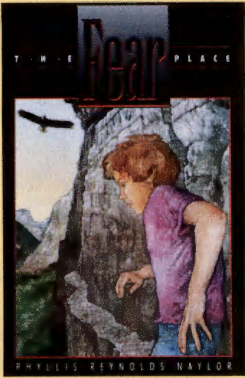


The Fear Place



California
Standards

Standards to Achieve

Reading

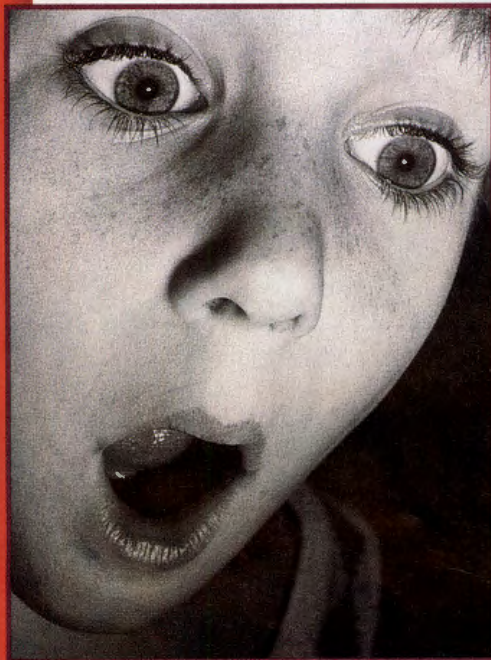
- Use roots and affixes (R1.4)
- Inferences/generalizations (R2.4)

Facing Fear!

Everyone is afraid of *something*. The main character in *The Fear Place* is **terrified** of being on a high mountain ledge. Do you have a fear place?

It's a mystery why people are **frightened** by some things, but not other things. You might be scared of spiders, while your friend keeps one as a pet. Your friend might dislike roller coasters, while you get a feeling of **excitement** or **adventure** from them.

There are many ways to deal with fear. You could try to avoid the thing that scares you. Or, little by little, you could get used to something until one day it doesn't seem as scary as it did before. Sometime you may find yourself forced to face your fear. You just might surprise yourself by having more courage than you thought possible.





Meet the Author **Phyllis Reynolds Naylor**

Early writing: In elementary school, Naylor began writing her own stories. She made booklets by stapling scrap paper together. After writing the story and drawing the pictures, she would glue an envelope to the inside cover. Placing an index card inside it made it look like a library book that her friends could check out. "I was the author, illustrator, printer, binder, and librarian, all in one."

Favorite part of her job: She says that "the best part about writing is the moment a character comes alive on paper, or when a place that existed only in my head becomes real."

Accomplishments: Naylor published her first story at age sixteen and since then has written over 100 books for children and adults, including the Newbery Award-winner *Shiloh*. She is also the author of *Saving Shiloh*, *Shiloh Season*, *The Grand Escape*, *The Healing of Texas Jake*, and *The Boys Start the War*.



Meet the Illustrator **Paul Lee**

Hobby: "I yo-yo. Wherever I go, I always have at least one yo-yo on me, usually in a holster on my belt. It comes in handy when I have to wait in line for something."

Career choice: "I realized that I would not be happy unless I had a future in which I could draw all the time."

Advice to artists: "Practice. Practice. Practice."



