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SYNOPSIS

Introduction In March 1996, Jon Krakauer travels to Nepal on assignment by *Outside* magazine to climb Mount Everest, which he summited on May 10. Haunted by the loss of Rob Hall, a New Zealand guide, as well as by the deaths, blinding, and disfigurement of others on the expedition, Krakauer writes first an article, then a book to express his dismay at the climbers' ill luck.

Chapter One Reflecting on his arrival at the peak 29,028 feet above Nepal and Tibet at 1:17 P. M., Krakauer recalls the rogue storm that kills eight people and forces the amputation of Beck Weathers's right hand. Krakauer recalls the traffic jam at the Hillary Step, where twelve climbers from the American, New Zealand, and Taiwanese teams line up to make the ascent. A misturn of his tank valve causes him to waste precious oxygen.

Chapter Two In 1865, after surveyor Radhanath Sikhdar concludes that Everest is the world's highest mountain, Sir Andrew Waugh names it after Sir George Everest, a British colonial official. The mountain becomes a British obsession. On June 8, 1924, climbers George Leigh Mallory and Edward Felix Norton disappear at Everest's summit. The first official climbing occurs on May 29, 1953, after Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay's joint ascent.

Americans, too, join the competition to reach the world's highest peak. Tom Hornbein and Willi Unsoeld's successful ascent a decade later inspires Krakauer's dream of scaling the mountain. In 1985, he becomes a devotee of Dick Bass, who summited the world's seven highest peaks. By the time Krakauer makes his own assault on the mountain in 1996, mountaineering had become a commercial venture. In all, 294 climbers paid millions of dollars to join the spring climb.

Chapter Three After flying from Seattle to Bangkok to Kathmandu, Krakauer meets companion climbers and travels by helicopter to Lukla. His tentmate is Doug Hansen, a postal worker who works extra jobs and saves his pay for a second attempt at Everest.

Chapter Four The expedition moves up to Phakding village and encounters professional Sherpa guides. Hall paces the group to acclimate them to thin air. At Tengboche, Krakauer meets a Buddhist head lama, who bestows a good luck scarf. On April 4, Hall and two others predict an inevitable disaster from climbing. Tenzing, one of Rob's assistants, must be rescued after falling through a crevasse.

Chapter Five The group presses on to base camp, where Krakauer meets Scott Fischer, Hall's self-aggrandizing competitor. Krakauer develops a cough, limited appetite, and sleeplessness. Doug suffers headaches. Hall assures Krakauer that the body adjusts to thin air in the Death Zone above 25,000 feet.

Chapter Six Acclimatization begins on April 13, with ventures up to Camp One at the top of the Khumbu icefall. The demands of the climb begin to reveal inexperience in some members. Krakauer suffers a headache from ultraviolet radiation. He relives the hardship mountaineering has put on his marriage to Linda.

Chapter Seven Krakauer admires the credentials of Pete Schoening. Makalu Gau leads a Taiwanese party of amateurs; Petter Neby of Norway climbs alone. A South African contingent attempts to put a black climber at the top. Ian Woodall, the gung-ho group leader, is exposed as a fraud.

Chapter Eight Krakauer makes a second climb to Camp One and, on April 18, presses on to Camp Two. He encounters two corpses left along the way. On April 22, a Sherpa named Ngawang suffers High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE). Within two days, he is airlifted to Kathmandu, but dies in mid-June. Socialite climber Sandy Hill Pittman carries on daily interaction with NBC.

Chapter Nine On the first move from base camp to Camp Two on April 26, Doug develops frostbite and a frozen larynx. Expedition leaders bicker over responsibility for stretching rope up Lhotse Face. The Sherpas believe Fischer's team angered the mountain because of the sexual activities of an unmarried couple.

Chapter Ten Krakauer denigrates climbers like Scott Fischer, Rob Hall, and Sandy Hill Pittman for courting media attention. Krakauer realizes his presence as a journalist creates tension. On April 29, he reaches Camp Three and experiences solar radiation. The next day, he returns to base camp. Hall sets May 10 as the day to reach the top, where the team will share the event with Fischer's group. Ian Woodall insists that the South Africans choose the same date.

Chapter Eleven On May 6, Hall's group begins the final ascent. Some expeditioners drop out; Doug refuses to give in to difficulties. As they press on to Camp Three two days later, a boulder smashes into Andy Harris. In the absence of Sherpas, the group must cook for themselves. At dark, they receive oxygen tanks to help them breathe during sleep. The next morning, Chen Yu-nan slips from a precipice to his death.

Chapter Twelve At Camp Three, Krakauer finds 50 climbers in line for the final assault on Everest. At Camp Four, he assists Sherpas in anchoring tents during a gale. The wind halts at 7:30 P. M. At 11:35 P. M., he begins the climb. The South Africans remain behind. Rob convinces Doug not to quit. Lopsang becomes ill from carrying Sandy's telephone and short-roping her up the slope.

Chapter Thirteen Into the Death Zone, Krakauer is aware of the use of oxygen and of the lack of hand-holds at the upper limits. The short-roping of Pittman creates a traffic bottleneck. Krakauer is surprised to see that Anatoli Boukreev

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carries no supply pack and uses no oxygen. At the summit, Krakauer finds the trash left behind by past climbers. He dreads the descent.

Chapter Fourteen Five expeditioners quit without reaching the top. Andy mistakenly opens Krakauer's oxygen valve, causing the waste of precious gas. Mike Groom offers Krakauer his oxygen bottle. At 3:30 P. M., as he begins descending the South Summit, the weather worsens. Because Beck's eyesight dims, he waits for Mike Groom to return with Yasuko Namba. Krakauer runs out of oxygen after a blizzard, adding a new threat. In a whiteout, he follows Andy downhill to Camp Four. Exhausted, Krakauer collapses in his tent.

Chapter Fifteen Beidleman complains that Fischer does not turn his clients around at the top. Rob, Mike Groom, and Yasuko reach the summit. Yasuko becomes the oldest woman to climb Everest. Krakauer learns that Fischer conceals illness from a cyst on the liver. Charlotte Fox injects Sandy with an energy-boosting steroid before Beidleman drags her down the slope.

When the storm worsens, chaos ensues as survivors search for lost members in temperatures below -100 degrees Fahrenheit. Stuart Hutchison bangs pot lids to summon 19 climbers lost in the storm. At 7:30 P. M., Anatoli leaves camp to search for the lost. He sets out a second time and locates Sandy, Yasuko, and Beck. A gust blows Beck into the night.

Chapter Sixteen At 6:00 A. M., May 11, Krakauer realizes that Andy is lost. Krakauer also learns that the South African group refused to give up their radio to aid the search party. Two months after the expedition, he realizes that he mistook Martin Adams for Andy.

Chapter Seventeen A reconstruction of events at the top describes how Lopsang tried to help Doug and Rob, then left to catch up with Scott Fischer. Andy Harris erroneously reported that the supply of oxygen at South Summit was depleted. Lopsang persuaded Scott not to jump and hurried down to ask Anatoli and the Sherpas to help. Rob Hall died at the top; searches found Andy and Doug's ice axes, but not their remains.

Chapter Eighteen According to a Japanese expedition, a Ladakhi team never reached the summit.

Chapter Nineteen The next morning at 7:30, Krakauer realizes the leadership is gone. Hutchison leads a rescue mission and finds Beck and Yasuko near death. Hutchison is unable to retrieve them. Anatoli shepherds a group down to Camp Four. Two falling stones kill a Sherpa. To everyone's surprise, Beck revives and makes it back to Camp Four alone.

A gale flattens half of Krakauer's shelter. At 8:30 A. M., Mike Groom leads the way back to Camp Three. Krakauer finds Beck convulsing and swollen. He radios base camp for advice. Two members inject Beck with steroids.

