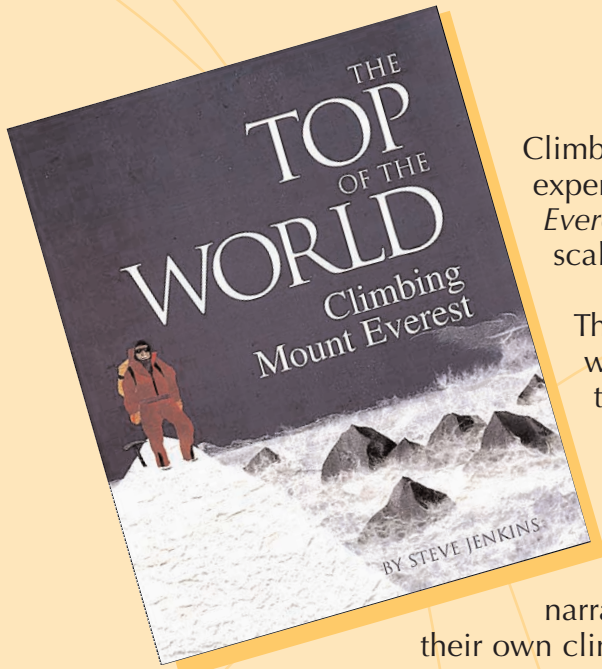


SCHOOLWIDE BOOK REVIEW

***The Top of the World: Climbing Mount Everest* by Steve Jenkins**

Houghton Mifflin, ISBN: 0618196765

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Climbing Mount Everest is an activity that most students will likely never experience, yet Steve Jenkins's *The Top of the World: Climbing Mount Everest* gives readers the opportunity to learn what it might be like to scale the world's tallest and most dangerous mountain.

This award-winning nonfiction book begins by placing the mountain within its geographical and cultural contexts. Jenkins describes both textually and visually where Mount Everest is located, how it is changing due to continental drift, and the place of reverence it occupies among the people of Nepal and Tibet. The book's journey structure allows the reader to participate as if planning to scale Mount Everest; Jenkins's narrative, then, is necessarily instructional in tone and addresses the reader in the second person, "you." This narrative choice makes the readers feel as if they are about to embark on their own climbing journey.

After readers arrive in Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, they encounter a group of Sherpas (people from Nepal). These expert climbers and guides have been helping climbers from all over the world ascend Mt. Everest for years, from long before the first successful summit ascent to now. This is a noteworthy inclusion in the text because it emphasizes the different cultures of the region and exposes the reader to a group of indigenous peoples they might otherwise never encounter.

The remainder of the book describes the gear climbers need and maps the journey itself from base camp up to the summit, using language that is engaging and mindful of the very real dangers involved in undertaking such a monumental task as climbing Everest.

The stunning paper collage illustrations set this book apart from other nonfiction books for young readers. Jenkins created all the illustrations using either cut or torn paper of varying colors and textures, and he uses layer upon layer of paper. The illustrations of the required climbing gear, like the mountaineering boots or the climbing suit represented on several pages, are remarkable for their detail and ability to represent the real item.

In the Classroom

Not only would this be a terrific book for your classroom library, but when studying nonfiction as a genre, *The Top of the World* would be an excellent mentor text for its inclusion of statistical information within the text, subheadings, illustrations, and resources listed in the back of the book. Sidebars and pullouts emphasize the interesting facts, trivia, and history that readers will need and want to know about mountain climbing. You could start a Word Wall with content-specific vocabulary.

Look for *The Top of the World* as a featured text in our Writing Fundamentals Program nonfiction genre study for grades 4-5.