

Into Thin Air by Jon Krakauer Book Discussion Questions



1. Much like Krakauer's other book, *Into the Wild*, many readers lacked sympathy for the climbers and were angered by their lack of skill and the carelessness of the guides who attempted to get them to the top, letting a hefty fee get in the way of sound judgment. What is your opinion?
2. Discuss Rob Hall's decision not to turn around by 2:00 as he had stipulated but to help Doug Hansen reach the summit. It was a difficult decision because it was Hansen's second attempt, and the men had both an emotional and a monetary stake in Doug's success. If you were in that situation (yeah, right...), would you have been tempted to push to the top, to reach a goal that you'd trained for and wished for...and paid for?
3. Talk about the decision to leave Beck Weathers and Yasuko Namba to die, knowing both were still alive.
4. *There was only one choice, however difficult: let nature take its inevitable course..., and save the group's resources for those who could actually be helped. It was a classic act of triage.*
5. Which individual did you find yourself most sympathizing with ... which did you most admire ... which least admire?
6. What are some examples of physical hardships or illness that Krakauer mentions?
7. How do the very bodily, physical challenges of ascending Mt. Everest impact the climbers' mental states, their decision making, and their relationships with each other?
8. What are some examples of how individuals in the book responded both ethically and unethically to the challenges they faced on Mt. Everest?
9. How did the climbers treat the Nepalese Sherpas?
10. How has the commodification of Mt. Everest changed the lives of the Sherpa communities?
11. Who pays for the expensive search and rescue efforts? Is it right to endanger other lives (helicopter pilots) to transport injured climbers down to hospitals?
12. What did you make of the survivors' attitudes, especially Beck Weather's, when Krakauer later contacted them?
13. How would you feel about a loved one who was passionate about climbing, who felt the pull toward Everest or K2? Would you encourage him/her to pursue the dream...or be more mindful of leaving behind families should something happen?