Vocabulary

*Before reading, translate these words.*

Legacy

Pursue

Determined

Stubborn

Osteosarcoma

Amputate, Amputee

Chemotherapy

Ambition

Threshold

Shin splints

Swelling

Cyst

Dizzy

Telethon

In the name of

Fundraiser

biography

What is the farthest you have ever run? What’s the farthest you have ever walked? What’s the farthest you have run in a year? From April 12th, 1980 to September 1st, 1980, Terry Fox ran 5,373 kilometers. Why did he do it? Let’s take a look at one of Canada’s most inspiring athletes.

Terry Fox was born on July 28th, 1958 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He moved to British Columbia when he was 8 years old. He loved sports. And even though he was short, Fox enjoyed basketball. His Phys Ed. teacher said that he would be a good long-distance runner and encouraged Fox to pursue that. He wasn’t interested in distance running at the time but did it to make his teacher and coach happy. Fox was seen as a determined athlete. Some might even say he was stubborn.

On November 12th, 1976 Fox was in a car accident. He was fine except for a sore knee. The knee pain only got worse as time went by and he eventually went to the hospital. At the hospital, his doctors discovered he had osteosarcoma, a type of cancer that often starts in the knees. It had nothing to do with his accident, but Fox always thought it did.

The doctors told Fox that his leg needed to be amputated and that he required chemotherapy. However, he only had a 50% chance of survival. Actually, he was lucky because two years prior to that he would have had a 15% chance of survival. Fox learned the value of cancer research.

Fox was given an artificial leg and was walking three weeks after the amputation. The doctors said that Fox had a positive attitude. He kept this attitude even though he endured sixteen months of chemotherapy and saw many other cancer patients die. After his treatment, Fox knew that it was cancer research that saved his life. He decided to live his life to help other cancer patients find strength and hope.

In 1977, Rick Hansen (another one of Canada’s greatest people) invited Fox to join his wheelchair basketball team. Fox would go on to win three national titles with the team.

Just before his cancer surgery, Fox learned about Dick Traum. Traum was the first amputee to complete the New York Marathon. It inspired Fox. He told his family that he wanted to complete a marathon as well. But secretly, Fox had bigger ambitions.

Fox had an unusual way of running because of his artificial leg. It caused him a lot of pain. After about 20 minutes he crossed the pain threshold and running became easier. On September 2nd, 1979, he completed a 27km road race. He finished in last place, ten minutes behind the second to last person. However, when he crossed the finish line, the other runners cheered and cried.

After the race, Fox told his family his plan. He wanted to run across Canada (the Marathon of Hope) to raise money for cancer research. Originally, he wanted to raise $1 million, but as his ambitions grew, so did his goal. His goal was to raise $1 for each Canadian citizen (24 million at the time). He got the support of the Canadian Cancer Society and began getting sponsors for his run.

Before starting his journey, doctors diagnosed Fox with hypertrophy, an enlarged heart. The doctors warned Fox that he should not attempt the run. They made Fox promise to stop if he had any heart problems.

Terry Fox began his journey on April 12th, 1980 when he dipped his right (amputated) leg in the Atlantic Ocean near St. John’s Newfoundland. In the first few weeks, he experienced heavy rain, strong winds, and a snowstorm. It was a difficult start, but Fox was determined.

Throughout the trip, Fox expressed his anger. His friend, Doug Alward was supporting him through the journey. By Nova Scotia, Terry and Doug were not talking to each other. Fox was discouraged because people kept trying to get him off the road and he wasn’t getting many donations.

All that changed when Fox arrived in Montreal. The CEO of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts learned about Fox’s run. His son had died because of cancer, so he wanted to help Fox. He made a large donation, let Fox stay at any of his hotels, and persuaded nearly 1000 other corporations to also donate.

When Fox arrived in Ontario, he was greeted with a Brass Band and an entire town coming out to cheer him on. While he ran in Ontario, the police escorted him. It was more protection than he got previously. He was running 42kms per day during the summer. Many of the cities that Fox passed through, honored him. His spirits were lifted, and his hope continued to grow.

Fox’s health was starting to get worse though. He suffered shin splints and swelling in his good leg and cysts on his other leg. He also felt dizzy at some points. On September 1st, Fox was forced to stop running after intense coughing and chest pains. He continued running, but a few kms later he asked Alward to drive him to the hospital.

Fox’s cancer had returned and spread to his lungs. He was forced to end his run after 143 days and 5,373kms. By this time, he had raised $1.7 million (worth $5 million today). The Canadian Television Network (CTV) held a telethon a week later an raised another $10.5 million (worth $33 million today). By April of 1981, $23 million had been raised in Fox’s name. However, the cancer was getting worse. Terry Fox died on June 19th, 1981.

The spirit of Terry Fox lives on. Each year many people participate in The Terry Fox Run. It is a non-competitive event to raise money for cancer research. In the first year, 300,000 people joined the event and raised $3.5 million. By 1999, other countries had joined with over one million people participating. Now, The Terry Fox Run is the largest one-day fundraiser for cancer research. Over $850 million has been raised in his name for cancer research.

Questions

1. Where was Terry Fox born?
2. What was his favorite sport?
3. When did he find out he had cancer?
4. Why was his leg amputated?
5. What was his chance of survival?
6. What did Fox want to do (Marathon of Hope)?
7. How much money did he want to raise?
8. What did the CEO of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts do?
9. Why did he stop running?
10. What is the Terry Fox Run?
11. How much money has been raised in Terry Fox’s name?
12. How long did he receive chemotherapy?
13. Go to www.terryfox.com to see a map of his journey.