

BEFORE YOU READ

DISCUSSION A. Look at the photo and read the caption. What kind of physical and personal characteristics might make a person successful at this sport? Discuss with a partner.

PREDICTING B. Read the first paragraph of the reading. What challenges do you think Mira Rai had to overcome in order to become a trail runner? Discuss your ideas with a partner. Then read and check your answers.

SKY RUNNER

- A Growing up in a village in eastern Nepal's Bhojpur Mountains, Mira Rai had dreams that went far beyond the conventional expectations for Nepali women. The eldest daughter of five children, she was expected to fetch water, tend crops and livestock, and help out at home. By age 12, she no longer regularly attended school, and instead hauled heavy bags of rice up and down steep trails—often barefoot—to trade at the market. It was hard work—but great training for a future trail runner.
- "As a girl," Rai recalls, "I would constantly be told to know my place, suppress my voice, and act in a certain manner. For me, breaking free from these traditions itself was a big dream."
- Several years ago, Rai's dream became reality. She was running outside Kathmandu when two male trail runners invited her to enter her first trail race, the Kathmandu West Valley Rim 50K. She had never run 50 kilometers before, had no special gear or training for such a distance, and was also the only woman in the competition. But against all **odds**, she beat everyone—even the men. From there, a community of supporters came together to give her a chance to compete in international trail running competitions.



- D Today, the running world recognizes Rai as a high-elevation trail racing phenomenon. Now she is on a mission to help both women and men of Nepal through sports. Rai believes her work to empower others has just begun. "We have realized that Nepal has tremendous potential to develop competitive athletes," she says.
- E Wasfia Nazreen, a mountain climber from Bangladesh, knows first-hand the impact Rai has had on the young women of Nepal. "For someone who has left school so early and missed the learning we take for granted, Mira has been able to turn back time and set a rare example by being the change herself," she says.
- "It's hard to find good role models¹ for young women in our region, especially one coming from the same **rural** village background as most of the young generation," Nazreen says. Mira is blazing a trail, not just in terms of being able to speak nationally on gender equality, but also by getting young people into running through the new Kathmandu Trail Race Series. "The grit² and joy she embodies **throughout** all her hardships and victories is an inspiration

- G Rai, however, remains **humble**. "I have been able to do the things I did because so many people believed in me and took chances, and I want to give back so others can have a chance just the way I did," she says. "We have a saying in Nepal, 'Khana pugyos, dina pugos,' which means, 'Let there be enough to eat, let there be enough to give.'"
- H Interviewer: Which is more difficult: running a hard, steep trail race or breaking gender stereotypes?

Mira Rai: Running is no issue, but breaking gender **stereotypes** is. For the society we live in, it's difficult for women and men alike because doing anything out of convention means a lot of struggle—especially for women. As women, we are expected to help out with

- **1** A **role model** is someone who is a good example for young people to follow.
- 2 If you show **grit**, you have courage.

➤ Eastern Nepal is home to several different Nepali ethnic groups, many living in isolated villages.

chores at home from childhood and then get married and raise a family, so it becomes a struggle, not **merely** a challenge. You get called a rebel, and for an adventure sport that involves risks, nobody encourages you. "You'll end up breaking your bones!" they'd say. Though the mindset³ seems to be changing, it's still at a snail's **pace** and has a long way to go before women are seen as equivalent to men.

What advice do you have for someone who wants to be a stronger runner like you?

MR: It was a matter of chance and luck that I became a runner. Back in the village we had to walk hours on end—up and down grueling terrain, often barefoot, with a heavy weight on our backs—and this definitely contributed. I started running, I got professional training that taught me techniques, and gradually I became more determined, motivated, and persistent to chase my dreams. However, I've also learned that proper diet, enough rest, confidence, yoga, and mental well-being—as well as having good

support from my mentor Richard Bull and my coach Dhruba Bikram Malla—are just as important as being in shape.

You stopped going to school regularly when you were 12. Do you wish you'd had more school?

