# To Climb or Not to Climb: An Argumentative Writing Unit

## Unit Overview (including context):
This unit will be used in a 10th grade English/language arts class and will require the students to read a variety of information pertaining to the dangers and successes of extreme mountain climbing. They will be reading nonfiction materials (some long/some short) as well as viewing a variety of documentaries, both long and short. Additionally, students will be required to do research on their own regarding extreme mountain climbing. The summative assessment of the unit is an argumentative paper which will require the students to synthesize material from the readings, viewings, and independent research in order to support a claim.

## Unit Rationale/Purpose for Instruction (including Key Shift(s)):

The students must have critical/close reading skills, and this unit will help them to develop and hone these skills. Additionally, they need to have interaction with nonfiction texts and become comfortable extracting key material from these texts. The topic is used to pique the students’ interest: access to the unknown. Furthermore, this unit will fortify research skills and the incorporation of sources within a paper. They will be moving on to a research paper later in the trimester, so the skills acquired in this unit will be immediately applicable later in the trimester.

### Key Shift #1:
Students will build knowledge and academic language through a balance of content rich complex nonfiction and literary texts.

### Key Shift #2:
Students will participate in Reading/Writing/Speaking that is grounded in evidence from the text, across the curriculum.
**Targeted Standards:**
Idaho Core Grade-Level Standards:
- **Central Standard: W.10.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- **RI.10.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **W.10.8:** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- **SL.10.1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- **L.10.5:** Demonstrate

**Essential Question(s)/Enduring Understandings:**

**Essential Questions:**
- What about the idea of “a challenge” is so intriguing to human beings?
- Why do human beings risk safety and wellbeing in order to explore the unknown?
- Why are stories about difficult decisions so interesting to human beings?
- Is it worthwhile to face what we don’t understand?

**Enduring Understandings:**
- Without risk, there would be no challenge.
- Decisions can have positive as well as negative impacts on individuals, groups, and society.
- Perspective has a tremendous impact on the choices, challenges, and risks that individuals deem personally appropriate.

**Measurable Outcomes:**

**Learning Goals:**
- Students will analyze multiple sources of evidence.
- Students will analyze complex/abstract themes, perspectives, and concepts.
- Students will draw and justify conclusions.
- Students will cite evidence and develop a logical argument for conjectures.
- Students will synthesize information across multiple sources or texts.

**Student-Friendly Learning Targets:**
- I understand what analysis of content is.
- I understand that clear ideas and accurate details within an informative/explanatory text are linked to effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- I understand which selections of content best support my main idea.
- I understand the outlining process and how it contributes to a first draft.
- I understand the peer editing process and how it contributes to a polished final draft.

**Success Criteria:**
- I will review students’ annotations and explanations of how they interact with various texts.
- I will have a rubric that will outline the skills focus and qualities that I want the students to achieve.
- I will gather anchors that students can use to visualize how to achieve various scores on the rubric.
- I will get completed essays from the students as artifacts to review.
understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

### Summative Assessment:
- **Summative Assessment Description:** Students will write a synthesis essay. This essay will require pre-writing, drafting, revision, and final drafting. Students will also need to research and examine sources in order to incorporate them into the synthesis essay. The assignment sheet and the rubric for the essay are included with this document.

- **Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Explanation:** From Hess’ Cognitive Rigor Matrix and Curricular Examples, the assessment would range from a Level 2 to Level 4 in reading and writing. The unit will particularly hit the DOK Level 4 in Analyze, Evaluate, and Create when the students will be reading multiple sources in order to synthesize the information and use the information as supporting evidence for their essays’ claims.

- **Rubric or Assessment Guidelines:** See the attached rubric. (Appendix D)

### Central Text: *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer (Appendix A)

### Text Complexity Analysis:
- **Quantitative:** 1320L

- **Qualitative:**

#### Text Structure:
**Very Complex**—This text is told through the first person narration of the author, journalist and participant, Jon Krakauer. The sentences consist of many compound, complex, and compound-complex varieties. The events within the text occur in chronological order; however, there are many back stories, alternate perspectives (via interviews with survivors or family of those who perished), and personal commentaries interjected within the chronological events. There are graphics given to support the events within the text and provide a better understanding of both the settings and participants.

