

## Hawaiian surfer catches the wave of a lifetime

### Level 3 • Advanced

#### 1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

footage

surges

momentum

buoyancy

swell

hurtle

paddle

lore

freak

ripple

1. If something enters the \_\_\_\_\_ of a particular activity or subject, it becomes a well-known story to people involved in that activity or subject.
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ wave is one which is extremely large and unexpected.
3. To \_\_\_\_\_ means to move very quickly, often in an uncontrolled way.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the movement of waves in the sea.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is the quality of being able to float.
6. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a small wave or series of waves on the surface of a liquid.
7. When water \_\_\_\_\_, it moves forwards as a large mass very quickly.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the speed with which a moving object keeps moving or moves faster.
9. When you \_\_\_\_\_ on a surf board, you move slowly by moving your arms through the water.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is film of a particular subject or event.

#### 2 True or false?

Decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F). Then check your answers in the text.

1. The world record for the size of a surfing wave recorded on film is 30 metres.
2. In sets of huge waves, the second wave is usually better for surfing than the first wave.
3. The biggest surfing wave recorded on film was in Australia.
4. Hundreds of thousands of people have watched the video on the internet.
5. The biggest waves in Europe are found in Ireland.

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#### **Surfer Garrett McNamara: 'It was only when I got in the wave that I saw the size. I was in awe'**

**Peter Beaumont**  
13 November, 2011

- 1 Garrett McNamara wasn't planning to surf on 1 November. "I just didn't really feel it," he says. He agreed, however, that he would tow his British friend and fellow big wave surfer, Andrew Cotton, on his Jet Ski.
- 2 What happened during that session has already entered surfing lore. Persuaded to take a wave, McNamara, 44, found himself on a freak mountain of water 30 metres high, surfing one of the biggest waves ever ridden, probably the largest in Europe and the biggest recorded on film. The video and photographs of McNamara's ride have been viewed by hundreds of thousands on the internet. They depict a tiny figure dropping down against a huge blue, hurtling backdrop.
- 3 It is all the more extraordinary because of the hazardous nature of the break, an hour north of Lisbon, where some of the world's biggest waves collapse almost on the shoreline.
- 4 Known as "Gmac", McNamara, who was born far from the ocean in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, is one of the world's best-known big wave riders. He took up surfing after his family moved to Hawaii's North Shore. He has surfed tsunami waves and ridden some of the world's biggest monsters.
- 5 "We'd been invited by the government of Portugal to Nazaré to investigate it for a big wave competition," he recalls. "There is an underwater canyon 300 metres deep that runs from the ocean right up to the cliffs. It's like a funnel. At its ocean end it's three miles wide but narrows as it gets closer to the shore and when there is a big swell it acts like an amplifier."
- 6 Unlike many of the other surf breaks that hold huge waves, which are offshore, those riding at Nazaré are so close to the overlooking cliffs, says McNamara, that he can shout to his watching friends.
- 7 "The harbour where the Jet Skis are kept is about five minutes' ride away. I can see it from my hotel window. You go out and it can be almost flat as you leave and ride along the coast. You start seeing the waves after about half a mile when you pass some rocks and turn a point. Then you are in the break. It's unique. The waves break into cliffs 100 metres in height. You can't contemplate coming off because it would kill you."
- 8 Big wave surfing requires special equipment and a different approach from riding ordinary waves. On 1 November, McNamara was equipped with a buoyancy aid and knee braces to protect his joints from the battering a surfer's legs suffer bouncing down the huge wave faces.
- 9 "It looks smooth but it's not. It's like bouncing down moguls [on a ski slope]. You hit every ripple in the water." It is for precisely this reason that in the huge sets, the second wave is often preferable. "The first wave grooms the sea bottom and can make the second smoother," McNamara explains.
- 10 On 1 November, McNamara was not equipped with an emergency air supply to improve his chances of survival if he were to be held down by the surging water after coming off his board. His board is equipped with feet straps, like a snowboard, to prevent him being thrown off, and loaded with five kilograms of extra weight to increase momentum at the beginning of the ride. Even catching big waves is different to ordinary surfing. The speed of big waves makes it difficult to paddle fast enough ahead of the wave to catch them, so Jet Skis are used to tow the surfer at speed on to the breaking crest and to recover the surfer at the end of his ride – a dangerous business in its own right.
- 11 "We went round and I just wasn't feeling it that much," McNamara said. "When we got round to the break, it did seem big but I was just going to tow Andrew. But we still weren't expecting much. I didn't feel so good. Then the other guys were saying 'You've got to go, you've got to go' and – boom! – I was on the rope and on a giant wave. Even then I just didn't realize how big it was. So I started and I kept going down and down and the drop seemed like forever. And I thought – wow! I started making the bottom turn and I felt the lip hit me. You can see it in the video. Usually, I don't

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have time to look around but you see me look round twice and then I get hit by the white water on the shoulder and it feels like a ton of bricks. I've been hit like that before and I'm thinking: I've got to make this. I've never been held down by a wave that size and I've ridden big waves. I've seen waves rip a guy's arms off so there is nothing holding them on but skin and I'm thinking this could tear my head off.

