (for those aged 15 and over) and
- **Gold** (for those aged 16 and over)

The Sections involve:

- **Service** Helping other people in the local community.
- **Expeditions** Training for, planning and completing a journey on foot or horseback, by boat or cycle
- **Skills** Covering almost any hobby, skill or interest
- **Physical Recreation** Sport, dance and fitness
- **Residential Project (Gold Award only)** A purposeful enterprise with people not previously known to the Participant

What are the benefits of involvement?

The award is widely recognised by educationalists and employers. Some of the benefits to young people include developing or discovering:

- A sense of achievement
- New skills and interests
- Self-confidence and self-reliance
- Leadership skills and abilities
- Exciting opportunities
- Friendship
- Experience of teamwork and decision making
- A network of local, national and international connections
- Enjoyment

- 15 Select the relevant material in the text, then use it to write the script for a talk of about 300 words addressed to a group of fellow students, explaining The Award programme and encouraging them to take part.
- Summarise the rules and structure of the programme.
 - Explain the aims and what is involved.
 - Comment on the benefits and give examples.

- 16 Give your talk to the class, and be prepared to answer any questions your audience asks about the programme.
- 17 With your partner, look back at the list of extreme sports which you made in Exercise 1b. Can you now add some more? Discuss which ones you would or would not be prepared to try, giving reasons.
- 18 Read the advertisement for a training course in hang-gliding.

Discover Hang-gliding at Lookout Mountain



Try Hang-gliding Once for memories that last a lifetime! Soar like an eagle in this purest form of flight! In-flight photos available. Fly with a professional certified instructor pilot by your side for a bird's eye view of beautiful Lookout Mountain. This flight is to 2,000 feet. 12 to 20 minutes of flying time. Satisfaction guaranteed and we mean it!

Pilots enjoy consistently good flying and training at Lookout. An easy cliff launch and 20 miles of ridge provide great soaring for low-time pilots. No other flight park can match our people, facilities, diversity, dedication and history of excellence. Our complete desire to help you realize your flying dreams and hang-gliding goals.

Lookout Mountain Flight Park is the largest and most successful full-time hang-gliding school and resort in the United States. We teach and certify more hang-glider pilots than any other school in the country. We offer the most comprehensive training facility on a 44-acre mountain retreat with camping and lodging conveniently located in our landing zone. Other amenities include swimming pool, volleyball court, clubhouse, bathhouse, bunkhouse, cabins and shaded pavilions. We've been teaching people to fly on our gently sloping training hills since 1978. Lookout Mountain Flight Park is America's #1 choice.

Discovery Tandem Flight \$129 Weekend Package \$399

Source: <http://www.hangglide.com>

- 19 Write a 250-word informal or e-mail letter to a friend suggesting that you both go on the training course. (Pretend it is in your own country.)
 - Give all the factual information.
 - Describe your impression of the school.
 - Give reasons why you think it would be a good idea.

Informal letters or e-mails tend to use contractions, abbreviations and phonetic spelling (e.g. *can't*, *uni*, *cos*) and colloquial expressions (e.g. *no way*, *go clubbing*) as if the writer is speaking aloud to the reader, with whom s/he has a casual relationship.

- 20 Formal letters have the following format, which you would use when writing for official or business purposes to someone whom you have probably never met. If you are asked to write a letter in the exam, you will probably not be required to give your address, the reader's address or the date.

Dear Madam/Sir (or the official position)

OR

Dear Mr/Ms Surname (if you know his/her name)

Section 1: Reason for writing/topic of letter

Section 2: Details of request, complaint, issue, background

Section 3: Conclusion, threat, thanks, prediction, advice

Yours faithfully (if you have not addressed the reader by name)

OR

Yours sincerely (if you have addressed the reader by name)

Example of letter text

I am writing to you because of an incident which I witnessed recently in one of your stores, which made me feel angry and embarrassed.

Last Saturday afternoon I was with my family in your Buenos Aires branch, shopping for toys. An elderly man, who was alone, collapsed on the floor, and a nearby customer asked for an ambulance to be called. The member of staff at the pay counter said he was too busy, suggesting that the customer should use her mobile phone instead. Although the store was very busy that day, I do not believe this was an acceptable response from the member of staff, and my children and some foreign tourists were shocked by the lack of concern which it revealed.

Unless such behaviour is your company policy, it seems that there is a need for your employees to be better trained in customer service, as this kind of incident damages your reputation with the public.

Formal letters differ from informal letters in register and in having a structure. They usually aim to persuade or argue. One paragraph per section is common, but the middle section can extend over two or three paragraphs. The tone of a formal letter is impersonal and polite, and the language is formal, without contractions, abbreviations or colloquialisms. The sentences are likely to be complex.

- 21 Write a letter of about 250 words to the editor of a local newspaper, giving your views on extreme sports after a recent tragic incident in your area. You may argue either that extreme sports should be allowed or that they should be banned.

Use the ideas which you collected in Exercise 1. Refer to the recent incident in your opening paragraph.

- 22 In small groups, exchange and read each other's letters as preparation for a class discussion on the topic of *Extreme Sports*.

Further practice

- a Describe, as if in an informal letter, a sport of which you are fond, either as a spectator or participant, to someone who knows nothing about it. Include a brief explanation of the rules.
- b Imagine that you and your friend went on the hang-gliding training course and were not satisfied. Write a letter of complaint to the company and ask for your money back. Include references to the advertisement.
- c Imagine that you are on a Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition which has met with unforeseen difficulties. Write a half-page diary entry describing your location, situation, thoughts and feelings.