#### Language Features:
**Moderately Complex**—This novel is, for the most part, literal. The only complication is that it has a fair amount of technical climbing jargon and terminology. There are words/phrases associated with climbing and adventurism that are often unfamiliar (bivouac, coulier, edema, etc.). There are also many vocabulary words that will be unfamiliar to most students (gangrenous, innocuous, benign, etc.). Most words can be deciphered through context and continued reading.

#### Meaning/Purpose:
**Very Complex**—The novel operates on a variety of levels. On the surface, the story can be read at its most basic level: the cause and effect relationships between the climbers and their choices. Multiple meanings come into play when the vast arrays of themes are unearthed. These themes includes ideas such as the dangers of the unknown, compassion and survival, interdependence versus independence, self-sacrifice, and the internal moral conflict of making truly hard choices while accepting the consequences.
Knowledge Demands:
Very Complex—As stated in the Meaning/Purpose piece, there are multiple levels of meaning and themes presented in this novel. Additionally, most students do not have much familiarity with mountain climbing and can find the setting and situations presented difficult to relate to on a narrow, literal view; however, they begin to understand the material better if it is stripped down to the most broad of views such as internal conflict resulting from difficult choices. The text’s moderate language demands, coupled with the more trying aspects of meanings within the piece, can make this text a struggle for many students.

- Reader-Task:
  RI.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
  RI.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide and object summary of the text.
  RI.9-10.3: Analyze how the author unfolds and analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
  RI.9-10.6: Determine the author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
  SL.9-10.1d: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reassigning presented.

Potential Challenges this Text Poses:
1. Many students may be very unfamiliar with the genre (nonfiction adventure); therefore, they could struggle with seeing a standard pattern of events that tend to occur within this genre.
2. Without a basic understanding of climbing terms, many references within this novel could be confusing or meaningless.
3. The multiple themes may be difficult for many students to uncover without directed help from the teacher.

Differentiation/Supports for Students:
1. Due to the lengthy nature of this nonfiction novel, an adapted reader (Appendix J) and/or “chunked” portions of the novel which focus on smaller segments of the actual text could be useful for those students who struggle with large passages.
2. Initially reading aloud for the students to follow along could prove helpful in untangling the long and complex sentences frequently introduced.
3. Having students work in groups to consider questions about and/or identify evidence that supports potential themes will help the students be exposed to different viewpoints and ways of interacting with the more subtle ideas within the novel.
4. Having a discussion with the class that connects the conflicts within the novel to broader conflicts within the students’ lives could help students better see their own world mirrored in this world of ill-fated adventurists.
Lesson Plan/Brief Outline:

Frontloading/Anticipatory Set
1. Students will think metaphorically about an “Everest” in their own lives. These “Everests” can be physical, mental, or emotional, but should represent some large challenge these students face. They will then journal for 10 minutes about such a personal challenge.
2. Students will be shown a set of pictures: Everest, climbers, storms, deceased climbers, maimed survivors. The following question will introduce us to personal views on climbing: Why do you think some people are so drawn to climbing mountains? Would you want to do it?
3. Students will be introduced to the central text with a brief activity that will require the students to consider the first essential question: Is it worth the risk to our personal safety in order to explore the unknown?

Instruction/Practice
4. Students will then read and annotate an excerpt from the central text. They will annotate for positives and negatives associated with extreme climbing.
5. After the reading, the students will reflect on the essential question and be given a new one: Why are stories about difficult decisions so interesting to human beings?
6. After the discussion, the To Climb or Not to Climb Writing Assignment (Appendix C) will be handed out along with the rubric (Appendix D). The compositions will be assessed with.
7. Students will watch the IMAX Everest video, other videos, view the pictures, and read the articles. They will do this in order to find information that will support their claim in relation to the writing assignment. Students will have the opportunity to annotate the articles.
8. Students will be given a day to research outside sources and find other materials to support their claims on the paper.
9. Students will begin filling in the outline for the writing assignment. (Appendix F)
10. Students will see an example of how to cite material and set up a paragraph within the synthesis essay. (Appendix G)
11. Students will write their rough drafts.
12. Students will peer edit with the use of the rubric that will be used by me.
13. Students will revise their rough drafts and begin their final draft.