MR: I feel that if I'd finished more school, I would have been able to communicate with more confidence and have a better insight into world affairs. In many cases when I first started racing abroad, I couldn't even be a part of conversations because of my poor English skills. I used to just sit there and listen, but I didn't feel uncomfortable being there as everybody was very supportive. However, with media and sponsors, it would've definitely been more helpful had I obtained more education back home. Even today when I try to read newspapers, I fail to understand quite a few words, so I am taking English classes these days, and it's certainly helping.

3 Your **mindset** is your way of thinking.



Running has helped you see the world. What is it like to return to your village now that you have been to Hong Kong, Italy, and other places?

MR: I return once a year during the Dashain, the largest festival of the year, and the people there are living the same sort of lives as I saw when I was a kid. We used to have kerosene lanterns, but now there are bulbs that run on solar power. The village had no access by road back in the day; now there are dirt tracks that connect to big towns. But the mud houses are the same. There's phone connection, but it doesn't work well. When I go back, I meet a lot of youngsters that ask me how they can live differently. They definitely seem motivated, but sadly their folks do not agree with such ambition. While the physical infrastructure in my village has improved, the mindset has not. I remain hopeful that the future generation will break the mold.

What work are you doing now with communities in Nepal?

MR: While recovering from knee surgery, I have been providing guidance to men and

women alike in running and encouraging them to **pursue** a career as professional athletes. Every so often, I visit schools and children's homes to share my knowledge about running, particularly training, diet, and more importantly, an active lifestyle.

We have realized that Nepal has tremendous potential to develop competitive athletes, so we're organizing a series of trail races in Kathmandu. These are short races aimed for both beginners and experienced runners. I also organized a small race back in my hometown of Sano Dumma last October, to introduce the sport to the young crowd and get them interested in running. In the coming days, I plan to organize races that aim to identify and promote promising runners.

N Is there a personal challenge that you still want to achieve?

MR: I have always dreamed of running in the Ultra-Trail du Mont Blanc in France. It's a challenging race for elite runners from all over the world—166 kilometers! I would love to see where I stand in this race.



READING COMPREHENSION

A. Choose the best answer for each question.

1. Which of the following would be the best alternative title for the passage?

- a. The World's Most Difficult Race
- b. The Village Girl Who Took On the World
- c. Trail Running: A Growing Phenomenon
- d. Changing Attitudes Toward Gender in Nepal

2. Which of the following is NOT true about Mira Rai's life as a child?

- a. She had to work on a farm.
 - b. She only started school when she was 12.
 - c. She didn't like being told how to behave.
 - d. She had four younger siblings.

3. In paragraph F, what is NOT given as a reason that Rai is a good role model?

- a. She works to promote gender equality in her country.
- b. She encourages youngsters to take up running.
- c. She has worked to improve housing in her village.
- d. Her determination to overcome hardships inspires others.

REFERENCE

- **4.** In paragraph H, what is Rai referring to when she says, "it becomes a struggle, not merely a challenge"?
 - a. doing anything unconventional
 - b. running a trail race
 - c. raising a family
 - d. going to school

VOCABULARY

- **5.** The word *grueling* in paragraph I is closest in meaning to ______
 - a. unknown
 - b. risky
 - c. endless
 - d. tiring

COHESION

- **6.** Where would be the best place in paragraph I to insert this sentence? It wasn't much fun, but it definitely helped me develop my stamina.
 - a. after the first sentence
 - b. after the second sentence
 - c. before the last sentence
 - d. after the last sentence

DETAIL

- **7.** Which of these questions about Rai's home village cannot be answered by information in the passage?
 - a. How did people light their homes there in the past?
 - b. When does Mira Rai make her annual visit there?
 - c. Has education in the village improved?
 - d. How can people living there now get to other towns?

SUMMARIZING B. Complete the summary of paragraphs A-G. Use no more than three words from the reading passage for each answer.