Chapter Twenty Arriving at Camp Two by 1:30 P. M., Krakauer finds the mess tent turned into a field hospital. Somehow, Beck is transported to the site alive along with Makalu. Both suffer terrible frostbite. At dawn the next morning, helicopters airlift the two survivors to Kathmandu.

Chapter Twenty-One When Krakauer reaches base camp, he cries for his lost companions. Altogether, although 16 climbs summited, the total death toll is twelve, the worst season of climbing on Everest in 75 years. After a memorial

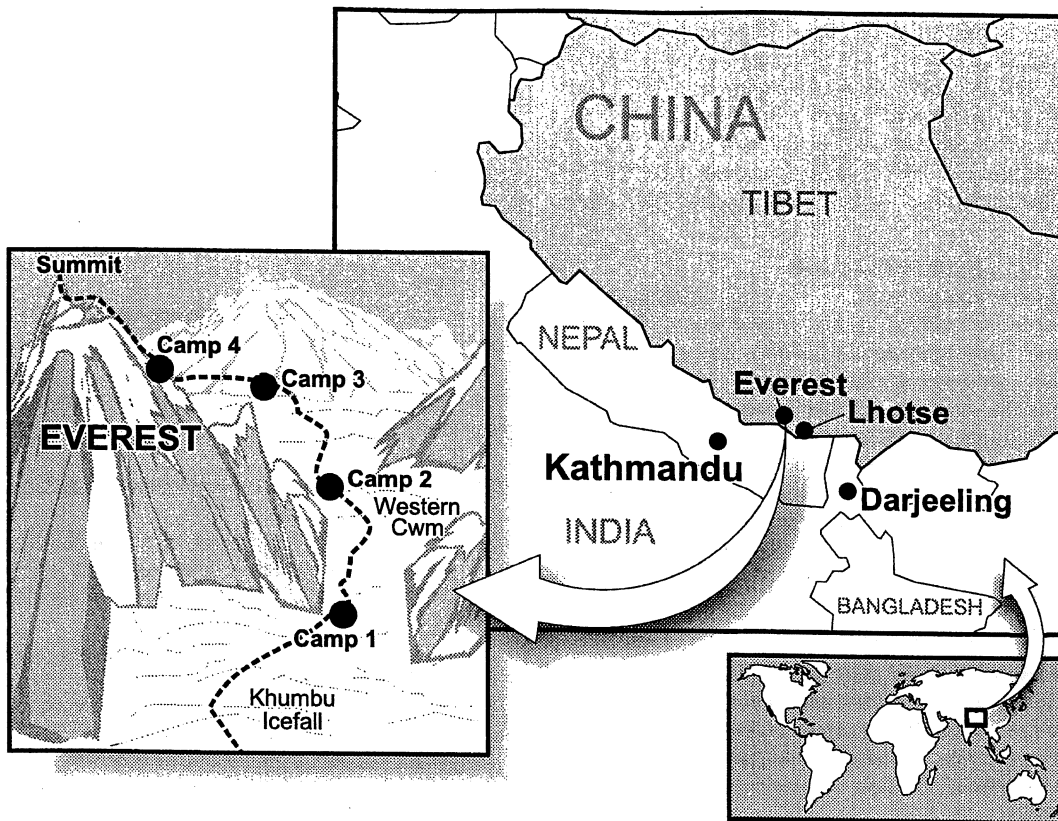
service for the dead, a helicopter airlifts Charlotte Fox and Mike Groom to a hospital. On his return to Syangboche, Krakauer answers questions from Yasuko's husband and her Japanese supporters. Krakauer returns to a hotel to weep. On May 19, he flies to Seattle and reports to the Hansens about Doug's death. Krakauer suffers survivor's guilt.

Epilogue Beck survives, but loses his right arm, a finger and the thumb from his left hand, and his nose. Within six months, Krakauer publishes his article for *Outside*. Lopsang dies in an avalanche; Anatoli is blinded in one eye by a bus accident. Beidleman suffers guilt over the death of Yasuko.

TIME LINE

- 1852** Surveyor Radhanath Sikhdar concludes that the mountain later named Everest is the world's highest.
- 1865** Sir Andrew Waugh names the mountain after Sir George Everest.
- 1921** The British initiate climbs of Everest. Sherpas establish their reputation for making camp and carrying loads.
- 1924 June 8** George Leigh Mallory and Edward Felix Norton disappear at Everest's summit.
- 1934** Maurice Wilson freezes to death on Everest below the North Col.
- 1935** Tenzing Norgay begins his climbing career.
- 1949** Nepal opens its borders to climbing expeditions.
- 1953 May 29** Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climb Everest.
- 1963 May 22** Tom Hornbein and Willi Unsoeld spend the night on Everest's summit.
- 1973** The Himalayan Rescue Association begins aiding climbers after the deaths of four Japanese trekkers.
- 1980 August 20** Reinhold Messner mounts to the summit a second time without oxygen.
- 1985** Dick Bass climbs the last of the world's seven highest peaks.
- 1990 May** Rob Hall conquers Everest on his third attempt.
- 1992 May** Hall's company, Adventure Consultants, produces a successful climb of Everest for six clients.
- 1993 May 16** Lopsang reaches the summit of Everest without using an oxygen tank.
- 1994 March** Alaskan Dolly Lefever becomes the first American woman to climb the world's seven highest summits.
- 1994 fall** Andy Harris and Fiona McPherson establish a medical clinic at Pheriche.
- 1996** Hall raises his price to \$65,000 per client.
spring Nepal cancels its four-expedition limit.
March 29 Jon Krakauer sets out from Kathmandu by helicopter for Lukla.
April 1 The South African expedition begins falling apart.
April 6 Krakauer scales the Khumbu Glacier.
April 13 The expedition begins acclimatization sorties to Camp One.
April 16 Krakauer joins the second acclimatization venture.
April 18 The group presses on to Camp Two.
April 26 Krakauer ventures from base camp to Camp Two.
April 29 He reaches Camp Three.
May 1 He returns to base camp.

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- May 6** Hall's group begins the final ascent.
- May 8** The expedition settles at Camp Three.
- May 9** Chen Yu-Nan falls into a crevasse.
1:00 P. M. Krakauer reaches the South Col.
11:35 P. M. He begins the final assault.
- May 10** **1:17 P. M.** He reaches the top.
3:00 P. M. To locate a replacement oxygen tank, he climbs down the South Summit.
- May 11,** **7:30 A. M.** He returns to Camp Four.
- May 12** The group begins descending to Camp Two.
- May 13** dawn Krakauer searches for a helipad site.
- May 16** His group takes a helicopter to Syangboche for the flight to Kathmandu.
- May 19** On arrival home to Seattle, he reports to the Hansens on Doug's death.
- mid-June** Ngawang dies of HACE.
- September** Krakauer publishes his article in *Outside*.

AUTHOR SKETCH

Self-taught journalist Jon Krakauer amazed the adventure-reading public with a detailed account of a 1996 expedition to the top of Mount Everest. Born April 12, 1954, in Brookline, Massachusetts, he grew up in the rugged terrain of Corvallis, Oregon. In the company of his father, Lewis Krakauer, he began scaling peaks at age eight with a 10,000-foot climb of South Sister. He developed hero worship for Willi Unsoeld, who conquered Everest when Krakauer was nine years old. As a student at Hampshire College, he learned about the sport of climbing from writer David Roberts.

Krakauer pursued summits while supporting himself with woodworking jobs and commercial salmon fishing in Boulder, Colorado. After marrying fellow climber Linda Moore, he promised to give up his avocation, but was unable to suppress a compulsion for more scaling adventures. His list of conquered slopes include Alaska's Arrigetch Peaks, the impetus to his sport writing for American Alpine Club journal. He followed with an ascent of Alaska's Stickine Ice Cap and of Devil's Thumb on the border of British Columbia, which he described for *Mountain* magazine. By age 29, he was adept enough at freelance writing to give up carpentry and fishing to write fulltime, including articles for *Architectural Digest*, *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone*, *Smithsonian*, and *Outside*, which financed the Everest climb.