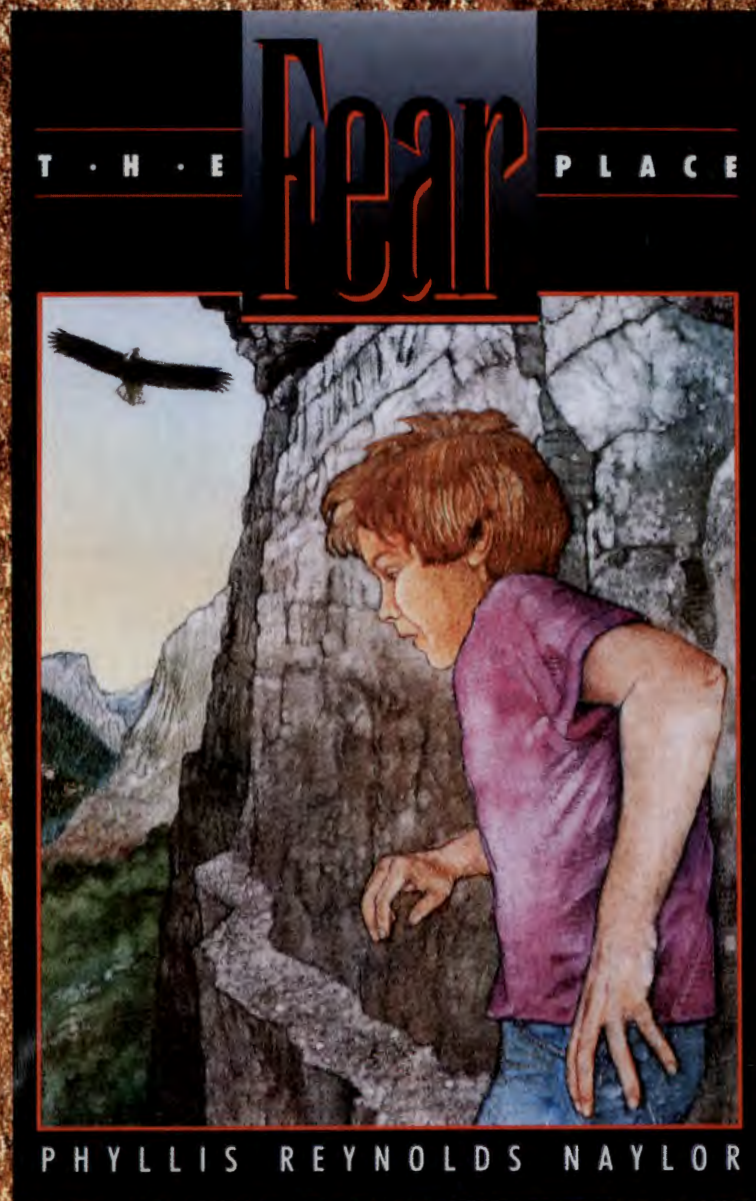
Internet



For more about Phyllis Reynolds Naylor and Paul Lee, visit Education Place.

www.eduplace.com/kids

Selection 3



Strategy Focus

Look at the title, introduction, and illustrations before you read the selection. What can you **infer** about Doug? What do you **predict** will happen?



On vacation in Colorado, Doug Grillo is alone. His parents have left on an emergency. His brother Gordie has gone off by himself after a fight with Doug. (Their mom and *her* brother fought, too.) Doug has kept busy studying mammals for his Scout merit badge, even befriend-
ing a cougar he calls Charlie. But now he has set off to find Gordie. To reach him, Doug must find the same courage his dad found when he fled Cuba. Doug must get past his Fear Place: a narrow ledge six hundred feet above a canyon, which he had vowed never to face again.



What path there was led over scattered pitches of bedrock, across ramps of boggy tundra, then climbed some more, becoming a narrow, zigzagging passageway. Doug followed the steep-slanting boilerplate rock, ledged with wildflowers, catching glimpses now and then of a distant snowfield. At one point he could see a ridge far above where he could just make out an elk cow leading her calf.

At times the journey seemed futile, for Doug would climb, scabbling and panting, up the rock face, around steep boulders, then make his way, feet sliding, down another gully, losing all the altitude he'd worked so hard to gain.

He was dismayed that he was thirsty again. At this rate, there would be little left for Gordie, so he took the cap off his canteen and drank only a swallow.



Every time he stopped, the fear inside him grew larger, however. At times it seemed to be the climb that frightened him most; other times it was worry about his brother. And then, as though that weren't worry enough, his parents. He plowed on, keeping his mind on other things, trying to remember the wildlife he'd seen so far. Elks — he could use those in his report; a snowshoe rabbit — he'd use that one, too. And a marten. He'd also seen two Steller's jays and a gray jay. Too bad he wasn't working on a merit badge in Bird Study while he was here.

Doug was nearing the first ridge. At nine thousand feet, he'd read, oxygen was about half of what it was at sea level. He had no idea how high he was. Stormy Peaks, to his left, was over twelve thousand feet. With each ascending step, the air seemed to change. A mountain has its own weather, Dad had told him. At high altitudes, a hiker could encounter sunshine, rain, sleet, ice pellets, wind, and snow, all in one afternoon, sometimes even in the space of an hour. The weather changed minute by minute, valley by valley, range by range.

It helped to keep his mind busy.





“This isn’t so bad,” he said aloud, wanting to hear a human voice, even his own. “You’ve climbed a lot worse than this.”