Born and raised in Nepal, Mira Rai was expected to be a 1 Nepalese woman. As a child, she had to fetch water for her family and carry large 2 to market. But these challenging tasks provided good 3 for her future career.
Rai got her big break when she participated in her ⁴ —the Kathmandu West Valley Rim 50K. Incredibly, she beat everyone. Her victory propelled her to international fame.
One of Rai's goals is to help both male and female athletes in her native country. She believes that Nepal has a lot of 5 to produce world-class athletes. A famous climber from Bangladesh said that Rai has had a very positive influence on young female athletes. She said that it was not easy for young women from the countryside to find good 6 She said that Rai also gives talks to promote 7 in her home country.

CRITICAL THINKING Applying Ideas Think of someone who, like Mira Rai, became successful after overcoming hardships in their life. Note your ideas below, then describe the person to your partner.



READING SKILL

MEANING

Guessing Meaning from Context—Idioms and Colloquial Language

The language found in interviews often contains colloquial language and idiomatic expressions. As with other vocabulary, the context can be helpful in determining meaning. If the context doesn't help and you have no idea what an idiom means, consult a dictionary.

INFERRING A. Find the expressions in **bold** in the reading passage. Choose the correct **MEANING** meaning. **1. breaking free** (paragraph B) b. learning a. escaping **2. against all odds** (paragraph C) a. in opposition to others b. despite the challenges

- **3. take for granted** (paragraph E) b. fail to properly appreciate a. need to work hard for **4. blazing a trail** (paragraph F)
- a. running at a very fast speed b. being the first to do something new
- **5. break the mold** (paragraph K) a. follow old traditions b. do something in a new way

INFERRING B. Find and note expressions in the reading passage that have the same meaning as the definitions below. 1. accept one's position in society (paragraph B) **2.** involved in an important task (paragraph D) **3.** extremely slowly (paragraph H)

RELATING C. Choose three of the expressions in Activity A or B. Write sentences about yourself or people you know using each one.

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COMPLETION A. Complete the information using the correct form of the words in the box. Five words are extra.

> humble merely odds gear pace throughout persistent pursue rural stereotype

The Ultra-Trail du Mont Blanc isn't __ a trail race through a pretty part of the Alps: It's also a grueling test of endurance. Each summer around 10,000 athletes run through 2____ countryside, up steep hills, and down deep valleys. Some ultramarathons are broken up into French ultra trailer Xavier Thevenard stages, allowing runners to take rests competes in the 170 km Ultra-Trail of __ the race. But the Ultra-Trail Mont-Blanc. du Mont Blanc is non-stop—and lasts through the night. Runners are required to bring appropriate 4_____ for such a long race, including flashlights and a security blanket. The best runners aim to keep a steady _ in order to finish the race in 20 to 24 hours. In recent years, more than a third of participants did not cross the finish line.

- **DEFINITIONS B.** Complete the definitions using the unused words from the box in Activity A.
 - **1.** If you are ______, you are quiet about your accomplishments.
 - 2. If you _____ something, you try and get it.
 - **3.** The ______ of something happening refers to how likely it is.
 - **4.** A ______ is a fixed, but often mistaken, idea about what a group of people are typically like.
 - **5.** If you are _____ at something, you continue to do it.

