



GCSE

C700U20-1A



A23-C700U20-1A



THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2023 – MORNING

ENGLISH LANGUAGE – Component 2
19th and 21st Century Non-Fiction Reading
and Transactional/Persuasive Writing

RESOURCE MATERIAL FOR USE WITH SECTION A

The schoolboy who conquered the Matterhorn

Tom McNally reports on the remarkable achievement of 11-year-old Jules Molyneaux, the youngest person to climb the Matterhorn.

Most 11-year-old boys would be happy to use their free time with a game of football or a trip to the local park with friends. But schoolboy adventurer Jules Molyneaux set his sights much higher – by becoming the youngest person to scale the 14,692 feet Matterhorn – one of the world’s toughest mountain challenges and Europe’s sixth highest peak. It is part of the Alps, a mountain range straddling the border between Switzerland and Italy.



Jules began to dream about scaling the Matterhorn after studying the mountain’s history for a school project. He explained, “I felt magnetised to it, to its shape, like a great big shark’s tooth. And then I thought, what if I climbed it?”

Jules’ father, Chris, thought his son was joking when he suggested it. “I didn’t take him seriously to start with. The Matterhorn is one of the most challenging and dangerous mountains to climb. Jules was already a proficient climber, but I knew to do this he would

have to take things to another level. He willingly agreed to follow a rigorous schedule I planned for him that worked on his endurance and technical skills. The more technically capable and the fitter he got, the more it began to seem possible.”

Normally you have to be 16 to apply to do the climb, so to prove to local guides that he was ready, Jules had to complete and pass several challenging technical and endurance tests on neighbouring mountains before they allowed him to tackle the potentially deadly climb. “The aim was to really test Jules’s skills,” his father said, “There were some tough sections of the practice climbs but he was just totally focused and fine.”

Climbers tackling the Matterhorn set out early, often at 4am, moving quickly so they can reach the summit before the sun starts to melt the snow on the mountain’s top section, making it prone to dangerous avalanches.

“I only got four hours of sleep the night before, so I felt exhausted when we began,” Jules said. “To distract myself from the tiredness and the pain in my legs and arms I kept singing Eminem’s *Lose Yourself* to myself.”



Jules, his father and their two Swiss guides reached the summit after five gruelling hours of solid climbing with barely a break. His father said, “We were determined to keep a fast pace and there was total focus and no banter – and I just felt relief when we got to the top safely.”

Jules said, “The wind is rushing round you and it really does feel like being on top of the world. You can see for miles and miles around.”

The group began their journey down almost immediately. “We just had time to take a couple of pictures before we had to think about getting down safely,” Jules said. “The descent is often the most dangerous part of a climb because the legs start to feel like jelly. There are a lot of ledges that are only a foot wide. It’s like standing on a knife edge and you have to really concentrate every second where you are putting each foot and hand.”

After reaching base camp at 1pm Jules said, “I felt a bit nervous at times but I knew you just have to keep focusing, one step after the other. Lose concentration and you slip and fall.”

Although there are no official records, Jules was congratulated as the youngest person to climb the mountain by the staff at the Matterhorn Museum in Zermatt, Switzerland, a feat described by one mountaineer as “an amazing achievement”. Despite breaking the record, Jules is taking his climbing success in his stride. He said, “It’s not about being the youngest ever to climb the Matterhorn. It was about doing it with Dad and having as much fun as possible.”