In 1990, Krakauer issued his first book, an anthology of twelve articles, *Eiger Dreams: Ventures among Men and Mountains*, which included adventures on Mount McKinley and, in 1984, his attack on the Eiger in Switzerland, an ascent that nearly ended his marriage. Two years later, he followed with a biography of Christopher McCandless, a transcendental philosopher who roughed it at Denali National Park, where he died of starvation. The consummate adventure, a climb with Rob Hall's 1996 expedition up Everest, initiated Krakauer's admiration for the Sherpa, who make possible the stream of traffic from would-be summiters up the Nepalese access to the world's highest peak.

After submitting a 17,000-word article to *Outside* on the journey after returning to his home in Seattle, Washington, Krakauer was still haunted by eight deaths on the day of his

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successful trek. He extended his interviews and correspondence and wrote *Into Thin Air*, a complex work comprised of the joy and commercialization of climbing and acknowledgment of nature's quirks and human wrongheadedness. His well researched, but judgmental work topped the nonfiction charts for months. Depressed and angry at himself for not rescuing more people, he swore off Everest, but returned to climbing in Antarctica for an article published in *National Geographic*.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Krakauer began earning honors with *Into the Wild*, a *New York Times* bestseller and the 1996 *Entertainment Weekly* Book of the Year. The print version of *Into thin Air*, also a *Times* bestseller, garnered a mix of positive and negative remarks. Some of the most caustic responses came from fellow climbers and guides, particularly Sandy Pittman, who sued him for libel. Additional criticism derived from the families of the eight people who died during the 1996 expedition.

After Krakauer earned a nomination for the National Magazine Award for the original article, the book returned to prominence in other forms. In 1997, ABC-TV aired TriStar's adapted version of *Into Thin Air*. That same year, Krakauer narrated an six-cassette, unabridged audio version.

OTHER WORKS BY JON KRAKAUER

- Eiger Dreams: Ventures among Men and Mountains* (1990)
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Francis Parkman, La Salle, and the Discovery of the Great West (editor) (1999)
High Exposure: An Enduring Passion for Everest and Unforgiving Places (co-author) (2000)
The Brendan Voyage (editor) (2000)
Chauncey Loomis, Weird and Tragic Shores (editor) (2000)
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Skow, John, "Review," *Time*, April 21, 1997, p. 123.
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GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To enumerate the conventions of survival literature
2. To comment on the psychological aspects of foreboding, loss, fear, and survivor's guilt
3. To evaluate behaviors and attitudes required of a mountaineering team, particularly bonding with fellow climbers and their guides
4. To explain the set-up and management of a base camp
5. To note alteration in climbers' behavior during times of danger, especially at night during a blizzard
6. To contrast types of people who choose to climb as a hobby
7. To analyze the title image
8. To account for confusion from inadequate oxygen
9. To characterize the role of observer and journalist
10. To quantify sources of eyewitness testimony

SPECIFIC OBJECTS

1. To validate the intent of each climber in Rob Hall's team
2. To explain why Krakauer accepts the assignment to climb Everest
3. To list examples of amateurism among the climbers
4. To discuss the leadership strengths of Rob Hall and his competitors
5. To depict the returnees' battle with self when they learn that others remain in danger of freezing or falling

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6. To justify Krakauer's lasting impressions of Sandy Hill Pittman
7. To analyze Krakauer's roles as tent-mate, friend, writer, and husband
8. To project how the doomed climb will affect future assaults on Everest
9. To recount the terrors of gale winds, whiteout, falls, and hypoxia
10. To express the dangers of high altitude climbing to Krakauer's team

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Jon Krakauer's writing, present the following terms and applications:

epigraph a short motto or citation at the beginning of a chapter, a method by which Jon Krakauer embroiders and illuminates his emotions and observations with those of famous adventurers from the past. At the beginning of Chapter Five, he cites Thomas F. Hornbein's *Everest: The West Ridge*, noting the harsh cold and rubble that forms the atmosphere of the Khumbu Glacier. The citation serves as a preface to the climbers' response to rough going.

irony an implied discrepancy between what is said or done and what is meant. A bitter dramatic irony in Krakauer's realization of his dream to climb Mount Everest lies in his exhaustion and disinterest at the summit. Pushed beyond the limits by lack of oxygen, sleep irregularities, and fatigue, he is happy to return to his domed shelter to collapse and recover. Doubling the irony is his realization that more terror and dismay await him the next morning when he learns the fate of dead and missing teammates.

nonfiction a body of literature comprised of factual writing, including memoir, article, treatise, and monograph. Krakauer uses to advantage the objectivity of the reporter in citing the people, places, events, and outcomes of the climb. To a straight reportage, he adds his own physical exertions and emotions as he takes part in Rob Hall's climbing team.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The milieu of Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* is the focus of the book, which recounts one ill-fated climb of Mount Everest in 1996. Amid a shifting cast of characters from a variety of expeditions, Krakauer concentrates on the people he wants to follow to the bitter end of his team's expedition. Organizing the day-by-day account are the shifting locales—base camp, Camp One, Camp Two, Camp Three, Camp Four, and summit—as the group carries out individual responsibilities, moves from Kathmandu airport to hotels, and presses on to the foot of Mount Everest.

Krakauer blends into emotional anticipation the daily tasks of dispatching Sherpas to carry loads ahead and to string rope for the climbers to grasp as they move upward. From the hamlet of Lobuje, Nepal, the men move out a few miles to set up a base camp, comprised of mess tent, communications tent, and shower. The station becomes the life-line of the guides and climbers as they move steadily upward into the troposphere. Calls to the camp doctor link teammates with information on first aid when they attempt to rescue fallen trekkers and those suffering from high altitude brain, lung, and heart anomalies.

At 21,300 feet, the group moves through an elegant mountain view and over icier terrain into Camp Two, a mini-

city of 120 tents at the edge of the most spectacular icefall, the Khumbu Glacier. No longer even moderately pleasant, the harsh atmosphere forces Krakauer to lie in his tent, head in hands, and rest up for the climb to the head of the Cwm. From there through the miseries of Camp Three, they approach the final nest of domed shelters on a precipitous slope and the push to the summit.

When Krakauer achieves his dream of mounting to the summit that once welcomed Sir Edmund Hillary, the prize loses its glory in the hardship of drawing breath at high altitude. Plodding mindlessly uphill, Krakauer encounters "a discarded oxygen cylinder and a battered aluminum survey pole" alongside Buddhist prayer flags. Instead of elation and joy, his attention turns downhill to "the long, dangerous descent that lay ahead."