Summative Assessment
14. Students will turn in their final draft complete with in-text citations and a works cited page.
Week One

Please note: The following days are set up for a 70-minutes teaching block. Shorter class periods will have units that result in 3 ½-4 weeks. Due to the introduction of a synthesis paper and group peer editing, two additional days are built into the schedule in order to accommodate for mini-lessons and re-teaching as necessary.

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<tr>
<th>Activity/Strategy</th>
<th>Texts and Resources</th>
<th>Sequencing and Scaffolding</th>
<th>Formative Assessments</th>
<th>Targeted Vocabulary</th>
<th>Instructional Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday: Class discussion beginning with the “Make the Connection” portion of the text. This will be in their student journals that contain “bellringers,” “writing into the day,” or “writing to finish the day” prompts and responses.</td>
<td>Writing journal into Thin Air (Appendix A)</td>
<td>Writing into the day</td>
<td>Listening to discussion.</td>
<td>Academic: Annotation Critical Reading Main Idea Situational Irony Content: Acclimatize Participatory Journalism Crampons Sherpa</td>
<td>Begin by asking what “mountains/Everests” (challenges) students have in their own lives. Have the students journal about their personal mountains for 10 minutes. Their writing should include what the challenge is, if/how they aim to approach it, and what the effect of a successful (or unsuccessful) attempt could be. Should students need an example, the teacher will supply one. Discussion regarding the essential question and the “Make the Connection” question must be encouraged. A kinesthetic activity for those who are pro-climbing and those who are anti-climbing is a great way to get the students going. Photos and graphics must help the students to understand this foreign terrain.</td>
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<td>Students will be shown graphics of Everest and those involved in the climb. Students will begin reading Into Thin Air. They will also be annotating in order to identify the positives and negatives associated with climbing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Whole group discussion</td>
<td>Checking for understanding through the annotations.</td>
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**Tuesday:**  
Begin the day with a class discussion reviewing what was covered in yesterday’s reading.  
**DOK 1 & 2**  
Continue/Finish reading and annotating *Into Thin Air*  
Close reading Activity 1 (attached on page 13 of this unit)  
**DOK 3**  
Discuss the essential question: Why are stories about difficult decisions so interesting to human beings?  
**DOK 2**  
Students will write to end the day by summarizing what happened in *Into Thin Air*  

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<tr>
<td><em>Into Thin Air</em> (Appendix A)</td>
<td>Finish reading independently Students may consult with classmates to help with comprehension after the initial reading is finished</td>
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<td>Checking for understanding through the annotations Listening to discussion</td>
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The text can be a bit tricky. Allow the students to consult with each other in order to straighten out timing and help make meaning of the text.

After the discussion with the students, the Close Reading Activity 1 will be used to help them zero in on a specific piece of the text. This portion of the text will draw the students’ attention back to the essential questions of, 1) Why do we risk safety and wellbeing in order to explore the unknown? And 2) Why are stories about difficult decisions so intriguing to human beings?  

**Wednesday:**  
Students will write into the day by rereading pgs. 219-220 and focus their  

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<tr>
<td>Literacy Integration mini-lesson text portion (pg. 219-220) (Appendix A) (attached on pages 12-13 of this unit)</td>
<td>Independent work to fill in the note catcher</td>
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| Check that note catcher has been filled out. | **Content:**  
Documentary |

Pause at various points in the video in order to check for understanding.
responsive writing around rhetorical questions, dashes, or specific comma usage.

Discussion over the writing assignment.

Students will watch the video and use a note catcher to record pertinent information that will build either side of the argument.

| Thursday: Open with the Close Reading Activity 2 (attached below on page 15 of this unit) DOK 3 |
| Climbing Article Packet (Appendix B) |
| Climbing Terms (Appendix H) |

Climbing Article Packet (Appendix B) Climbing Terms (Appendix H) Students will be broken into partnerships and will carefully go through the text segment for the close reading activity. Check that students have settled on a claim. Check that students are finding evidence to support their claims. **Academic:** Claim Supporting Evidence **Content:** Serac Couloir Bivouac Ice screws Bottleneck Students will begin reading and annotating the article packet in order to find evidence across

Students must make the decision as to which side they will take on the writing assignment. DOK 3

“I do, we do, you do” approach to finding evidence. Demonstrate an example of what one or two pieces of supporting evidence would look like for each claim. Make this a class discussion so students are giving the input and identifying why the evidence supports the claim.

