

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Who Was Junko Tabei?



Junko Tabei was the first woman to climb Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world. The summit, or peak, sits at almost 30,000 feet high, and lies on the international border between Nepal and China. Junko Tabei was also the first woman to climb all of the Seven Summits, the seven highest mountains in the world, one on each continent. A pioneer mountaineer, Tabei started the first women's climbing club in Japan at a time when no such group existed.

Junko Tabei was born on September 22, 1939, in Fukushima, Japan. She was the fifth of seven children in her family. As a child, she was considered small and fragile. In 1949, when she was 10 years old, she went on a class field trip to climb Mount Jaso in Japan. This excursion, her first exposure to mountain climbing, sparked her interest in mountaineering. However, it was an expensive activity, and her family was poor, so she was not able to do much climbing in high school.

She went to university and studied English literature. During college and after graduation, she joined several mountain climbing clubs, which consisted mostly of men. It was not common for women to become mountaineers at this time. Later, in 1969, she would start her own climbing group specifically for women, called the Ladies Climbing Club. Their motto was "Let's go on an overseas expedition by ourselves." Alongside the other members of this club, Tabei scaled many of the world's highest mountains.

Junko Tabei met and married a man who was also an avid mountaineer. The couple had two children. Many people in Japan at this time believed that women should focus on raising their children, not on dangerous activities such as mountaineering. Nonetheless, Tabei couldn't imagine a life without climbing, and continued on with her hobby with the support of her family.

In 1975, after many months of training, she led an expedition to climb Mount Everest. Halfway through the climb, an avalanche hit the group and completely covered them in snow. They were caught under the snow for a while, but managed to get out. After spending a few extra days recovering from the avalanche, the group continued on, and made it to the summit. Junko Tabei made it to the summit on May 16, 1975. She hit another record in 1992, when she became the first woman to climb all of the Seven Summits.

Later in her life, Tabei became concerned about the environmental effects of mountaineering. She had witnessed how the mountains were impacted by the waste left behind by climbing groups. She decided to return to university to study environmental science in 2000. Due to her interest in ecological matters, she became the director of the Himalayan Adventure Trust of Japan, which campaigned to protect and preserve mountain environments around the world.

Junko Tabei was a strong and determined woman, who defied all odds to devote her life to scaling peaks and protecting our highest mountains. She continued to summit many mountains even in the last decade of her life. She died in 2016, at the age of 77.

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**Directions:** Answer the questions below. Use text evidence to support your answers.

1. Junko Tabei was the first woman to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Complete the timeline of Junko Tabei's life using the line below. Include key events and dates.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is Junko Tabei famous for? Why do you think it's important to learn about her?

4. Reread the sentence, "Junko Tabei was a strong and determined woman, who defied all odds to devote her life to scaling peaks and protecting our highest mountains." Explain the meaning of the phrase *defied all odds*. Use quotes from the text to support your explanation.

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5. Complete the table with evidence from the text that supports or refutes the statements.

Evidence to Support (FOR)	Statement	Evidence to Refute (AGAINST)
	It was easy for Junko Tabei to become a mountaineer.	
	Junko Tabei was a courageous person.	
	Junko Tabei was a leader and a pioneer in mountaineering.	