

## Catch a Wave

Have you ever heard of Mavericks? Nicknamed “Mount Everest meets Niagara Falls,” it’s a famous big-wave surf spot in California. Mavericks is a fun adventure, but it can also be dangerous if you’re not a skilled surfer. For years, only male surfers attempted the challenge. Until Sarah Gerhardt came along.

Sarah was one of the first female big-wave surfers, and she was the first female to surf Mavericks. She started surfing as a young girl in Hawaii. She had a difficult life at home and being in the water was an escape. She worked her way up from small to big waves, using counting and breathing techniques to keep calm when things got rough.

Sarah encountered sexism in the surfing world. People did not think she would be able to conquer the waves because she was a female. But she proved them wrong. She found a tight knit community of surfing friends who believed in her. And she believed in herself. She perfected her technique and headed to California to conquer Mavericks, making surf history.

As a young surfer in Hawaii, Sarah drew on a long tradition of female surfing. In the 1600s, surfing was a communal activity in Hawaii. Men, women, and children of all social classes shared in the sport. Hawaiian myths tell of Mamala, a half-woman, half-shark demi-god who rode the waves. There are

also stories of a legendary Princess Kelea who was one of the best surfers in the kingdom.

When Europeans arrived in the 1800s, they disapproved of women surfing with men. Surfing, particularly female surfing, became less common in the wake of the European influence. But the sport never totally went away. Surfing went through a revival in the late 1800s, led in part by a woman. Princess Ka'iulani brought fame to the sport, even travelling abroad to surf the English Channel.

Surfing spread around the world in the 1900s, and women were a part of the expansion. Women such as Isabel Letham, Kathy Kohner, Joyce Hoffman, and Rell Sunn were pioneers of the modern sport. Sarah Gerhardt built on their legacy as she mastered the waves, first in Hawaii and then in California. She is an inspiration to the next generation of female surfers who will continue to push the limits of sport and sea.



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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where did Sarah Gerhardt make history by surfing Mavericks?
  - a. Hawaii
  - b. California
  - c. English Channel
  - d. Europe
  
2. Who of the following was a demi-god?
  - a. Mamala
  - b. Ka'iulani
  - c. Kelea
  - d. Rell Sunn
  
3. Why did surfing fall out of favor?
  - a. It was too dangerous
  - b. It was only for royalty
  - c. Europeans did not approve
  - d. There were sharks
  
4. Which of the following was NOT mentioned as something that Sarah Gerhardt had to overcome?
  - a. A difficult life at home
  - b. Sexism
  - c. The reputation of "Mount Everest meets Niagara Falls"
  - d. Physical limitations

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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