During the close reading activity, students must respond to a variety of text dependent questions. They must explain/justify their answers using supporting evidence from the text.

Focus on crafting the claim (thesis).
the texts that will support the students’ claims. 
**DOK 4**

Students will write to end the day by explaining what claim they will be making.

### Friday:
Continue reading and annotating the articles.  
**DOK 4**

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<td><strong>Monday:</strong></td>
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| Students will use laptops in order to identify two additional resources regarding their chosen claims.  
**DOK 4** | Internet            | Independent practice        | Check that students are identifying useful and credible resources | **Academic:** Credible Source | Remind students that they are looking for supporting evidence that is tied directly to their claims. Give the students a reminder of how to determine whether a source is reliable and/or credible. |
<p>| <strong>Tuesday:</strong>               | Into Thin Air (Appendix A) | Independent practice        | Look at outlines      | <strong>Academic:</strong>     Claim Thesis statement | Show the students an example of an outline that has been completed. Make sure to circulate continuously in order to answer questions and help with the outlining. Fill in the thesis statement/claim. |
|                           | Article Packet (Appendix B) | Fill in the graphic organizer for the outline |                       |                     | Focus on crafting a hook. |
|                           | Everest Documentary  |                             |                       |                     |                     |
|                           | Outline template and example (Appendix F) |                             |                       |                     |                     |</p>
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<td>Wednesday: Students will finish their outlines and begin their rough drafts</td>
<td>Composing first and subsequent drafts</td>
<td><em>Into Thin Air</em> <em>(Appendix A)</em>&lt;br&gt;Article Packet <em>(Appendix B)</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Everest Documentary</em>&lt;br&gt;MLA Formatting Paper <em>(Appendix I)</em></td>
<td>Fill in the graphic organizer for the outline</td>
<td>Look at outlines</td>
<td>Focus on three topic sentences and identifying supporting evidence for each topic. As students begin their outlines, go over the MLA formatting procedures by use of the MLA Formatting Helper. Answer students or demonstrate the skills on the projector should students need additional support or explanation.</td>
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<td>Thursday: Students continue their rough drafts</td>
<td>Composing first and subsequent drafts</td>
<td>Laptops and/or paper and pencil</td>
<td>Monitor the drafting phase</td>
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<td>Specifically craft body paragraphs that use in-text citations and explanations that connect the evidence to the point being made/topic sentence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday: Students finish rough drafts</td>
<td>Composing first and subsequent drafts</td>
<td>Laptops and/or paper and pencil</td>
<td>Continue monitoring the drafting phase</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students make their final touches to the body of the paper and focus in on the conclusion (point review, claim restatements, parting thoughts).</td>
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<td>Week Three</td>
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<td>Monday: Students peer edit each other’s papers using the grading rubric DOK 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Rubric <em>(Appendix D)</em></td>
<td>Using an exemplar, the teacher will model how to review and edit an introductory and body paragraph for the synthesis paper using the rubric. Students will be put into groups of three in order to</td>
<td>Peer editing</td>
<td>Academic: Peer editing</td>
<td>Make sure to go over the peer editing procedure and explicitly outline the expectations of the peer editors.</td>
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perform the peer editing. Depending on the form that the rough draft is in (written or electronic), students will make comments regarding peers’ rough drafts. If the students are editing an electronic draft, the notes feature of the program will be used. (Students have learned how to do this in previous lessons on essays done prior to the argumentative paper.)