Like the thin air above, details thin out as Krakauer returns to civilization, puts up for a night in a hotel, and weeps for the loss of his companions. Arriving May 19 to Seattle airport, which he barely acknowledges, he greets his wife and expresses condolences to Doug Hansen's family. No longer interested in scenery or challenges to the human body, he can only ponder that the climb forced him to confront the fact that he had "never actually seen death at close range." His emotions see him through the interviews, article writing, and book publication that he organizes to purge his spirit of guilt and grief.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

Novels

James Ramsey Ullman, *Banner in the Sky*
James Hilton, *Lost Horizon*

Nonfiction

David F. Breashears, *High Exposure: An Enduring Passion for Everest and Unforgiving Places*
Edmund Hillary, *View from the Summit*
Thomas F. Hornbein, *Everest: The West Ridge*

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"Mount Everest," <www.mteverest.com/>
"Pitons Are Served,"
<www.salon.com/june97/media/media970611.html>
"Sierra Nevada Mountain Climbing,"
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Videos/DVDs

Shackleton

THEMES AND MOTIFS

Themes

- challenge
- opportunity
- observation
- camaraderie
- isolation
- danger
- survivalism
- loss

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- grief
- reflections

Motifs

- coping with regret and survivor's guilt
- understanding the various psychological states that accompany climbing
- assuming the role of observer and journalist
- coping with a sense of loss and disappointment

MEANING STUDY

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the book. Explain each in context. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. At 29,028 feet up in the troposphere, so little oxygen was reaching my brain that my mental capacity was that of a slow child. (Chap. One, p. 4)
(Krakauer approaches a human limit, the atmosphere's lowest limit, which rises some eight miles from earth's crust skyward to the stratosphere. Marked by decreasing temperature, it contains clouds and weather systems, which wreak havoc on the assault of the summit.)
2. After leaving the summit, fifteen minutes of cautious shuffling over a 7,000-foot abyss brought me to the notorious Hillary Step, a pronounced notch in the ridge that demands some technical maneuvering. (Chap. One, p. 6)
(The notch takes the name of Edmund Percival Hillary of Auckland, New Zealand, who was the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest. After attaining world fame on May 29, 1953, he earned a knighthood and aided the Sherpas to upgrade their lifestyle with airports, schools, and hospitals.)
3. The six survey sites from which the summit had been triangulated were in northern India, more than a hundred miles from the mountain. (Chap. Two, p. 14)
(Triangulation is a technique used by navigators, surveyors, and civil engineers to determine precise angles and distances. Based on plane trigonometry, it applies the rules regarding measuring sides of triangles of which two angles and a side are known.)
4. The culture of ascent was characterized by intense competition and undiluted machismo, but for the most part, its constituents were concerned with impressing only one another. (Chap. Two, p. 23)
(Krakauer acknowledges a coterie of egotistic males and one female who strut their accomplishments before the group. The rest of the world is largely uninterested in climbers' grandstanding.)
5. It saddened and embarrassed Hall to be publicly castigated by this demi-god, this ur-climber who had been one of his childhood heroes. (Chap. Three, p. 42)
(The formation of guide companies in 1992 draws the anger of Sir Edmund Hillary, a fellow New Zealander, who charges Rob Hall with disrespect for Mount Everest. The subject of commercialization of the sport of climbing becomes an impetus to Jon Krakauer's assignment for Outside magazine to join an expensive expedition and report on the outcome.)
6. Sherpas remain an enigma to most foreigners, who tend to regard them through a romantic scrim. (Chap. Four, p. 55)
(The mountaineers of India, Nepal, and Sikkim, the world's 120,000 Sherpas are culturally and linguistically Tibetan. On an unyielding landscape, they earn their living as traders, herders, farmers, wool weavers, and guides in the Himalayan passes.)
7. Longtime visitors to the Khumbu are saddened by the boom in tourism and the change it has wrought on what early Western climbers regarded as an earthly paradise, a real-life Shangri-La. (Chap. Four, p. 57)
(The utopian concept of Shangri-La derives from the fiction of English writer James Hilton, author of the 1933 novel Lost Horizon. The Himalayan resort derived from the post-World War I malaise common to the upper classes of the Western world. In the novel, Shangri-La becomes a Buddhist refuge and haven from emerging world cataclysm.)
8. Chhôngba Sherpa, a wry, thoughtful man who had joined our expedition as Base Camp cook, offered to arrange a meeting with the rimpoche—"the head lama of all Nepal," (Chhôngba explained, "a very holy man.") (Chap. Four, pp. 59-60)
(The head lama bears the Tibetan title—rimpoche—once borne by Padmasambhava, the eighth-century Pakistani guru and mystic who brought Tantric Buddhism to Tibet in A.D. 747 and set up the nation's first Buddhist monastery there. As the guest of King Thi-srong-detsan at Samye, he taught yoga, worship, and ritual and made Buddhist writings available to local people by translating scripture from Sanskrit into Tibetan.)
9. Continuing a Raj-era tradition established by expeditions of yore, every morning Chhôngba and his cook boy, Tendi, came to each client's tent to serve us steaming mugs of Sherpa tea in our sleeping bags. (Chap. Five, p. 77)
(Krakauer refers to the colonial era of Indian history, when the English maintained a vast global empire that included the Indian subcontinent, Ceylon, and Burma. The subservience of local servants preserves former English traditions and beliefs that Asians were inferior to the British and therefore well suited to lowly jobs.)
10. Rob announced that the first of these acclimatization sorties would occur on April 13—a one-day round-trip to Camp One, perched on the uppermost brow of the Khumbu Icefall, a vertical half mile above. (Chap. Five, p. 96)
(Key to Rob Hall's preparation of clients for rigorous climbs are a series of day trips up and back down the mountain. As each increases in length and demand, he intends to ready the lungs, heart, and brain for the rigors of high-altitude climbing.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novel.

Motivation

1. What raises climbers' interest in Everest?
(The mystique of Everest dates to the first triangulation of its height by theodolite in 1852. From that point on, it ranked among the world's seven highest summits as a challenge to serious climbers. Because of the joint

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efforts of expeditions and Sherpa carriers in 1921, repeated attempts to scale the summit produced detailed information about South Col, the Khumbu Glacier, and the Hillary Step. After George Leigh Mallory and Edward Felix Norton disappeared at Everest's summit in 1924 and Maurice Wilson froze to death below the North Col a decade later, subsequent expeditions approached the climb with caution and respect.

The emergence of Sherpa climber Tenzing Norgay in 1934 and his joint climb with New Zealander Edmund Hillary in 1953 won world acclaim for courage. The triumph over the world's highest mountain coincided with the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II and brought honor to the British Empire. Subsequent episodes restored the sobering reputation of Everest for endangering lives. In 1963, the night Tom Hornbein and Willi Unsoeld spent in the open on the summit piqued the imagination of Jon Krakauer, who was only nine years old when he learned of his neighbor's near-fatal experience. A decade later, the formation of the Himalayan Rescue Association after the deaths of four Japanese trekkers brought more interest to the coterie of climbers who intended to add the scaling of Everest to their list of accomplishments.)

Setting

2. Describe the base camp.

(Set up at 17,600 feet, base camp is Rob Hill's triumph. He welcomes his party to the "ad hoc village" that they would call home for six weeks. Within sight of hanging glaciers and the sound of calving avalanches, the mass of tents commands a sobering view of Nuptse Wall, Pumori, and the Khumbu Icefall. Climbers enjoy the view to the southwest, from which they can savor daytime warmth in T-shirts and cut-offs before retreating to sleeping bags when the temperature plunges each night.

More than a camp site, the base camp offers the amenities of a stereo system, library, electric lights, satellite phone and fax, showers, and the fresh bread and vegetables that arrive regularly by yak train. Climbers awakening in sleeping bags enjoy morning tea served by Chhonga and Tendi. The mess tent serves as Hall's command center for solving medical, labor, and climbing problems. To ensure the care of the place, team members reduce the mounting rubbish heap by removing accumulating rubble, which is returned to Namche and Kathmandu for examination.)

Character Development

3. How does the climb change Krakauer?

(Krakauer harbored a yen to climb Everest since living in the same Oregon town as Willi Unsoeld in boyhood. Krakauer, like most climbers, builds up his expertise through increasingly daring expeditions, including major adventures in Alaska. A defining moment in his contemplation of serious adventures is the writing of a biography of Christopher McCandless, a mystic hermit who starved to death while attempting to survive alone in the wild. Krakauer identifies with McCandless's yearning to live alone on his own terms.