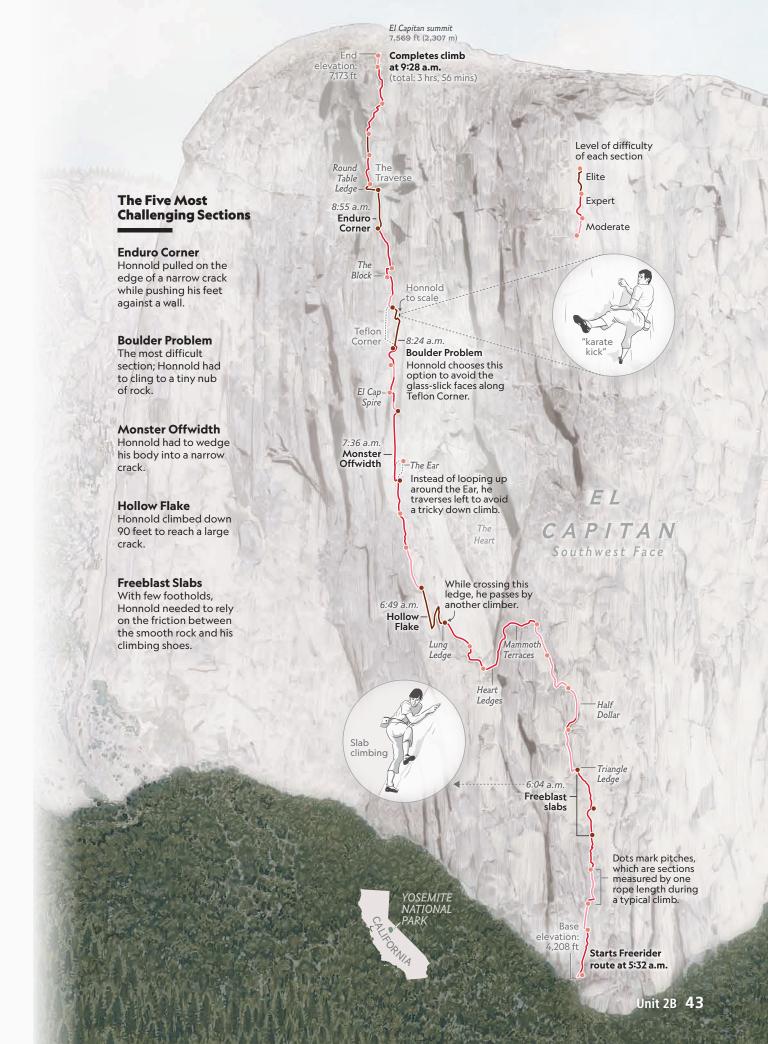
- WORD USAGE C. The adverb merely can be used to emphasize that you mean exactly what you are saying and nothing more. Mark where it should be placed in each sentence.
 - 1. He didn't quit the ultramarathon; he stopped to take a rest.
 - **2.** They didn't mean to cause a problem—they were trying to help.
 - **3.** He didn't talk much about his motivation, mentioning that he did it for his family.





- E Six hundred feet below, I sit on a fallen tree watching the tiny circle of Alex's light. It hasn't moved in what feels like an eternity, but is probably less than a minute. And I know why: he's facing the move that has haunted him ever since he first dreamed up this **scheme** seven years ago. I've climbed this slab myself, and the thought of doing it free solo makes me nauseated. The log on which I'm sitting lies less than a hundred yards from where Alex will land if he slips.
- F A sudden noise jolts me back to the present; my heart skips. A cameraman, part of the crew recording the feat, hustles up the trail toward the base of the wall. I can hear the static of his walkie-talkie. "Alex is bailing," he says. Thank God, I think, Alex will live.
- G Some in the climbing world view free soloing as something that isn't meant to be. Critics regard it as reckless showmanship that gives the sport a bad name, noting the long list of those who've died attempting it. Others, myself included, recognize it as the sport's purest expression. Such was the attitude of Austrian alpinist Paul Preuss, considered by climbing historians to be the father of free soloing. He proclaimed that the very essence of alpinism² was to master a mountain with superior physical and mental skill—not "artificial aid." By age 27, Preuss had made some 150 ropeless first ascents, and was celebrated throughout Europe. Then, on October 3, 1913, while free soloing the North Ridge of the Mandlkogel in the Austrian Alps,
- H But Preuss's ideas would live on, influencing **successive** generations of climbers and inspiring the "free climbing" movement of the 1960s and '70s, which espoused using ropes and other gear only as safety devices, never to assist a climber's upward progress. The
 - **2 Alpinism** refers to mountain climbing in the Alps and also other mountains.

