The Man Who Bought a Mountain

"Everyone: stick together, look out for each other and stay on the trail, please. The path is really rocky and steep. It's mostly uphill from here – but I suppose you'd all guessed that! As the elders say, the longest journey begins with a single step."

Yash finished his speech and smiled at the weather-beaten faces looking back at him. He had spoken loudly and clearly to the group of nine men and women, most of whom shuffled from foot to foot, adjusting huge rucksacks as they listened.

"Jeez! How old is this kid, eleven?" muttered one man towards the back.

"Actually, I'm twelve." Yash gritted his teeth.

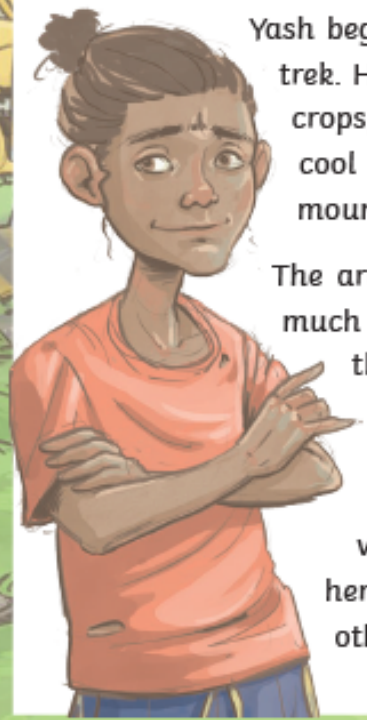
Twelve years living at the base of this mountain, he thought to himself, *compared with the twelve hours since you got off the plane.*

A wise voice then echoed in his head.

Always be welcoming to friends but be even more welcoming to visitors.

He forced another smile and then fastened his rarely brushed brown hair into a messy knot with a plain elasticated band which he took from his wrist.

"Right, follow me. It's a few hours to the base camp. The Jagurdwa mountain is home to thousands of different species of animals and plants..."



Yash began his ritual of information and storytelling as he led the trek. He weaved his familiar route through the fields of amaranth crops, up a steep slope and past the Spring of Hope, where clear, cool ground water pooled gently before tumbling down the mountain rocks.

The area around the Spring of Hope always reminded him how much new life came from even the tiniest nooks and crannies on the vast Jagurdwa mountain. Cracks and crevices along the side of the steep path were home to beetles and spiders and, behind the cascading waterfall, a damp, shallow cave served as a perfect hiding place for other small creatures who preferred the darkness. The river that cascaded from here with its streams and pools provided homes for fish and other creatures, and food for people.

Some visitors squealed or jumped in fright at the sight of the many animal species living on its slopes, but Yash loved to see them and took pleasure in trying to identify one set of distinguishing features from another. He knew that some animals lived only in this mountain region and nowhere else.

The group wound their way along the rocky track which led to the path of yaks. Yash's scratched and faded boots glided deftly over each section of the rough ground. He gripped a finely crafted stick with his right hand, made by his grandfather. The tip of it reached shoulder height and he planted it into the ground with every alternate footstep. Yash knew this – and every – path up the mountain like the back of his hand, and he adored every inch of the familiar landscape.

Behind him trudged the group, each kitted out with walking boots and hats and weighed down with their heavy bags. Sometimes, the groups were chatty and asked lots of questions; sometimes, they marched silently as though they had been sent as a punishment. Thankfully, this lot seemed like a fairly interesting bunch.

Several hours and two short stops later, he had delivered most of his repertoire.

"Some people believe that the mountains were created by the gods. They point to the skies, see?" Yash extended an arm up towards the nearby peaks that were visible around them as they climbed. "Lots of our people believe that they are sacred and a way for us to get closer to the gods."

With that, he showed a final flourish of energy, dashing to greet his uncle, Ranj, as they arrived at their destination. At eye level, the sight was little more than a colourful array of dome-shaped tents pitched on some flat, rocky ground. It looked like alien pods had landed on a moonscape. Above was the most breathtaking view – the one which always drew gasps from the visitors when they first rounded the corner approaching base camp. All around, jagged mountain peaks pointed skyward, stretching their cold fingers towards the clouds. Straight ahead, the highest tip of the Jagurdwa rose above them all.

"They're all yours," Yash said to his uncle.

"A good group?" he asked, out of earshot.

"Pretty good, Uncle," Yash replied. "Not too fit – but we've seen worse!"

Questions

1. Look at the first paragraph.
   Why do you think that Yash tells the group that the path is rocky and steep?

2. *"Actually, I'm twelve." Yash gritted his teeth.*
   What does this extract tell us about how Yash is feeling?

3. *Always be welcoming to friends but be even more welcoming to visitors.*
   Why is this line written in italics?

4. The text says that Yash '...fastened his rarely brushed brown hair into a messy knot with a plain elasticated band which he took from his wrist.'
   Give two impressions of Yash's character or background that are suggested by this sentence.

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5. Look at the paragraph beginning 'The area around the Spring of Hope...'.
   Give two examples of habitats for living creatures mentioned in this section.

6. Look at the paragraph beginning 'The group wound their way along...'.
   How does this section give the impression that Yash is an expert in guiding the trek? Give evidence to support your answer.

7. Explain what is meant by the phrase 'out of earshot'.

8. What do you think Yash's feelings are about the mountain? Use the text to support your answer.

9. Which of these statements are **Fact** and which are **Opinion**? Tick one for each row.

	Fact	Opinion
The animals on the mountain were fascinating.		
The ground at base camp was rocky and flat.		
There were many tents of different colours.		
The view above them was breathtaking.		

10. Which of these words do you think best describes Yash as a guide? **Circle one.**

    immature confident knowledgeable uncaring

    Explain your answer using evidence from the text.