After *Outside* magazine negotiates Krakauer's fee of \$65,000 for joining Rob Hall's expedition to Everest, the build-up of anticipation carries Krakauer from Seattle to Kathmandu at the possible cost of a divorce from his

wife Linda, herself a climber. Undaunted by outside pressures, he focuses his hopes on the assault on Everest and his ability to reach the world's highest summit. The collateral loss of life and multiple damage to climbers' bodies strip Krakauer of his boyish hopes of accomplishment. In the introduction to *Into Thin Air*, he divests the text of suspense by admitting at the outset, "I was a party to the death of good people, which is something that is apt to remain on my conscience for a very long time.")

Historical Milieu

4. How does evolving technology influence climbing?

(The addition of new technology over the 20th century eases the task of climbing and reduces the dangers of falling, dying of high-altitude stress, or disappearing without a trace. When climbers carry the first air tanks in 1921, the devices earn the scorn of Sherpas, who dub them "English air." Gradually, light-weight materials for tents and sleeping bags, warmer linings for clothing and mittens, and the firm grip of ice stakes and metal crampons remove the worst discomforts of living on the slopes of Mount Everest for weeks. Simultaneously, air rescue with helicopters puts injured expeditioners in reach of hospital care in Kathmandu within minutes of take-off from makeshift helipads on the slopes.

Some of the improvements carry difficulties of their own. Krakauer's party is laden with fax, telephones, and internet devices, largely the impediments carried by NBC agent Sandy Hill Pittman, who intends to file dispatches to NBC from 26,000 feet. The burdens demand the Sherpas add communications devices to the oxygen cylinders that must be delivered to Camp Four and removed on the descent. In the epilogue, Krakauer features the public's loathing and media harassment of Pittman, one of the lives that Everest poisoned.)

Theme

5. What does the author reveal about disappointment?

(Krakauer blames hubris, human error, and nature for the disappointing climb to Mount Everest's top. The terrifying storms and loss of life in a whiteout force him to examine human vulnerability, which falls victim to traffic jams on slopes and the emotional upheavals caused by Ian Woodall's lies and Scott Fischer's manipulation of clients. As he set out to do, Krakauer gets an up-close glimpse of commercialized tours led by both the best and worst of organizers. As a result, he delivers a scathing report on Woodall and Fischer, but mourns the deaths of Rob Hall and Andy Harris, both likable, honorable sportsmen.

In the final analysis, Krakauer eases his conscience by playing with data, noting that "the 12 fatalities amounted to only three percent of the 398 climbers who ascended higher than Base Camp—which is actually slightly below the historical fatality rate of 3.3 percent." The tossing around of figures fails to relieve the survivor's guilt that overcomes Krakauer when he wades into a sea of reporters at the Kathmandu airport and answers pointed questions from Namba, Yasuko's widower. On return home, Krakauer has little to say about his own fence-mending with Linda. Instead, he directs his writing at the unanswered question of why people dare to climb into

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the troposphere and what they risk by doing so.)

Interpretation

6. What does the book conclude about sport climbing?

(Krakauer straddles the fence on the issue of mountaineering as a sport and as a wildly dangerous boost to human pride. He recognizes that he was infected by the climbing bug early in his life and that he fed that bug into adulthood even after he promised his future wife that he would stop. The call of the cables and ice ax lure him repeatedly to his stash of gear, forcing him to admit he is hooked on high altitude exploration for the rush of accomplishment it brings. He explains, "I'd always known that climbing mountains was a high-risk pursuit. I accepted that danger was an essential component of the game—without it, climbing would be little different from a hundred other trifling diversions.")

Krakauer suggests serious climbers constitute a small fraction of the world's trekking enthusiasts. Some, like the Scandinavian who rides his bicycle to Nepal, travel their route alone. Others resort to the promises of men like Rob Hall and Scott Fischer, who take the sting out of planning and arranging expeditions by buying supplies, setting up camps, hiring carriers and medical teams, and educating climbers in what to expect at the top of the world. Conflicted as to the direction that sport climbing has taken, Krakauer must admit that tour guides commit wrongs in deceiving their clients. On the other hand, they earn regard from environmentalists for cleaning up the detritus left by past expeditions. Unable to offer a single response to criticisms of the sport, Krakauer can only acknowledge the draw is real and that he is happy to be numbered among the world's respected climbers.)

Conflict

7. Why do the climbers become confused at the summit?

(Multiple natural elements assault the team as it approaches the summit. Ultraviolet radiation dizzies the brain as it scorches the eyes; gale-force winds further distort conversation and endanger climbers from the possibility of a sudden lift off the icy faces as teams converge at traffic jams. Adding to confusion are nights of gasping for breath, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, headaches, and gastrointestinal complaints.)

Krakauer admits altitude affects the thinking process. As he scales his way down from the summit, he faces swirling snow, diminished light, and concern for injured climbers. He worries about Beck Weathers, whose eyesight was failing from ice scratches on the cornea and from the effects of low barometric pressure on eyes corrected by radial keratotomy.

Fear creeps in after the crash of thunder. Rappelling through a blizzard, Krakauer survives depleted oxygen, but moves more slowly. Feeling detached from his body, he presses on through temperatures of -70 degrees Fahrenheit and descends 200 feet into camp in a white-out. Exhausted beyond his strength to go on, he collapses in his tent without returning to the slope to assist less able climbers.)

Atmosphere

8. How does lack of leadership add to the confusion?

(The emotional atmosphere of the expedition suffers a serious lapse after the deaths of Scott Fischer and Rob

Hall. In the absence of qualified leadership, Stuart Hutchison emerges as the self-appointed rescuer. Even with the combined efforts of Hutchison and Anatoli Boukreev, the location of lost and fallen climbers in the dark, wind, and driving snow is virtually impossible. The location of Beck Weathers and Yasuko Namba at the extremes of their survival forces Anatoli to admit defeat after a gust blows Beck into the night.)

The next morning, Hutchison continues taking charge by awakening Krakauer to announce Andy Harris is missing. Rested, yet physically and emotionally wrecked by the deaths, Krakauer takes some of the burden of leadership. He prowls the tents looking for additional oxygen, offers first aid to Beck, and joins Hutchison in packing for the descent. At Camp Two, Krakauer scouts for level ground for a helipad before shouldering his own gear for the return to base camp.)

Author Purpose

9. How does Krakauer depict himself as a climber?

(Krakauer modestly depicts himself as physically fit and experienced in judging the quality of ice and remaining alert for seracs, falling boulders, and carelessness with rope and crampons. He justifies his good opinion of himself as a climber by recapping an interest in climbing from boyhood and the number of slopes that prepared him for Everest. After Mark Bryant, editor of Outside magazine, assigned him to make the trek, Krakauer arranged for a year's training period. As a result, he is capable of pacing himself and of focusing his attention on the dangers of Everest, beginning with the Khumbu Glacier and South Summit and back.)

Krakauer also wisely controls emotions that emerge during the climb, for example, when Hall orders him to wait for the others. Krakauer admits, "I felt frustrated about wasting so much time and peeved at falling behind everybody else. But I understood Hall's rationale, so I kept a tight lid on my anger." Later, Krakauer makes a hard assessment of the price he has paid for climbing: "It is easy to lose sight of the fact that climbing mountains will never be a safe, predictable, rule-bound enterprise. This is an activity that idealizes risk-taking.")

Comparative Literature

10. How does *Into Thin Air* compare with Jack London's "To Build a Fire"?

(The 1996 expedition to Everest and London's single Yukon traveler share some emotional and physical elements. In the longer work, the challenge of Everest is an unpredictable natural setting that can shift rapidly to avalanches, falling boulders, blinding snow, tearing winds, and sudden darkness, which causes the temperatures to plummet. In the short story, London's unnamed musher sets out over a difficult route with only his dog as companion. Both are equipped with inborn sensitivities to cold, wet, and discomfort. Similarly, Jon Krakauer and others respect intuitive inklings of impending danger.)

