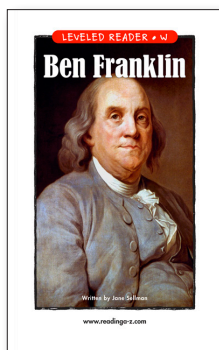


## Climbing Mountains: An Interview with Erik Weißenmayer



### About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Interview Page Count: 24 Word Count: 2,300

#### Book Summary

Erik Weißenmayer lost his sight when he was thirteen. Despite his blindness, he went on to climb the Seven Summits of the world as an adult. Readers learn about the dedication and work required to prepare for a climb, the dangers faced by mountain climbers, and how a blind person “sees” the world. Erik also shares his passion for helping and inspiring others. Photographs, charts, and Web sources support the text.

### About the Lesson

#### Targeted Reading Strategy

- Connect to prior knowledge

#### Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of making connections to prior knowledge to understand nonfiction text
- Sequence events to gain understanding
- Identify past- and present-tense verbs
- Recognize and use content vocabulary

#### Materials

**Green text** indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*Climbing Mountains: An Interview with Erik Weißenmayer* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- **Sequence, verb tense, vocabulary worksheets**
- **Discussion cards**



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

#### Vocabulary

- **Content words:**  
**Story critical:** *Braille (n.), crevasses (n.), documentary (n.), genetic (adj.), terrain (n.), vibration (n.)*  
**Enrichment:** *avalanche (n.), couloirs (n.), crampons (n.), echolocation (n.), endurance (n.), outcasts (n.)*

### Before Reading

#### Build Background

- Ask students what they already know about mountain climbing. Discuss the possible dangers involved in climbing steep or snowy terrain. Ask students if they know the names of any of the highest mountain peaks in the world.

#### Preview the Book

#### Introduce the Book

- Give students a copy of the book and have them preview the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers and offer ideas as to what kind of book this is and what it might be about.

### Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Connect to prior knowledge**

- Model connecting to prior knowledge.  
*Think-aloud: The picture and title of this story remind me of a time I climbed a tall mountain in Alaska. I will always remember that view. Because I already know some interesting things about mountain climbing, I'm looking forward to learning about Erik's experiences. I can turn to the glossary to see the new words about mountain climbing I will learn in this book.*
- Direct students to the glossary. Remind them that the glossary is an alphabetized list of words appearing in the text that includes definitions. Glossaries also provide page numbers where the reader can locate each word in the text. After reviewing the glossary, model using it as a way to make connections to prior knowledge. For example, say: *The first word, avalanche, makes me think about what I already know about the dangers of climbing in the backcountry.* Ask students if they know anything about avalanches. Ask what page number the glossary provides to help readers find more information about avalanches (page 10).
- Have students preview the rest of the book, looking at photos, captions, and charts. Point out that because this book is in the format of an interview, it is not divided into sections. For that reason, a table of contents is not necessary.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

### Introduce the Vocabulary


- Remind students of the strategies they can use to work out words they don't know. For example, they can use what they know about letter and sound correspondence to figure out a word. They can look for base words, prefixes, and suffixes. They can use the context to work out the meaning of an unfamiliar word.
- Model how to apply word-attack strategies. Have students find the bold word *endurance* on page 6. Tell students that they can look at the letter the word begins with and use what they know about syllables and vowels (one vowel sound per syllable) to sound out the rest of the word. Tell students to first look for a clue about the word's meaning in the sentence. Explain that in this book, they will not always find a context clue in the sentence that explains the unfamiliar word, but that other information in the paragraph explains it.
- Model how they can use the glossary or a dictionary to find the word's meaning. Have a volunteer read the definition for *endurance* in the glossary. Have students follow along on page 6 as you read the sentence in which the word *endurance* is found to confirm the meaning of the word.
- Preview other vocabulary words, such as *crampons*, *sonar*, and *genetic*, in a similar fashion before students begin reading.

### Set the Purpose

- Have students think about what they know about mountain climbing as they read the book to identify important events in the life of Erik Weiheymayer.


## **During Reading**


### Student Reading

-  **Guide the reading:** Have students read to page 10. Tell them to underline the words and phrases in the book that tell about important events that occurred in Erik Weiheymayer's life. If they finish before everyone else, they should go back and reread.
- Ask students why they think the author wrote the book in the form of an interview. Ask: *How can you tell who is asking the questions? Who is answering the questions? How do you know when Erik stops talking?*
- Have students tell the events they underlined. Write the first event on the board: *Erik climbed the Seven Summits by the time he was 36 years old.* Ask individual students to come to the board and write the remaining important events in Erik's life that they found in text.

- Model connecting to prior knowledge.

