

Climbing Blindly



A **fact** is information that can be proven.
(Example: Asia is a continent.)

An **opinion** is information that tells what someone thinks.
(Example: Asia is the most interesting continent in the world.)

Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world. This mountain is located in Asia. Asia is home to all five of the world's highest mountains. Mount Everest's peak is five and one-half miles above sea level. That is very high!

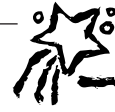
Many climbers have tried to climb to the top of Mount Everest's approximately 29,141-foot peak. The first people to reach the peak were Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. Since then, about 900 people have survived the climb to Mount Everest's top.

One of the successful climbers is Erik Weihenmayer. Like all who try to climb this huge mountain, Erik faced strong winds, snow, and avalanches. However, what really made Erik's climb unbelievable is the fact that he is blind. After losing his vision at age 13, Erik began climbing at age 16. He has climbed the tallest mountains on five continents. Erik became the first blind person to reach the peak of Mount Everest.

At the age of 32, Erik began his climb as part of a 19-member team. His team wore bells that he could follow during his climb, and fellow climbers were quick to warn him of such things as a big drop on the right or a boulder to the left. Erik also used long climbing poles and an ice ax to feel his way across the ice, rock, and snow on the mountain.

During his climb, Erik encountered many dangers. He struggled through 100 m.p.h. winds and sliding masses of snow, ice, and rock. Because the air became thinner the higher Erik climbed, he wore an oxygen mask, as do many who climb high mountains. This helped him breathe as he climbed higher and higher. It took Erik about two-and-a-half months to reach the top of this incredible mountain.





1. Write *F* for fact or *O* for opinion.

- ___ Erik is very courageous.
- ___ The bells made Erik's climb a lot easier.
- ___ Erik is blind.
- ___ All climbers should use climbing poles and ice axes.
- ___ Mount Everest is the world's tallest mountain.
- ___ Erik's oxygen mask helped him breathe.
- ___ Erik used tools to help him climb.
- ___ Erik is proud of his achievement.

2. List three interesting facts from the story. _____

3. Write your opinion of Erik's accomplishment. _____

4. Circle words that describe Erik.

- brave foolish cautious strong daring athletic

5. What are some climbing tools many climbers use? _____

6. Do you think bells are a good idea for all teams of climbers to use? Why or why not? _____

7. Why do you think Erik attempted this dangerous climb? _____



Read about another adventurous person. On another piece of paper, write three facts and three opinions about this person.

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1. O, O, F, O, F, F, F, O; 2. Answers will vary. 3. Answers will vary.
4. brave, strong, daring, athletic;
5. climbing poles, ice axes, breathing masks; 6. Answers will vary. 7. Answers will vary.