The two works employ character surprise at the rapid turn of events that alters an invigorating, positive experience to potential doom. London's outdoorsman loses control of the situation by failing to apply logic to his fruitless attempt to light a campfire, the only refuge that can save him from freezing to death. Equally threatened by

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deep cold, Krakauer's team presses into the upper reaches of the summit, losing mental acuity as they go because of lack of oxygen. The onslaught of dimmed vision and dwindling thinking capacity coupled with sleepless nights, loss of appetite, and physical illness reduces their ability to approach the summit one by one, leave on time, and make the descent in orderly fashion. The pile-up of people trying to reach the top and the false report that the cache of air canisters is useless combine with a harsh weather front to weed out eight hapless victims. Like London's trekker, those doomed to die on Everest recognize their gamble with nature does not favor success.)

HOW LANGUAGE WORKS

Through graphic details, Jon Krakauer re-creates for the reader the hardships of climbing Mount Everest.

1. For the description of the icefall above Periche, he resorts to metaphor from the human body: "We arrived at the lower end of the Khumbu Glacier, a twelve-mile tongue of ice that flows down from the south flank of Everest and would serve as our highway—I hoped mightily—to the summit."
2. Through contrast, he describes a rapid influx of bad weather over Camp One: "The sun was bright when the last of my teammates pulled into Camp One, but by noon a scum of high cirrus had blown in from the south; by three o'clock dense clouds swirled above the glacier and snow pelted the tents with a furious clamor."
3. At the next camp, he personifies nature with negative intent that suggests a personal animosity: "The altitude here manifested itself as a malicious force, making me feel as though I were afflicted with a raging red-wine hangover."
4. The heightening of drama at Camp Three confirms the freak happenings that can spell instant death: "Two thousand feet above the floor of the Western Cwm, just below Camp Three, a boulder the size of a small television came rocketing down from the cliffs above and smashed into Andy Harris's chest."
5. An intense time pressure stalks Krakauer on the final assault: "Above the South Col, up in the Death Zone, survival is to no small degree a race against the clock."
6. In retrospect, Krakauer captures the value of pitting his strength against nature on Earth's highest peak: "It was titillating to brush up against the enigma of mortality, to steal a glimpse across its forbidding frontier. Climbing was a magnificent activity, I firmly believed, not in spite of the inherent perils, but precisely because of them."

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art

1. Create a bulletin board contrasting settings at each stop along the way. Note details such as friendly locals, religious rituals, and threats to health and life. Mark the spots where characters die.
2. Design contrasting murals or posters to demonstrate these pairs: canisters and prayer flags, hot tea and steroid shots, the helipad and a wrapped corpse, faxes and field radios, crampon tracks and Everest's ice plume, a domed shelter and mess tent turned into a field hospital, and treatment for HACE and amputation of fin-

gers, hand, and nose.

3. With a group, design a brochure, web site, frieze, or poster series illustrating relationships between guides and climbers of different nations, religions, and races. What do the climbers have in common? Why do the Japanese and South African expeditioners bear the good will of their nations? How does Krakauer laud the Sherpas for their dedication and hard work?
4. Draw a montage or mural detailing food, drink, clothing, domes, mess tent, electronic and climbing equipment, ropes, Gamow bag, hospital set-up, and transportation during the expedition. Include trinkets that accompany people to the top of Everest, particularly flags and photos.
5. List books, stories, movies, videos, art, sculpture, photography, dance, song, and other creativity that depict the area around Mount Everest.

Drama

1. Improvise a scene in which Krakauer returns to *Outside* magazine, visits with Hansen's family, confers with Beck Weathers or Martin Adams on details, questions a doctor about the effects of frozen cornea or hypoxia, or tells Linda of his adventures during the climb. What might Krakauer regret about his decision to make the journey? What details might he keep from his wife and from Doug's family and other survivors, for example, the misery of HACE or the terror of descending in the dark during a blizzard?
2. Role-play the part of a doctor, nurse, helicopter pilot, lama, Red Cross volunteer, licensing agent, innkeeper, spouse or child of a dead climber, or rehabilitation counselor. Explain how the story would change if Krakauer had not reached the top.

Economics

1. Generate a list of post-climbing jobs for successful expeditioners. Put their experiences to use.
2. Total in columns the year-by-year expenditures and personal loss for the assault on Mount Everest, including licenses and fees, hiring of Sherpas, medical care, transportation, and replacement of lost or outdated equipment and clothing.

Geography

1. Draw a Venn diagram or cause-and-effect chart explaining faulty judgment or unwise decisions at each step along the slope of Everest, particularly bottlenecks and failure to clip to safety lines. What is the purpose of carrying along electronic gear for email, telephone calls, and faxes?
2. Explain in a chalk talk the types of terrain that pose the greatest advantage for bivouac, sunbathing, climbing, transporting heavy gear, retrieving trash, searching for lost team members, issuing electronic messages, setting up a field hospital, and landing helicopters.
2. Compose a tour guide of Mount Everest. Include these sites: Hillary Step, Kathmandu, Nepal, Tibet, Darjeeling, India, Bangkok, Lukla, Khumbu Glacier, Tengboche, Syangboche, Lhotse Face, and Pheriche.

Health and First Aid

1. Make an oral report on high elevation illness affecting

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brain, heart, lungs, eyes, or gastrointestinal track. Comment on Krakauer's inability to follow direction and make decisions after he begins to run out of oxygen. Explain how portable equipment reduces the stress of respiration in thin air at high altitude.

- Using charts of the human brain, heart, and respiratory system, explain why high altitude cardiac or pulmonary edema kills quickly.
- Make a chart of advice to beginners concerning first aid in the field. Name items useful in saving lives, for example, extra oxygen, splints, back boards, painkillers, steroid shots, warm clothes, and hot fluids.

History and Social Studies

- Write a theme, create a web site, or sketch a flow chart describing the different levels of command among tour coordinators and the responsibilities each guide has to guard the climbers and to accomplish their mutual objective. Make a separate presentation on the medical hierarchy, which remains behind at base camp, but keeps in contact by radio and helicopter.
- Divide the class into small groups to discuss these questions:
 - How do squabbles among the South Africans endanger morale? Why does Ian Woodall include women in the group? How does his exploitation of black nationalism harm innocent people?
 - What influence do childhood heroes have on Krakauer as an adult?
 - How does Krakauer's climb differ from that of Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay? Why is media response different?
- Summarize in a chalk talk the influence of the Seven Summits—Everest, Aconcagua, McKinley, Kilimanjaro, Elbrus, Vinson Massif, and Kosciuszko—on sportswriting. Contrast the scaling of all seven with the accomplishments of Neil Armstrong on the moon, Libby Riddles and Susan Butcher on the Iditarod race course, Dr. Peter Throckmorton and Mel Fisher in underwater archeology, or Jacques Cousteau at the bottom of the sea.
- Make an oral report on the limited role of women in planning and carrying out the expedition, for example, Linda Krakauer, Sandy Hill Pittman, Dr. Caroline Mackenzie, Helen Wilton, Charlotte Fox, and Yasuko Namba. Suggest why Biedleman regrets most the death of the small-framed Japanese woman.
- Using a computer art program, create lessons in expedition command. Draw on the strategies of Rob Hall and Scott Fischer on acclimating climbers to high altitudes, sending Sherpas ahead to build camps and place ropes, lecturing groups on the protocol of leaving the summit by a set time, and assisting weaker members in making the climb without endangering themselves or others.