Walking along the ridge crest, he followed a route through a long granite fin that stretched like a roofless tunnel before him. He remembered this tunnel from the first time he was up here, and was reassured he was on the right path. If only it went on like this all the way to where Gordon was camped, he’d have no problem. He had strength; stamina. A climb like this, no matter how rocky, he could do forever, as long as there were sides to enclose him.

When he came out again into open space, the winds buffeted him. A hawk he had startled from a nearby rock flew directly past, so close that Doug could hear the steady flap of its wings. He held tightly to a rock, not wanting to look down, but did. It didn’t frighten him particularly, because there was plenty of room between him and the edge. Over the rocky hogbacks slabbed with quartz and sprinkled with muscovite, he could see a tongue of aspen crowding the narrow gorge below. It looked like the set for a model railroad.



It occurred to him that if he were more like the other members of his family, he would actually enjoy a hike like this. He would have set out that morning with a feeling of excitement. Then he thought of Gordon and how this wasn't the time for adventure. What would he find when he got up there? All the possibilities . . .

That was another word to remember, possibilities. Almost anything was possible, Mom had told him once. But not everything was probable. Which was more likely, that he'd find Gordon okay up there on the ridge, or that something awful had happened? That he'd find Gordon okay, he guessed.

Which was more likely, that he would get around the ledge just fine, or that his foot would slip and he'd fall six hundred feet to his death? He shakily sucked in his breath. That everyone else would be able to get around the ledge without trouble he had no doubt. That he, Doug Grillo, could do it, was a different story.

So he tried to think of the climb as something ordinary. When he stopped at the next level place on the trail, not even winded, he took time

to look out between the trees. He could just make out Longs Peak from here — “old granitehead,” they called it.

Weird, he was thinking now, that there were probably a hundred climbers on it right this minute, and Doug couldn't see any of them. Looking into the distance at Longs Peak, in the quiet of morning, it looked peaceful and unthreatening.

It didn't fool him for a minute. He knew the stories of the people who had died. He knew about the guy who . . . Doug pushed the thought out of his mind. Don't! he told himself as he set off again. Concentrate on rocks.

Okay. Rocks. Precambrian rock, his dad had told him. The rock that formed Longs Peak was here before there was anything else on the planet. Heat and pressure changed sediments to harder and harder rock, until sediments became schist and gneiss, quartz and feldspar. Mica. Layers of rock. Layers that had their beginnings in some huge disturbance inside the earth. He'd done a paper on it once for science.

Doug didn't know why, but he felt a vague sense of discomfort, like some unpleasant memory tapping at the side of his head. No, he thought fiercely. He was doing too well. No unpleasant thoughts now, thank you.

The muscles in Doug's legs carried him easily with each stride. He forced himself to think positively, concentrating on his strength. He didn't even bother to rest at the next place the ground leveled out, but moved on around the curve of the mountain, inching down steep, rocky troughs chiseled out by water, then making his way through a long maze of rocky outcrops.

Layers. It came back to him now. That was the word that seemed so unpleasant. Layers of rock, he'd been thinking, that had their beginnings in some huge . . . Layers of feelings, of grudges. Wasn't that how Mom had described it, with her and Uncle Lloyd? One thing piled on top of another, she had said. So many layers we never did get to the bottom of it.

Would Mom have climbed this mountain to rescue Lloyd? Well, Doug was doing it for Gordon, wasn't he? So no, what happened between her and Lloyd was not the same as him and Gordie at all. She was right.

There was a noise behind him and he stopped. It was like a rock falling, tumbling — rolling behind him down the trail, too far back for him to have caused it. He turned and waited, seeing nothing, hearing nothing more, then moved on again.

At this point there was a vertical face of rock on one side of him, boulders and scrub trees on the other. With each upward step he took, the small trees retreated from the landscape, but the wide expanse of boulders remained. He liked that — liked a wide span between him and the gorge below, a monstrous guardrail. If ever the fear that terrified him in high places convinced him to simply fling himself over the edge and get it over with, the boulders would be there to say no.

Suddenly he felt that familiar thump against his thigh.

“Man, Charlie!” he gasped, leaning against the rock wall. “You scared me half to death!”

The cougar came up around him, looked at Doug a moment, then moved on, checking once to see if he was coming.

“Hold your horses,” he said, unsure of whether he wanted her with him or not.

Was it conceivable, he wondered, that the cougar had a den up here? That she spent most of the day among the rocks, coming home each morning, then going out to hunt around dusk?