<table>
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<th>Tuesday: Students make revisions based upon feedback from the peer editing</th>
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<td><strong>Composing first and subsequent drafts</strong></td>
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<td>Students begin writing the final draft of the synthesis essay</td>
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<td><strong>DOK 4</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Composing final drafts</strong></td>
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<th>Wednesday: Students finish their final drafts and print off their publishable draft to submit</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DOK 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Laptops</th>
<th>Independent Work</th>
<th>Visual checks</th>
<th>Be available for students as they may encounter tech issues or have questions about MLA formatting.</th>
</tr>
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Be available for students as they may encounter tech issues or have questions about MLA formatting.
**Composing final drafts**

**Thursday:**
Additional day scheduled in should students have needed more time for peer editing or further explanation of concepts and/or clarification of previous lessons

**Friday:**
Additional day scheduled in should students have needed more time for peer editing or further explanation of concepts and/or clarification of previous lessons

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**Integrated Literacy Mini-Lesson**

**When will the mini-lesson occur in the unit?**
The mini lesson will occur on the third day of the unit. It will focus on the last paragraph of page 219 and the first paragraph of page 220. *(Appendix A)*

**Mini-lesson focus (academic vocabulary, word study, grammar in context, etc.):**
The focus of this mini-lesson will be using dashes, purposeful commas, or rhetorical questions to build suspense within our writing.

**Mini-lesson outline or lesson plan:**
Students will reread the two paragraphs from the central text. They will highlight the dashes (and the section between the dashes) in yellow. They will then highlight the use of commas in pink. Finally, they will highlight the use of rhetorical questions in orange. Students will then select which element they would like to focus on. Once they have done that, they will move to the section of the room that has also chosen that text feature. In
these groups, they will have three minutes to discuss why they think the author used the aforementioned features in his writing. After the three minute discussion, the groups will share out with the entire class. Should guidance or clarification be needed, the teacher is able to assist.

Students will tape the paragraphs into their notebooks, and they will write into the day by selecting the feature they chose (dashes, commas, or rhetorical questions) and incorporating it into a one paragraph story about some adventure they have had. They will also need to add a one or two sentence explanation of the effect they were going for when they used this language feature. They will have to share this adventure (as well as their text feature) with a classmate the following day. During this time, they need to be able to explain why they put the feature where they did and ask for feedback.

Mini-assessment:
Students will be assessed during their share-out with their peers and when they hand in their notebooks for review at the end of the month. Their use of the feature within the notebook as well as their explanation for the use of the feature will be formatively assessed.

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Close Reading Activity 1

**When will the close reading activity occur in the unit?**
This close reading activity will occur on the second day of the unit. This small activity is designed to get the students more familiar with the text as well as pique their interests in the difficult decisions and risky behaviors associated with high-altitude climbing. Students will be working independently on this assignment while the teacher circulates and observes the responses given by students. Should a student need the additional assistance, the teacher will draw the student’s attention to a specific portion within the text excerpt.

**Text Excerpt:**
*Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer
Pg. 423-424 in the Holt Literature book
Pg. 230-233 in the Holt Literature Reader

He turned his attention to Weathers, who lay 20 feet away. His face was also caked with a thick armor of frost. Balls of ice the size of grapes were matted to his hair and eyelids. After cleaning the frozen detritus from his face, Hutchison discovered that he, too, was still alive: “Beck was mumbling something, I think, but I couldn’t tell what he was trying to say. His right glove was missing and he had terrible frostbite. He was as close to death as a person can be and still be breathing.”

Badly shaken, Hutchison went over to the Sherpas and asked Lhakpa Chhiri’s advice. Lhakpa Chhiri, an Everest veteran respected by Sherpas and sahibs alike for his mountain savvy, urged Hutchison to leave Weathers and Namba where they lay. Even if they survived long enough to be dragged back to Camp Four, they would certainly die before they could be carried down to Base Camp, and attempting a rescue would needlessly jeopardize the lives of the other climbers on the Col, most of whom were going to have enough trouble getting themselves down safely.

**Text-Dependent Questions**

1. What happens to Beck Weathers in the first portion of this text? Use specific details from the text to support your answers.

2. Why does Beck Weathers initiate his own rescue operation? What does this show about the state of rescues up on Mt. Everest? Cite specific material from the text to support your point.

3. Why does the author use the term “mummy in a low-budget horror film” to describe Weathers? What additional details in the text let the reader know the specific state of health that Weathers was in?

