

Out of the Death Zone

13-year-old Poorna Malavath's Mount Everest adventure

About the Story

Lexile: 830L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to identify key ideas in a nonfiction article about climbing Mount Everest and write a short essay

Key Skills: mood, author's craft, inference, character, literary devices, key ideas and details

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to have grit?
- What motivates people to take on challenges?
- What are the benefits of working toward a goal?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Video:

- Beyond the Story: Into the World of Mount Everest

Audio:

- Author read-aloud
- Text to speech

Slideshow:

- Vocabulary slideshow

Differentiated Articles:

- Lower-Lexile version
- Spanish language version

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: Climbing Mount Everest
- Video Discussion Questions
- Nonfiction Elements*
- **Core Skills Workout:** Summarizing*, Central Ideas and Details*, Text Features, Text Structure
- Choice Board
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read 20 minutes

Do-Now: Make a list. (5 minutes)

- Ask students to study the illustration of Mount Everest on page 4 of the printed magazine or at the top of the digital story page. Then have students list words and phrases that describe the mountain.
- Give students two minutes, then invite them to share their lists.

Watch the Video (10 minutes)

- Watch the **Beyond the Story** video which takes your students into the world of Mount Everest. Then have students respond to the **Video Discussion Questions** in small groups or independently.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow** on your whiteboard, or if you're remote, share it on your screen. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class or in groups. Optionally, share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently. Highlighted words: *acclimatize, altitude, expedition, glaciers*

2. Reading and Discussing 45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 5 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the story once through as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the **lower-Lexile version** of the article with students who may need it.*) Optionally, have students listen to author Kristin Lewis read the story while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the

Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.

- Divide students into groups to read the story again and respond to the following close-reading questions. *Tip: If you're remote, you can have each group respond in a shared doc or discuss the questions in their own chat room; you can also use the questions as an asynchronous assignment.*

Close-Reading Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- 1. How does author Kristin Lewis create suspense in the introduction?** (mood, author's craft) *Lewis creates suspense by immediately situating a girl in a life-threatening—yet exhilarating—situation. She explains that 13-year-old Poorna Malavath is climbing to the top of Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world. Readers are immediately filled with suspense, wondering whether Poorna will be able to pull off such an amazing feat. Then the author explains that Poorna has to climb through an area called “the Death Zone,” where there isn’t enough oxygen to breathe and where the human body begins “to slowly die.” These details evoke feelings of suspense and anxiety in the reader. The author heightens the suspense even more by ending the section with Poorna telling herself to “Just keep going”—and not revealing whether Poorna succeeds in making it through the Death Zone.*
- 2. Consider this quote from Poorna in the section “The Death Zone”: “I could see my goal above me. I could not turn back.” What does this quote tell you about Poorna?** (character, inference) *At this point in the article, Poorna is battling the life-threatening elements of the Death Zone, including a lack of oxygen and fierce winds. The fact that Poorna would not give up on her goal even in the face of these challenges shows courage, resilience, and determination.*
- 3. In the section “The Death Zone,” Poorna says that the view from the top of Everest “was an ocean of ice-capped mountains.” What literary device does Poorna use in this quote? Why might the author have decided to include this quote in the article?** (literary devices, author's craft) *Poorna is using a metaphor. She is comparing the view of the mountain tops from Everest to the vastness of the ocean. The author likely included this quote to help readers not only picture the view from Everest's summit but also to show how Poorna herself experienced it.*
- 4. Why does it take so long to climb Mount Everest?** (key ideas and details, inference) *Climbing Mount Everest takes a long time for several reasons. First, there are many hazards, including snow, ice, rocks, and crevasses, so climbers must move carefully. Second, Everest is so tall that climbers must take breaks as they move up the mountain to allow their bodies to get used to the increasing altitude. Climbing Everest is also exhausting. If climbers moved too quickly, they likely wouldn't have the energy to make it to the top.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. In the section “The Training,” Lewis writes, “If they were going to climb Everest, they would need endurance, skill, and grit.” What other traits might someone need to climb a mountain like Everest? *Answers will vary but may include focus, strength, courage, commitment, and agility.*
 2. Is climbing Mount Everest a good idea? Would you climb it? *Answers will vary.*
- Ask students to return to the lists they made before reading. Ask students if they would add or remove anything from their lists.

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Climbing Mount Everest**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 9 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, which includes a range of ideas and difficulty levels.