- 12 "That's when I knew that it was pretty damn big. Andrew picked me up. And I'm shouting: 'Put me in deeper. Deeper!' And Andrew is looking at me like I'm a lunatic. Everyone else is saying: 'It's a

monster. We're going in.' It's only when I got in that I saw the footage. I was in awe. I mean, I felt it was a decent size. But you can see it then pops up three, six, nine metres higher. It just supersizes." Despite being acclaimed as a world record-breaking wave, McNamara is modest. "I know it was not 30 metres so I'll leave the sponsors and others to say how big it really was."

- 13 He is also not convinced he wants to repeat the experience. "I'm not sure I want to ride that peak again," he admits.

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### 3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

1. Why are the waves at Nazaré so big?
  - a. because they are near the cliffs
  - b. because the water passes through an underwater canyon that acts as a funnel
  - c. because the water is full of ripples in the region around Nazaré
2. Why is it so dangerous to surf there?
  - a. because there is a lot of swell in the sea around Nazaré
  - b. because the waves break against the cliffs
  - c. because surfers use extra weight to increase momentum at the beginning of the ride
3. Why is it difficult to catch big waves?
  - a. because they are too high
  - b. because the water surges and surfers can fall off their boards
  - c. because they move so quickly
4. What was McNamara's reaction to his record-breaking ride?
  - a. He wants to repeat the experience.
  - b. He doesn't want to repeat the experience.
  - c. He probably won't repeat the experience.

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#### 4 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a two-word expression meaning *with a feeling of great respect and admiration, often combined with fear* (title)
2. a verb meaning *to pull something by fixing it to the back of a vehicle or boat* (para 1)
3. an adjective meaning *dangerous, especially to people's health or safety* (para 3)
4. a noun meaning *violent physical punishment* (para 8)
5. a noun meaning *piles of snow like very small hills that you jump over when skiing* (para 9)
6. a noun meaning *the white top of a wave* (para 10)
7. a five-word expression meaning *like something very heavy indeed* (para 11)
8. two two-word phrasal verbs both meaning *to remove something with violence and force* (para 11)

#### 5 Phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences using appropriate particles.

1. McNamara took \_\_\_\_\_ surfing when his family moved to Hawaii.
2. He has seen waves rip someone's arm \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If you come \_\_\_\_\_ your surf board, you will be killed.
4. He was equipped \_\_\_\_\_ a buoyancy aid and knee braces.
5. The surging water can hold a surfer \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Feet straps prevent surfers being thrown \_\_\_\_\_ their boards.

#### 6 Word-building

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

1. The funnel acts as an \_\_\_\_\_. [AMPLIFY]
2. He was equipped with a \_\_\_\_\_ aid. [BUOYANT]
3. The second wave is often \_\_\_\_\_. [PREFER]
4. An emergency air supply increases the surfer's chances of \_\_\_\_\_. [SURVIVE]
5. The wave has been described as record- \_\_\_\_\_. [BREAK]
6. The coast north of Lisbon is particularly \_\_\_\_\_. [HAZARD]

#### 7 Discussion

Should dangerous sports like this be banned? Why? Why not?

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#### KEY

#### 1 Key words

1. lore
2. freak
3. hurtle
4. swell
5. buoyancy
6. ripple
7. surges
8. momentum
9. paddle
10. footage

#### 2 True or false?

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. T
5. F

#### 3 Comprehension check

1. b
2. b
3. c
4. c

#### 4 Find the word

1. in awe
2. tow
3. hazardous
4. battering
5. mogul
6. crest
7. like a ton of bricks
8. tear off; rip off

#### 5 Phrasal verbs

1. up
2. off
3. off
4. with
5. down
6. off

#### 6 Word-building

1. amplifier
2. buoyancy
3. preferable
4. survival
5. breaking
6. hazardous

#### Teachers note:

You can watch Garrett McNamara surf the record-breaking wave online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd2jtwviyC8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd2jtwviyC8)

Alternatively, type *Garrett McNamara world record* into a search engine to find the video.