Into Thin Air: Literary Analysis

Title: Into Thin Air

Author: Jon Krakauer

Date of Publication: 1977

Genre: Non-fiction

Biographical Information about the Author: Jon Krakauer is an American writer and mountain climber. He is the author of Into the Wild & Into Thin Air & Under the Banner of Heavenand Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman as well as many magazine articles.

Historical Information about the period of Publication: In 1977, Krakauer made several attempts to climb Devils Thumb, a mountain in Southeastern Alaska. Characteristics of the Genre: Non-fiction & Memoir

Plot Summary

Krakauer joins the climbing service called Adventure Consultants, guided by Rob Hall. The guide service is intended to speed up the acclimatization process and guide the climbers successfully to the summit of Mount Everest. During his journey Jon went through many hard times from harsh storm and the trauma from the dead around him. He invests a lot of energy into the article from his personal experiences considering what occurred and how it has changed his life until the day he dies.Krakauer battles with survivor's blame and addresses questions concerning occasions on the mountain that maybe don't have answers or questions that don’t want to be answered . Krakauer recognizes and apologizes for any pain or anger his book may give to the loved ones of victims.

Describe the Author’s Style: An example that demonstrates that style:

While Krakauer tries to maintain a professional journalist perspective throughout the book, the things that he went through to survive and pass through along with the rest of the climbers on the mountain is so serious that the wall between a journalist and his article topic is forgotten . Krakauer cannot simply treat the subject as a writer who gets there evidence from others. “ It would be many ours before I learned that things had not turned out great-that nineteen men and woman were stranded up on the mountain by the storm, caught in a desperate struggle for their lives” (Krakauer 203)

Quotation Significance

'I'd been fantasizing about this moment, and the release of emotion that would accompany it, for many months. But now that I was finally here, actually standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, I just couldn't summon the energy to care.'Jon Krakauer, pg. 5as

At the top of the world, where one would expect to feel triumphant and awestruck, Krakauer doesn't have the energy to care or feel any emotion at all.

'Having stumbled upon a tolerable career, for the first time on my life I was actually living above the poverty line. My hunger to climb had been blunted, in short, by a bunch of small satisfactions that added up to something like happiness.'Jon Krakauer, pg.25 While a stable, well-paying job and a happy marriage had the effect of blunting his hunger to climb, the word choice in this quote--'small satisfactions' and 'something like happiness'--indicate that this is still not the life he seeks to live

“The ration of misery to pleasure was greater by an order of magnitude than any other mountain I'd been on.” Jon Krakauer, pg.5 There are no thrills to be had on Everest, no adrenaline to be pumped—just pain and suffering, with only more pain and suffering to look forward to.

'With enough determination, any bloody idiot can get up this hill.... The trick is to get back down alive.'Rob Hall, pg. 147 This quote foreshadows the tragedy that would strike the teams and shows that Hall was always aware of the risks of the descent.

“Nobody suspected that by the end of that ling day, every minute would matter.” Jon Krakauer, pg.11 This quotes shows the trauma that Jon felt while writing his story. And the Foreshadowing the future venture of Mt.Everest

“But the notion that climbers are merely adrenaline junkies chasing a righteous fix is a fallacy

Characters

Name Role in the story Significance Adjectives (3)

Jon Krakauer The narrator and writer The narrator and the author. Krakauer is hired to write an article about Mount Everest for an adventure magazine, and ends up going on the most disastrous expedition in Everest history. Determined, Optimistic, Survivor

Rob Hall The head guide of Adventure Consultants The Everest climbing service that guides Krakauer up the mountain. Hall is an esteemed climber, having summated the tallest mountain in each of the seven continents in a period of only seven months. He also develops a sterling reputation as an Everest Guide. Respected, Loyal, Concerned for others

Andy Harris A guide in Rob Hall's expedition. Harris is from New Zealand, and grows close to Krakauer during the climb. Krakauer holds himself accountable for Harris's death. Trustworthy, Helpful Selfless

Mike Groom An Australian guide with Adventure Consultants Andy Groom gets lost with a group of clients during the descent, but survives. He also guides Beck Weathers down the mountain when Beck goes blind.

Ang Dorje Sherpa Rob Hall's number one Sherpa. Ang performs with near heroics frequently during the ascent, always helping other climbers and exhausting himself with the effort he exerts

for others. He attempts to find Hall during the summit, but cannot climb high enough.

Doug Hansens as A client with Adventure Consultants. Hansen is a postal worker who climbed Everest one year before but had to turn back just a few hundred feet from the summit. He and Krakauer become close friends. Hansen is at the summit with Hall when the storm hits.

Beck Weathers One of the novel's heroes, Weathers is a doctor with a passion for mountain climbing. He is left for dead after a group of clients get lost in a storm, but amazingly regains consciousness and manages to get to camp. Despite suffering numerous physical ailments he descends the mountain and survives. Brave , Strong , Perseverance

Yasuko Namba and Beck Weathers are left for dead when their group gets lost on the way down the mountain. Namba is a Japanese woman whose attempt to climb Everest gained much notoriety in Japan. Unlike Weathers she cannot summon the strength to return to camp, and dies. Different, Blamed, Steady

Stuart Hutchinson A Canadian client with Adventure Consultants. Hutchinson is a strong climber, and when Hall and the other guides are stranded on the mountain, he steps in as leader.

Setting:

The setting of the story takes place on the face of Mt.Everett.

Significance of Opening/Closing Scene

Krakauer is at the top of the world, only he is 'incapable of feeling much of anything except cold and tired' (4). It has been almost three days since he has slept, and he describes various physical ailments—coughing, separated ribs, trouble breathing and an altered mental s tate due to lack of oxygen. Krakauer descends into Base Camp. Finally safe, he begins weeping 'like I hadn't wept since I was a small boy.' They hold a memorial service on the mountain, giving eulogies, reading Buddhist scriptures, burning incense and praying.

Symbols/Archetypes

Rob Hall is one of the mountain guides that are “The Wise Men”. He demonstrates care for his clients and staff as he was “always especially concerned about the welfare of the Sherpas who worked for him” (Krakauer 54).

Possible Themes

One major theme of this book is the importance of trust and teamwork, reliance in your partner.