- next serious free soloist of note appeared in 1973, when "Hot" Henry Barber shocked the climbing community by scaling the 1,500-foot north face of Yosemite's Sentinel Rock without a rope. In 1987, Canadian Peter Croft free soloed two of Yosemite's most celebrated routes—Astroman and Rostrum—back-to-back in the same day.
- Honnold, a shy 22-year-old from Sacramento, showed up in Yosemite Valley. He stunned the climbing world by repeating Croft's Astroman-Rostrum masterpiece. The next year he free soloed two famously tough routes—Zion National Park's Moonlight Buttress and the Regular Northwest Face of Yosemite's Half Dome—climbs so long and technically difficult that no serious climber had imagined they could be scaled without a rope. As sponsorship offers poured in and journalists and fans hailed his achievements, Alex was secretly contemplating a much bigger goal.
- It's important to note that Alex's quest to free solo El Capitan wasn't some adrenaline-fueled stunt that he'd come up with on a whim. In 2009, during our first climbing expedition together, he had mentioned the idea to me. There was something about his supreme confidence, though, and the way he effortlessly moved up incredibly difficult rock faces that made the comment seem like more than just an idle boast.
- K Alex researched several El Capitan routes, finally settling on Freerider, a popular test piece for veteran climbers and one that usually requires multiple days to **ascend**. Its 30 or so pitches—or rope lengths—challenge a climber in practically every possible way: the strength of fingers, forearms, shoulders, calves, toes, back, and abdomen, not to mention balance, flexibility, problem solving, and emotional **stamina**. Certain times of the day the sun heats the rock so much that it burns to touch it; hours later the temperature can **plummet**



he fell to his death.

- below freezing. Storms blow in, powerful winds lash the wall, water leaks out of cracks. Bees, frogs, and birds can burst from crevices during crucial moves. Rocks of all sizes can suddenly give way and tumble down.
- The Freeblast may be the scariest part, but more physically demanding sections await higher up: a chimney-like crack he'll have to climb through; a wide gap where he'll have to perform almost a full split, pressing the rock with his feet and hands to inch his way up. And then 2,300 feet above the valley floor is the Boulder Problem—a blank face that requires some of the most technically challenging moves of the climb.
- M But before he could **tackle** the Boulder Problem, he would have to get over the Freeblast. In 2016, the vertical slab proved to be an insurmountable³ obstacle and he was forced to give up his attempt. But Alex knew he would try again.
- **3** If something is **insurmountable**, it is a problem too great to be overcome.

- N **Saturday morning, June 3, 2017.** Seven months after Alex's failed attempt, I am in a meadow near the foot of El Capitan. The tall grass is covered with dew, and the sky is gray, as it always is just before dawn. I squint through a telescope, and there is Alex, 600 feet above the valley floor, moving up onto the Freeblast, the glassy slab that has frustrated him for nearly a decade.
- O Alex's movements, normally so smooth, are worrisomely jerky. His foot tap-tap-taps against the wall as if he's feeling his way tentatively into the slab. And then, just like that, he's standing on a ledge several feet above the move that has been hanging over his head for years.
- P I realize I've been holding my breath, so I consciously exhale. Thousands of moves are still to come, and the Boulder Problem looms far above, but he won't be turning back this time. Alex Honnold is on his way to completing the greatest rock climb in history.



READING COMPREHENSION

	A. Choose the best answer for each question.
INFERENCE	 1. The divots, nubs, and cracks mentioned in paragraph C a. are dangerous features of the mountain b. occur in all parts of the mountain c. occur only in the lowest part of the mountain d. are helpful to a free solo climber
AUTHOR TONE	2. In paragraph E, the author's tone isa. optimisticb. technicalc. anxiousd. humorous
VOCABULARY	 3. When the cameraman says, "Alex is bailing" in paragraph F, he means that Honnold a. nearly fell b. is climbing slowly c. has reached the summit d. is giving up for now
AUTHOR ATTITUDE	 4. According to the information in paragraph G, the author a. feels free soloing is too dangerous b. agrees with the ideas of Paul Preuss c. believes climbers need artificial aids d. disapproves of Honnold's plans
DETAIL	5. Who was the second free soloist to become well known?a. Paul Preussb. Henry Barberc. Peter Croftd. Alex Honnold
COHESION	 6. Where would be the best place in paragraph J to insert this sentence? At first, I thought he was totally crazy. a. before the first sentence b. after the first sentence c. after the second sentence d. after the last sentence
DETAIL	7. Which of the following was NOT given as one of the challenges involved in climbing the Freerider route?a. iceb. heatc. animalsd. wind