**Think-aloud:** *I understood how Erik felt when he was describing the exciting scenery while climbing, such as the sounds of nature, the sun in his face, and the way the ground felt under his feet. I remember enjoying the same things when I was in the mountains. Ask students if any of them have hiked or climbed a mountain and, if so, what they remember about it. Ask students if they can understand how such a wonderful experience might inspire Erik to continue climbing.*

 Tell students to read the rest of the story. Have them continue underlining important events in Erik's life. Remind them to think about what they already know about mountain climbing as they read.

 Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in the discussion that follows.

### After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

### Reflect on the Reading Strategy


- Ask individual students to come to the board and write the remaining important events in Erik's life that they found in text.
- Discuss how making connections with things in the text they know something about keeps them involved in the reading process and helps them understand and remember what they have read.

### Teach the Comprehension Skill: **Sequence events**

- **Discussion:** Ask students what they think the author's purpose was for writing the book and what they learned about mountain climbing that they didn't already know. Ask students what they think about the sport of extreme mountain climbing.
- **Introduce and model:** Review or explain that many writers present the events in a story in the order in which they happened. Ask students to think of a recent story they've read in which the events were written in order. If necessary, prompt with a familiar story, such as *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Tell students that some writers do not present the events of the story in order. It is then up to the reader to look for signal words, such as *today*, *then*, *first*, and *after*, or time references, such as dates, to help them put the story events in the order in which they occurred.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students find and tell signal words and/or dates that they see on the board while you circle them.
- **Independent practice:** Give students the [sequence worksheet](#). Explain that a timeline is a way to show events in the order in which they happened. Have students use their book and the information on the board to complete the timeline on the sequence worksheet. Point out that some events may not have signal words or dates, and the reader must make an inference as to when they think the event most likely happened. For example, we know that Erik's climb with the Tibetan teenagers hadn't yet happened when the interview took place, so that must be placed last on the timeline. Start students off by talking about what happened first (Erik lost his sight at age 13). Have students complete the remainder of the worksheet on their own. Discuss students' answers when they have finished.
- **Extend the discussion:** Talk with students about Erik's positive attitude and drive to be successful, despite the loss of his sight. Ask if anyone has felt inspired to read his book or to do something adventurous.

### Build Skills

#### Grammar and Mechanics: Past- and present-tense verbs

-  Direct students to the last paragraph on page 4. Ask them to circle the verbs Erik used when describing how he felt when he lost his sight (*panicked, bubbled, realized, was*). Explain that these are *past-tense verbs* that describe something that has happened in the past. Write the term *past tense* on the board.
- Have students turn to page 19. Have them name the verbs while you list them on the board (*speak, learn, need, is*). Explain that these verbs are not past tense. Write the term *present tense* on the board. Ask students why they think the tense has changed. (Erik is speaking about something he is involved with currently.)
- Tell students that nonfiction texts often use a kind of present tense called *timeless present tense*. This means that the action is not just happening in the present but is something that always happens. For example, every time Erik climbs vertical ice, he kicks into the ice with crampons and taps to listen for vibration. This is what he has done in the past, what he does today, and what he will do tomorrow. Write the term *timeless present tense* on the board.
- Check for understanding:** Direct students to page 7 and ask them to find the present-tense verbs. Write these verbs on the board as students answer (*are, follow, had, use, find*, and so on).
- Independent practice:** Have students complete the [verb tense worksheet](#). Discuss their answers when they have finished.

#### Word Work: Content vocabulary

- Tell students that many of the words in the book are used to tell about mountain climbing. Talk about difficult words such as *couloirs* and *crevasses*.
- Check for understanding:** Provide opportunities for students to say the new vocabulary words from the book and to use the words in sentences.
- Independent practice:** Give students the [vocabulary worksheet](#). Each worksheet provides the opportunity for students to work with two vocabulary words. Supply multiple copies for students to continue working on more words if they have time.

### Build Fluency

#### Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

#### Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have them sequence the main events in Erik's life with someone at home.

### Extend the Reading

#### Writing Connection

Provide an opportunity for students to explore the websites listed in the book to learn more about Erik ([www.touchthetop.com](http://www.touchthetop.com) and [www.climbingblind.org](http://www.climbingblind.org)). Have students choose one website and write a report on the topic that includes answers to *What, When, Where, and Why*. Have students share their reports with the group.

#### Social Studies Connection

Have students locate all of the mountains mentioned in the book on a copy of a world map. Have them record each peak's location, the name of the mountain range it's part of, and its height. Provide resources for students to research one of the peaks to find out what makes it special to climbers.

### Skill Review

**Discussion cards** covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

### Assessment

**Monitor students to determine if they can:**

- use the reading strategy of making connections to prior knowledge to understand nonfiction text
- identify and sequence important events in a story and on a timeline
- identify past- and present-tense verbs in text
- understand and use content vocabulary

### Comprehension Checks

- **Book Quiz**
- **Retelling Rubric**