4. “Climbers, as a species, are simply not distinguished by an excess of common sense.” Which specific characters prove this comment to be true? Which specific characters prove this comment to be false? Reference specific details from the text.
Hutchison decided that Chhiri was right. There was only one choice, however difficult: Let nature take its inevitable course with Weathers and Namba, and save the group’s resources for those who could actually be helped. It was a classic act of triage. When Hutchison returned to camp at 8:30 A.M. and told the rest of us of his decision, nobody doubted that it was the correct thing to do.

Later that day, a rescue team headed by two of Everest’s most experienced guides, Pete Athans and Todd Burleson, who were on the mountain with their own clients, arrived at Camp Four. Burleson was standing outside the tents about 4:30 P.M. when he noticed someone lurching slowly toward camp. The person’s bare right hand, naked to the wind and horribly frostbitten, was outstretched in a weird, frozen salute. Whoever it was reminded Athans of a mummy in a low-budget horror film. The mummy turned out to be none other than Beck Weathers, somehow risen from the dead.

A couple of hours earlier, a light must have gone on in the reptilian core of Weathers’ comatose brain, and he regained consciousness. “Initially I thought I was in a dream,” he recalls. “Then I saw how badly frozen my right hand was, and that helped bring me around to reality. Finally I woke up enough to recognize that the cavalry wasn’t coming so I better do something about it myself.”

Although Weathers was blind in his right eye and able to focus his left within a radius of only three or four feet, he started walking into the teeth of the wind, deducing correctly that camp lay in that direction. If he’d been wrong he would have stumbled immediately down the Kangshung Face, the edge of which was a few yards in the opposite direction. Ninety minutes later he encountered “some unnaturally smooth, bluish-looking rocks,” which turned out to be the tents of Camp Four.

The next morning, May 12, Athans, Burleson, and climbers from the IMAX team short-roped Weathers down to Camp Two. On the morning of May 13, in a hazardous helicopter rescue, Weathers and Gau were evacuated from the top of the icefall by Lieutenant Colonel Madan Khatri Chhetri of the Nepalese army. A month later, a team of Dallas surgeons would amputate Weathers’ dead right hand just below the wrist and use skin grafts to reconstruct his left hand.

After helping to load Weathers and Gau into the rescue chopper, I sat in the snow for a long while, staring at my boots, trying to get some grip, however tenuous, on what had happened over the preceding 72 hours. Then, nervous as a cat, I headed down into the icefall for one last trip through the maze of decaying seracs.

I’d always known, in the abstract, that climbing mountains was a dangerous pursuit. But until I climbed in the Himalayas this spring, I’d never actually seen death at close range. And there was so much of it: Including three members of an Indo-Tibetan team who died on the north side just below the summit in the same May 10 storm and an Austrian killed some days later, 11 men and women lost their lives on Everest in May.
1996, a tie with 1982 for the worst single-season death toll in the peak’s history....

Climbing mountains will never be a safe, predictable, rule-bound enterprise. It is an activity that idealizes risk-taking; its most celebrated figures have always been those who stuck their necks out the farthest and managed to get away with it. Climbers, as a species, are simply not distinguished by an excess of common sense. And that holds especially true for Everest climbers: When presented with a chance to reach the planet’s highest summit, people are surprisingly quick to abandon prudence altogether. “Eventually,” warns Tom Hornbein, 33 years after his ascent of the West Ridge, “what happened on Everest this season is certain to happen again.”

When will the close reading activity occur in the unit?
The close reading activity will occur on day four of the unit. Students will begin by reading through the text silently to themselves the first time through. Next, students will be put into teacher-selected partnerships in order to read through the text a second time. Each student will have an individual copy of the text, and she/he must annotate the text in order to show evidence for where they have found the answers to the text-dependent questions. The students will discuss potential responses with each other and decide upon an appropriate answer to share with the class in a text dependent question gallery walk. Students have had plenty of practice with annotating a text in order to reveal the evidence for text-dependent questions prior to this lesson.

Text Excerpt:

A New Everest Mess
Text by David Roberts
Additional reporting by Billi Bierling (Pages 1 & 2)

As record numbers reach for the summit, a question arises: Should the world’s strongest climbers be forced to risk it all for a flagging few?