INFERRING **MEANING**

Review this reading skill in Unit 2A

- B. Scan the reading passage for the words in **bold** below. Study the context around each word or phrase and then match it to its definition.
 - ____ **1. meticulous** (paragraph A)
 - **2. cling** (paragraph B)
 - ____ **3. slab** (paragraph C)
 - _ **4. eternity** (paragraph E)
 - **__ 5. nauseated** (paragraph E)
 - **6. reckless** (paragraph G)
 - _____ **7. espoused** (paragraph H)
 - **____ 8. on a whim** (paragraph J)

- a. feeling sick
- b. based on a sudden decision
- c. a large flat piece of stone
- d. adopted or supported
- e. infinite or never ending time
- f. to hold on tightly to
- g. careless of risks or consequences
- h. careful and detailed

MEANING

- C. Find and underline the words or phrases in the reading passage that mean the same as the definitions below.
 - **1.** to praise and show approval (paragraph I)
 - **2.** to hit with a lot of force (paragraph K)
 - **3.** to partly close eyes when looking (paragraph N)
 - **4.** quick and sudden (paragraph O)

CRITICAL THINKING Inferring Reasons What do you think Honnold's main motivation was for doing the climb? Is it an example of "reckless showmanship" or could there be other reasons? Note your ideas below, then discuss with a partner.



READING SKILL

Understanding Rhetorical Purpose

An author's rhetorical purpose refers to either their overall reason for writing a text, or their reason for including certain information in it. Identifying an author's purpose is a key part of engaging critically with any reading passage. It is also an important skill for taking exams. Examples of this type of question might include:

What is the author's purpose in mentioning ...?

Why does the author mention/include ...?

The author includes the information ... in order to ...

The author uses ... as an example of ...

The author mentions ... for which of the following reasons?

PURPOSE

- **RHETORICAL A. 1.** What is the main purpose of the passage?
 - a. to persuade the reader to take up rock climbing
 - b. to describe Alex Honnold's personality
 - c. to give an account of Honnold's most difficult climb
 - d. to give an overview of the sport of free soloing
 - 2. Why does the author include the quote "It's like walking up glass" in paragraph C?
 - a. to help the reader visualize how shiny the wall as
 - b. to show how confident Honnold was in this part of the climb
 - c. to emphasize how challenging this part of the climb was
 - d. to explain why this part of the climb was relatively easy
 - **3.** Why does the author mention Paul Preuss's exploits in paragraph G?
 - a. to explain why he was a better climber than Honnold
 - b. to warn of the dangers of climbing for the untrained
 - c. to refute the idea that climbing is still dangerous
 - d. to show how influential his free solo climbs were
 - **4.** Why does the author include information about the temperature, weather, and animals in paragraph K?
 - a. to illustrate how challenging this climbing route is
 - b. to explain why Honnold nearly ended his climb there
 - c. to show how dangerous a climb can be if you are unprepared
 - d. to support the idea that free solo climbing is the purest form

PURPOSE

RHETORICAL B. Why do you think the author mentions that Honnold completed his climb successfully in the first paragraph rather than leaving this for the final paragraph? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

COMPLETION A. Complete the information using the correct form of the words in the box. Four words are extra.