Language Arts

- Illustrate a gazetteer of terms from the book: troposphere, rappel, ice ax, apex, theodolite, refraction, plumbline, *rimpoche*, lama, crevasse, tether, crampon, puja, amulet, cwm, serac, carabiner, distal, stalagmite, butress, col, edema, Gamow bag, jumar, matrix, jet stream, spur, steroid, rising traverse, and hyperbaric.
- Draw up a contrasting list of elements that characterize

the climbers, for example, Charlotte Fox's skillful first aid.

- Enumerate general pieces of advice for beginners, such as familiarizing themselves with the use of crampons and snap lines.
- Read aloud passages that capture a single negative feeling, especially deceit, inappropriate bluster, hesitation, anger, terror, loss, self-doubt, disappointment, blame, or grief. Add details that express how these feelings linger and haunt Krakauer, especially after he publishes *Into Thin Air*. Why does the reunion at the Seattle airport deepen his emotional response to Doug's death? What does Krakauer learn from Beck Weathers's example?
- Read or listen to an audio cassette of Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire." Compare Krakauer to the main character in terms of contentment in nature, fear, faulty judgment, inadequacies, self-knowledge, and courage. What do both men learn by experience? Describe the scenes in which each discovers what novelist Stephen Crane called "the great death."
- Using incidents from the book, comment on gradual changes in the writer. Explain how Krakauer the writer rifles his feelings, loyalties, and memories to describe Krakauer the adventurer. Name areas of his experiences which he omits from the book, for example, concern for Linda and his marriage, medical treatment for frozen cornea and exhaustion, and relationship with Mark Bryant, editor of *Outside* magazine.
- Write a poem, slogan, or the lyrics to a song or hymn in which you express the fears and self-doubts of amateur and professional climbers. Compare your lyrics to songs about or other forms of adventure far from home, family, comfort, and safety.
- Write an encyclopedia entry on the troposphere. Add details that explain the importance of acclimatization, mittens, goggles, extra oxygen, food, water, and rest to assist the body in coping with the world's highest mountain. Comment on the beauties of peaks in the upper reaches, for example, bright sunlight on sparkling ice and snow.
- Compose a list of questions to accompany a televised interview with successful climbers and guides. Balance questions and answers to give a fair, unbiased view of day-to-day activities and demands. Inquire about the ethics of making money off public curiosity about accidents and deaths along the way.
- Discuss in an editorial why clients of Rob Hall and Scott Fischer might prefer that their teams contain no socialites, media reporters, or photographers.
- In a brief report, summarize the psychological affirmation of reading accurate news reports of the assault on Everest and on the risks of returning alive and unharmed.

Psychology

- Discuss in a short speech the emotional effects of alarming cold, howling wind, blizzard and whiteout, falling boulders, icy crevasses, headaches, blindness, and sleeplessness on climbers. What physical and mental symptoms demonstrate the effects of the final assault?
- Explain why a sensitive writer like Krakauer chooses to

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objectify the subject of sport climbing rather than to defend or glorify it. Include an explanation of his comments on breaking a pre-marital promise to Linda to give up climbing.

3. Compose a lecture on dealing with the maiming or death of a climber. Suggest ways that families can relieve sorrow and loss.
5. Explain the last sentence of the introduction. What does Krakauer mean about being "a party to the death of good people"?

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List characteristics of individual characters.
2. Compile a list of actions that demonstrate planning, for example, repeated excursions up the slope to acclimate climbers to thin air.
3. Compose a scene in which Jon Krakauer addresses Seattle residents about his climb to the top of Everest. Express his mixed feelings about multiple injuries and deaths and his own inability to help teammates lost in the blizzard. Propose a suitable award for his contribution to sport journalism.
4. List settings and explain the role of each in the upward and downward climb. Note the hazards and discomforts of each location.

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

1. reprehensible, disintegration
2. glacier, fissures
3. patrician, queue
4. serac, adrenaline
5. metabolize, sustenance
6. discern, carapace
7. blistering, reeling
8. ascent, acrimonious
9. lee, hunkered
10. cognoscenti, denigrate

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. C |
| 2. A | 7. D |
| 3. C | 8. C |
| 4. B | 9. A |
| 5. D | 10. A |

Part II: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. H | 6. D | 11. L |
| 2. A | 7. F | 12. E |
| 3. J | 8. C | 13. I |
| 4. O | 9. M | 14. B |
| 5. K | 10. N | 15. J |

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Yasuko | 6. radio |
| 2. Camp Four | 7. ice axes |
| 3. telephone | 8. watch |
| 4. Scott Fischer | 9. 16 |
| 5. steroid | 10. Anatoli |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. A | 11. N |
| 2. D | 7. K | 12. H |
| 3. O | 8. J | 13. L |
| 4. G | 9. E | 14. I |
| 5. M | 10. B | 15. C |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part III: Completion (20 points)

1. Tibet, amputation
2. Hillary, Taiwanese
3. 1953, Tenzing Norgay
4. Kathmandu, helicopter
5. base, Scott Fischer

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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VOCABULARY TEST

Complete each of the following sentences by underlining an appropriate word from the lists in each line.

1. The three teammates seemed unconcerned by the reports of Ian's (**reprehensible, undulated, resonating, relishing**) behavior and rumors predicting their expedition's imminent (**chorten, buttress, disintegration, vexation**).
2. As the (**theodolite, glacier, vertigo, entropy**) inched over humps and dips in the Cwm's underlying strata, it fractured into countless vertical (**impacts, fissures, connoisseurs, portents**).
3. Just before Kasischke—a tall, athletic, silver-haired man with (**patrician, apoplectic, nonpareil, carping**) reserve—emerged from the airport customs (**matrix, queue, catharsis, Shangri-La**), I asked Andy how many times he'd been on Everest.
4. Again I redlined my cardiovascular output rushing to ascend from its threatening shadow, and again dropped to my knees when I arrived on the (**machismo, accoutrement, carabiner, serac's**) summit, gasping for air and trembling from the excess of (**adrenaline, flux, allure, hypoxia**) fizzing through my veins.
5. My appetite vanished and my digestive system, which required abundant oxygen to (**moraine, bivouac, metabolize, deplete**) food, failed to make use of much of what I forced myself to eat; instead my body began consuming itself for (**vertex, rimpoche, sustenance, euphoria**).
6. The first body he came to turned out to be Namba, but Hutchison couldn't (**veneer, discern, tether, accentuate**) who it was until he knelt in the gale and chipped a three-inch-thick (**scrim, carapace, enigma, antipodal**) of ice from her face.
7. The (**engendering, cerebral, blistering, crepuscular**) intensity of the collective wrath over Everest—and the fact that so much of that wrath was directed at her—took Pittman completely by surprise and left her (**reeling, arable, histrionic, motleyed**).
8. Relying on bottled oxygen as an aid to (**jurisprudence, depressurization, escarpment, ascent**) is a practice that's sparked (**sundry, unwarranted, acrimonious, indolent**) debate ever since the British first took experimental oxygen rigs to Everest in 1921.
9. In the (**contrail, infrastructure, lee, midriff**) of a boulder no larger than a dishwasher, the climbers (**surfeited, roiled, leached, hunkered**) in a pathetic row on a patch of gale-scoured ice.
10. By then it had become fashionable among alpine (**parvenus, cognoscenti, raconteurs, fetters**) to (**denigrate, cascade, dishearten, cajole**) Everest as a "slag heap"—a peak lacking sufficient technical challenges or aesthetic appeal to be a worthy objective for a "serious" climber, which I desperately aspired to be.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the phrase that completes each of the following sentences. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Ultraviolet radiation causes
 - A. HACE.
 - B. headaches.
 - C. gastrointestinal upset.
 - D. death.
- _____ 2. In place of leaders who have died, the responsibility falls on
 - A. Stuart Hutchison.
 - B. Scott Fisher.
 - C. Lopsang.
 - D. Martin Adams.
- _____ 3. Ian Woodall lies about
 - A. attaching himself to the snap line.
 - B. choosing the same date as Rob Hall for reaching the summit.
 - C. listing names on a climbing permit.
 - D. how the Sherpa broke his femur on a fall into the crevasse.
- _____ 4. The most frightening part of climbing the South Col is
 - A. the danger of frostbite.
 - B. the icefall.
 - C. gale-force wind.
 - D. the absence of rope lines and ice pins.
- _____ 5. To *Men's Journal*, Anatoli Boukreev explains that he had to
 - A. pull Sandy Pittman over the Hillary Step and down the ice face.
 - B. leave Beck Weathers for dead because he had no chance of recovery.
 - C. bang pot lids together to get Neal Beidleman's attention.
 - D. keep moving to conserve his strength.
- _____ 6. Dr. Kamler discovers that Beck Weathers's frostbite is
 - A. no cause to summon a helicopter from Kathmandu.
 - B. worsening from soaking in lukewarm water.
 - C. worse than Makalu's.
 - D. limited to the tip of his nose.
- _____ 7. The Sherpas disapprove of
 - A. the Xi stone.
 - B. leaving dried bodies on the ice slope.
 - C. carrying oxygen bottles for climbers' use.
 - D. sex between unmarried couples on Mount Everest.
- _____ 8. The South Africans are the first blacks to
 - A. reach the summit.
 - B. lose a leader on the descent.
 - C. receive a climbing permit.
 - D. include a woman in their party.
- _____ 9. Maurice Wilson named a gypsy moth
 - A. *Ever Wrest*.
 - B. *Lama*.
 - C. *Sikkim*.
 - D. after Eric Shipton.
- _____ 10. In the early days of May,
 - A. monsoon rains halt the jet stream.
 - B. Helen Wilton has many more patients to treat for cerebral swelling.
 - C. a Norwegian climber reaches the summit solo.
 - D. daytime temperatures on Everest plunge to -100 degrees.