Last spring the annual high-altitude circus set up its Ringling Brothers tents at Everest Base Camp. Thanks to long spells of good weather—without a single killer storm such as the one that took five lives in a day in 1996—a record number of more than 500 men and women reached the summit. Seven people died (in ways ranging from long falls to hypoxia), a relatively small number compared to 11 last year and 12 in 1996.

New Everest marks were set. Apa Sherpa added a 17th notch to his matchless gunbelt of Everest summits. A 71-year-old Japanese man named Katsusuke Yanagisawa, who his own teammates were sure was too slow and weak to reach the summit, set a new age record for tagging the top. And on June 14 perhaps the most remarkable feat of the

Text-Dependent Questions

1. What types of records were achieved during this climbing season?
2. In this text, what positive achievements are associated with high-altitude climbing?
3. In this text, what negative consequences are a result of high-altitude climbing?
4. Why does the author use the phrase “high-altitude circus set up its Ringling Brothers tents” to introduce his article?
5. Who was David Sharp?
6. Why is the death of David Sharp considered “controversial?”
7. Who was Usha Bista?
8. What parallels are presented between David Sharp and Usha Bista?
9. How is Bista’s situation different from Sharp’s situation?
10. What is the author’s purpose for writing this section of text?
whole spring season was performed by the last team to summit. Leading an expedition on the north side that hoped to make the definitive film about Everest legends George Mallory and Sandy Irvine, American Conrad Anker free-climbed the notorious Second Step, a rock-and-ice cliff at 28,300 feet (8,626 meters), as Mallory would have had to do in 1924 to become the first to climb the mountain. Anker rated the pitch at 5.10—probably beyond Mallory's capabilities.

As has come to be expected, there were a number of follies committed in the name of recherché "firsts." A Brit claimed the first cell phone call (as opposed to sat phone) from the summit, as he uttered, "One small text for man, one giant leap for mobilekind—thanks, Motorola." But Everest pedants cut him down to size by dredging up a Chinese expedition leader who had beaten the Brit to the cell-phone punch four years earlier. Meanwhile, a Dutch eccentric calling himself the "Iceman," who was determined to climb Everest wearing only boots, shorts, gloves, and a cap, had to turn back at 24,300 feet (2,407 meters), but still claimed an altitude record for shorts.

There were, alas, more clients than ever who filled the role so memorably framed by Jon Krakauer in Into Thin Air—novices who couldn't put on their own crampons. Greg Child, who climbed a very different Everest in 1995, spent two months reporting on the north side last spring. "Considering the number of people on the mountain," says Child, "considering the kind of people—a mountain full of nonclimbers, 80 percent guided and Sherpa-managed—I'd say that seven deaths is getting off lightly."

Among the tragedies of the season a year ago, the most controversial was the demise of David Sharp, a British mountaineer who lay in the snow, slowly dying of hypothermia and frostbite, as some 40 climbers allegedly walked past him without offering help, much less initiating a rescue. For the general public, the story of Sharp's death instantly became a parable epitomizing everything that's wrong with the Everest scene today.

Last spring, toward the end of May, it seemed entirely likely that the Sharp scenario would repeat itself. The potential tragedy involved a team called the Democratic Everest Expedition (DEE). One of a number of groups organized around humanitarian or nationalistic agendas, the DEE was born out of the political turmoil that has seized Nepal. Led by Ang Ngima, the team set out to honor martyred anti-government demonstrators by placing the flags of eight different political parties (ranging from Maoists to Marxist Leninists) on top.

One of the DEE's team members was 22-year-old Usha Bista. As a non-Sherpa Nepali, she would be the first woman from the country's far western Terai plains to attempt Everest. Her inclusion, presumably, would demonstrate a solidarity among all of Nepal's
far-flung ethnic groups. "Half of the people in my village," Usha would later say, "have never set their eyes upon a mountain." Growing up fatherless in Asia's poorest country (which has a median per capita income of $270 a year), Usha was nonetheless required to raise more than $27,000 to join the DEE's expedition.