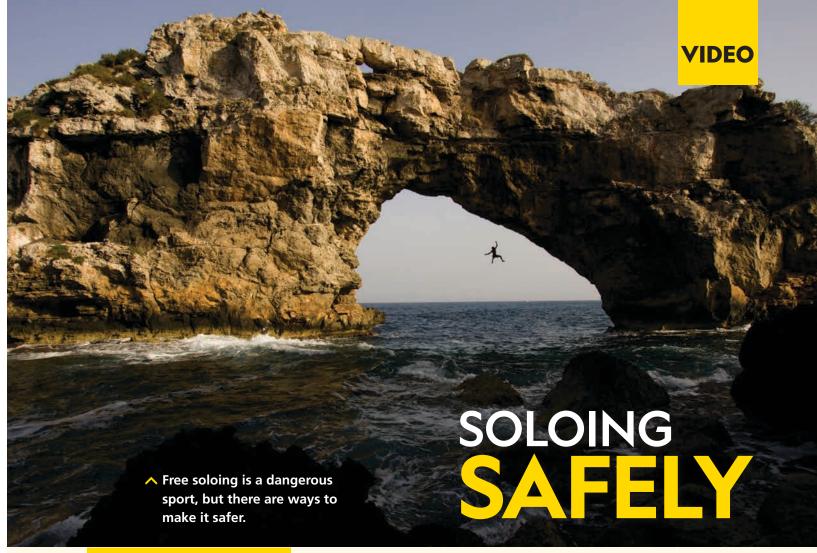
artificial plummet		contemplate stamina	delicate successive	devoid of tackle
When Honnol	d first began	to seriously 1	a free	solo climb of El
he spoke with	friend and fe	ellow climber Jimm	y Chin to discuss	s filming the ever
eventually resu	ulted in the m	novie <i>Free Solo</i> —v	which won the 20	018 Academy Av
best documen	tary film.			
To film the eve	ent, Chin hire	d a team of climb	ers who would c	limb an easy rou
		ld, lugging up can		•
·		eep pace with Hor	·	• •
	•	urse used no 3		
		_ work. No one w		
distract Honno	old—distractio	ons that could cau	ise him to 5	to his
Chin wanted h	nis film to be	about Honnold's p	process. The fina	l movie showcase
Honnold's incr	edible focus,	6	and determination	on. "Whether it e
with him sumi	miting El Cap	or deciding not to	go for it didn't	matter," Chin sa
Match each ι	unused word	from the box in	Activity A with	n its definition.
1	: an orga	nized plan for doi	ng something	
2	: entirely	lacking or free fro	m	
3	: happen	ing one after ano	ther	
4	: to try a	nd deal with some	thing or someor	ne
The nouns in	the box are	frequently used	with the word	plummet . Con

COLLOCATIONS C.

DEFINITIONS B.

the sentences with the correct words.

	popularity	price	temperatures	
1.	. The	of oi	il plummets when th	
	Typically, a po		·	
	In the middle		•	



BEFORE YOU WATCH

DEFINITIONS A. Read the information below. The words in **bold** appear in the video. Match each word with its definition.

> There are many different forms of rock climbing, such as mountaineering, sport climbing, and free soloing. Free soloing is considered to be a **fringe** sport, even among professional climbers. Some climbers consider it to be dangerous and **reckless**. During free soloing, climbers do not use any equipment at all, including ropes, even when scaling difficult **terrain**. However, those who do it often enjoy the added **adrenaline** rush it brings.

- 1. reckless •
- a. a chemical produced by the body that makes your heart beat faster
- **2.** terrain
- b. having or showing no regard for danger
- **3.** fringe
- c. an area of land
- **4.** adrenaline •
- d. not widely popular

DISCUSSION B. How could free solo climbers make rope-free climbing safer? Note your ideas below, then discuss with a partner.

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GIST	safer?						
DETAILS	 DETAILS B. Watch the video. Note answers to the questions. 1. Why does Maddaloni mention sneezing? 2. What does grade mean when Maddaloni says, "I wanted to get that grade as difficult as it could be"? 						
	3. How does Maddaloni take "a page from the circus"?						
	4. What does Maddaloni mean when he says he's "a bit of an oddball"?						
documen Do you thin	tary ık su		e answers to the	questions below,	oopular following the 2018 then discuss with a partner. to free solo? What might be some		
Are there as	ny et	hical issues with	promoting extrem	ne sports like free s	soloing?		
VOCABUL							
-			iings of these wo rds you're not sui		e ones you know. Look back at		
Reading A	A						
gear		humble	☐ merely	odds*	pace		
☐ persist	ent*	pursue*	☐ rural	stereotype	☐ throughout		
Reading I	В						
artifici	al	ascend	☐ contemplate	delicate	devoid of		
☐ plumm	net	scheme*	stamina	successive*	tackle		
*Academic \	Nord	List					