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Part II: Matching (30 points)

Match the following places with characters from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| _____ 1. Krakauer gets reacquainted with Linda. | A. summit |
| _____ 2. Krakauer finds discarded canisters and a broken pole. | B. Manhattan |
| _____ 3. The body must adjust to thin air above 25,000 feet. | C. South Summit |
| _____ 4. The team stops at the top of the Khumbu icefall. | D. Camp Two |
| _____ 5. Daily dispatches arrive from Sandy Hill Pittman. | E. New Zealand |
| _____ 6. Doug develops a frozen larynx. | F. Camp Three |
| _____ 7. The climbers must cook for themselves. | J. Death Zone |
| _____ 8. Andy Harris mistakenly assumes that the cache of oxygen is depleted. | H. Seattle |
| _____ 9. Krakauer meets the <i>rimpoche</i> . | I. Lhotse Face |
| _____ 10. The team encounters professional Sherpa guides. | J. Stockholm |
| _____ 11. Krakauer retreats to his room and releases pent-up sobs. | K. NBC |
| _____ 12. Rob begins recruiting clients. | L. Karuda Hotel |
| _____ 13. Lopsang and two others die in an avalanche. | M. Tengboche |
| _____ 14. A camera crew ambushes Sandy. | N. Phakding |
| _____ 15. A climber departs from home to bicycle to Nepal. | O. Camp One |

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| _____ | 1. Whose death makes Neal Beidleman feel guilty? |
| _____ | 2. Where does Krakauer assist Sherpas in anchoring tents? |
| _____ | 3. What does Lopsang complain about carrying? |
| _____ | 4. Who neglects to turn clients around at the summit? |
| _____ | 5. What does Charlotte Fox inject into Sandy Pittman's hip? |
| _____ | 6. What do the South Africans refuse to give up? |
| _____ | 7. What do searchers locate when they hunt for Andy Harris and Doug Hansen? |
| _____ | 8. What irritates Beck Weathers's swollen arm? |
| _____ | 9. How many climbers make it to the top during Krakauer's expedition? |
| _____ | 10. Who is blinded in one eye by a bus accident? |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain why Krakauer feels compelled to write about Everest.
2. Contrast the job of camp physician with that of Sherpa carrier.
3. Account for Krakauer's enjoyment of solitude during the climb.
4. Summarize events that display human misjudgement or error.
5. Describe the equipment that reduces danger of falling.

INTO THIN AIR

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Match each of the following descriptions from the novel with a character name. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| _____ 1. conceals the suffering of a cyst on the liver. | A. Jon Krakauer |
| _____ 2. hesitates to touch the dead. | B. Lopsang |
| _____ 3. mistakenly opens Jon's oxygen valve. | C. Edmund Hillary |
| _____ 4. turns out to be a fraud. | D. Sherpas |
| _____ 5. is found with three inches of ice on her face. | E. Sandy Pittman |
| _____ 6. promises his future wife to give up climbing. | F. Scott Fischer |
| _____ 7. speaks privately with Doug about not giving up. | G. Ian Woodall |
| _____ 8. loses a hand, fingers, and nose to cold. | H. Mike Groom |
| _____ 9. wearies Sherpas with burdensome electronic equipment and short-roping. | I. Tenzing Norgay |
| _____ 10. weeps that he failed Rob by not rescuing him. | J. Beck Weathers |
| _____ 11. serves as expedition doctor. | K. Rob Hall |
| _____ 12. gives Jon his own oxygen bottle. | L. Linda Krakauer |
| _____ 13. knows that Jon may not be coming home. | M. Yasuko Namba |
| _____ 14. immigrated to Nepal and worked for Eric Shipton. | N. Helen Wilton |
| _____ 15. accused Rob of disrespect for Mount Everest. | O. Andy Harris |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. The obsession with the doomed climb causes Krakauer to write first an article, then a book.
- _____ 2. Sandy Hill Pittman disappears from public view out of her shame that she caused death to fellow climbers.
- _____ 3. The wind threatens to destroy the domed shelters at Camp Four.
- _____ 4. Krakauer helps guide the helicopter to earth to airlift Beck to Kathmandu.
- _____ 5. Arrival near the summit makes climbers sleepy and hungry.
- _____ 6. Krakauer answers Namba's questions about his wife's death.
- _____ 7. Months after the climb, Krakauer realizes that he was talking to Doug Hansen in his last moments, but thought he was talking to Scott Fischer.
- _____ 8. Andy Harris is correct about the depletion of all the remaining oxygen tanks.
- _____ 9. Krakauer is embarrassed to wear a magic stone, which the lama blesses with good luck.
- _____ 10. Climbers take seriously the heavy task of removing detritus left on the slopes by past expeditions.

INTO THIN AIR

Part III: Completion (20 points)

Fill in the blanks below with a word or phrase which completes the sentence. Place your answer in the spaces provided.

1. Reflecting on his arrival at the peak 29,028 feet above Nepal and _____ at 1:17 P. M., Krakauer recalls the rogue storm that kills eight people and forces the _____ of Beck Weathers's right hand.
2. Krakauer recalls the traffic jam at the _____ Step, where twelve climbers from the American, New Zealand, and _____ teams line up to make the ascent.
3. The first official climbing occurs on May 29, _____, after Edmund Hillary and _____'s joint ascent.
4. After flying from Seattle to Bangkok to _____, Nepal, Krakauer meets companion mountaineers and travels by _____ to Lukla.
5. The group presses on to _____ camp, where Krakauer meets _____, Hall's self-aggrandizing competitor.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe how climbers pass the time before ascending the slope.
2. Give reasons for the multiple foul-ups that lead to deaths, near blinding, falls, and frostbite on the final assault.
3. Discuss Krakauer's attitude toward media-hungry climbers.
4. Account for the odd sounds and falling boulders that challenge climbers.
5. Summarize events that precede the death of a climber from high altitude edema.



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