Despite these obstacles, on May 21 Usha had reached an altitude of 27,300 feet (8,321 meters), almost the same altitude at which Sharp died the year before. As Usha crawled slowly upward above the South Col, she was on the verge of a collapse comparable to the one that doomed Sharp.

The Usha Bista saga, however, would have a different ending from Sharp's, producing the most compelling—and at the same time the most puzzling—of all the stories that emerged from the mountain this past spring.

May 21 dawned a perfect day on Mount Everest—clear, windless, and relatively warm. Shortly after 7:30 a.m., Meagan McGrath, a 29-year-old captain in the Canadian Air Force, was descending from the summit on the south side of Everest. (In recent years, more and more of the strongest climbers have started their summit bids from the South Col as early as 11 p.m. the night before, ensuring not only that they reach the summit in the predictable good weather of early morning, but that they get out ahead of the throng of slower climbers.)

One of the strongest climbers on the mountain, McGrath was accompanied by her Sherpa guide Ang Rita, of Asian Trekking, the same low-budget guide service Sharp had hired, which was widely censured in 2006 for not sending a Sherpa to accompany him on his summit bid.

Just below a prominent feature called the Balcony, McGrath came upon Usha standing in place, bent over as if to catch her breath. "She looked like she was in trouble," recalled the Canadian. McGrath tapped Ang Rita on the shoulder and asked if they should assist Usha, but he ignored her and took off, continuing the descent without a word.
## UDL Components:

**Principle 1: Provide Multiple Means of Representation**

- 1.1 Offer ways of customizing the display of information: All materials are available on Moodle and can thus be manipulated as needed form there.
- 2.1 Clarify vocabulary and symbols: Vocabulary is pre-taught and complex terms are discussed and broken down.
- 2.4 Promote understanding across languages: Domain specific vocabulary is explained and given graphic representations.
- 3.1 Activate or supply background knowledge: Advanced organizers for information collection are used; visual imagery is used to explain concepts.
- 3.2 Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships: key elements within texts are emphasized; examples and non-examples of drafting are used.
- 3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation: Explicit prompts for drafting are given; the synthesis paper is “chunked” into smaller sections.

## Support for students who are ELL, have disabilities or read well below grade level text band:

Students who need additional support and a version of the text that has more accessible language will be supplied with a “Simple Reader” version of the text. (Appendix J) This version of the text is still able to recount the action of the excerpt, but uses simpler vocabulary and shorter syntax.

Additionally, students who struggle with the amount of reading will be given only key articles to read, thus preventing them from being overwhelmed, but at the same time giving them more than one text to synthesize information from.

Those students who struggle with writing will be given an assignment that is only three to four paragraphs long. They will still have to synthesize information, but will have a reduction in the number of sources synthesized.

## Extensions for advanced students:

Students interested in extension activities will be given an “Everest Extension Opportunities” assignment sheet.

A brief outline of the extension opportunities offered:

1. Read the entire work of *Into Thin Air* and discuss how the excerpt read in class and the full text offer different focus points.

2. Read a variety of “adventure centered” works by Jon Krakauer and compare how he discusses different topics. Novels to choose from: *Into Thin Air, Eiger Dreams: Ventures Among Men and Mountains, Into the Wild*, and assorted articles written for magazines such as *Outdoor, National Geographic, Architectural Digest, Rolling Stone, The New Yorker, or Smithsonian*.

3. Read at least two works that focus on the same 1996 Everest disaster and evaluate how perspectives differ and what elements the authors focus on. Options:
   - *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer
   - *The Climb* by Anatoli Boukreev
   - *Left for Dead* by Beck Weathers
   - *No Shortcuts to the Top* by Ed Viesturs
   - *After the Wind: 1996 Everest Tragedy—One Survivor’s Story* by Lou Kasischke
   - *Within Reach: My Everest Story* by Mark Pfitzer and Jack Galvin
   - Other works are acceptable upon teacher approval

4. Read at least two works that focus on high-risk activities (high-altitude climbing, sky diving, extreme snowboarding, motocross, etc.) and write a paper that identifies similarities and differences, as well as responds to the essential question of, What about the idea of “a challenge” is so intriguing to human beings?

**All extension opportunities that are completed may be submitted as a book report for the trimester.**