That was another thing to think about now, one more thing to occupy his mind. But thinking about Charlie led to thinking about Gordon, and Doug decided it would have been better if the cat hadn't come.

The rocky path far up ahead suddenly fell into shadow, and Doug glanced at the sky. The clouds overhead were hard to read. Dark around the edges, with the sun gleaming behind them, and the wind trying to push them, unwanted, from this part of the sky.

The farther Doug climbed, the narrower the stretch of safety on his left. When he first started out, there was nothing at all but trees and meadow, then trees and rocks, then mostly boulders and a few scrubby trees. Each time he stepped, however, the span on his left grew smaller.



Now the low, twisted trees gave way to rock entirely, and the span had narrowed to the point that Doug could see the gorge below almost continuously. The hillside seemed to be receding, the edge coming closer to the trail. There were a few places, Doug was sure, where, if he were to lie down crosswise on the path, his feet against the cliff, his arms stretched above his head, his fingers would touch the drop-off.

He tried to redirect his thoughts.

“How you doin’ up there, Charlie?” he called shakily to the cougar, who seemed to be waiting for him at the next rise. The cat stretched out her head toward the sun and panted, the closest thing yet to a smile.

But there was a drumbeat starting now in Doug’s chest; he could feel it. Seemed almost to hear it. Like a foghorn out over a bay; the far-off whistle of a train. . . .

He thought of various guys in his troop — how they would be enjoying the trail about now, exclaiming every time there was a new view of the canyon below. He tried to imagine himself in their bodies, becoming Frank Jameson, for example, or Teddy Heinz. They were always the first ones to the top of any climb.

But it didn't work. He *wasn't* Teddy or Frank, he was Doug Grillo, who had come up this way with his family two years ago and had not been able to make it back without help. Now he was Doug Grillo here alone.

About two hundred yards more, he guessed, and he'd be at the spot. Snow-splattered ridges gleamed in the distance. He felt he could remember every rock, every root of the ledge. Should he stop awhile and get his nerve up? Catch his breath?

He kept going, making his way around the next bend. The wind was soundless, sweeping the sun-filled sky. And suddenly, there it was, sooner than he had thought. The span of safety on his left gave way entirely, and he was face-to-face with the Fear Place.

Even the cougar stopped, lifted her head, and sniffed the air. She looked down over the edge, then back, as if to see if Doug were coming.

I can't! A swell of fear engulfed him, and for a moment the trees far below seemed to come up to meet him. Clinging tightly to a scrubby bush growing out of the face of the rock, Doug stared without blinking at the ledge stretching before him, even narrower than he remembered. Was this possible? Could it have eroded to twenty inches in places?

There was nothing separating him from the edge of the cliff and a plunge downward. There were even places that the ledge tipped slightly toward the yawning gap, places where loose rocks and stones lay ready to trip him, make him skid.

He could smell the difference in the air here above the canyon, sharp and moist. It beckoned him downward, and each breeze seemed to punch him in the stomach, shoot upward, socking him again beneath the chin.

Far below him, the rocky floor of the canyon waited. He could see the tops of the trees, a meandering stream, boulders. He wondered how long it would take his body to reach the bottom. How it would feel to . . . *no!*



Immobile, Doug swallowed and tried to get a grip on his fear. His mouth felt as though it were lined with dust. He attempted to measure the length of the ledge with his eyes — the length of the place where his heart stopped pumping and his legs wouldn't move. *That* place. About nine yards to the curve, and a few yards more after that, if he remembered right. It didn't seem so long when he thought about it, but looking out there now, it seemed impossible.



Maybe there were times it paid to be cautious. Maybe there were places that only fools would tread. Hadn't his mother said something like that once, or was it "Where angels fear to tread?" If there was such a place, this was it.

Would he ever make Eagle Scout if he couldn't try something like this? Would he even *live* to make Eagle Scout if he did? One slip of the foot and . . .

Stop it. His other self. As though he never took any other kinds of risks — riding his bike at top speed around corners, for example.

Look at the ledge, he told himself, and see if you could make it without falling off if it was drawn on the sidewalk with chalk.

Sure, no problem.

Could he do it if it were only half as wide, drawn with chalk on the sidewalk?

Of course. A fourth as wide, even. Give him a path on the sidewalk five inches wide, marked with chalk, and he could go for a mile, never stepping outside the boundaries once.



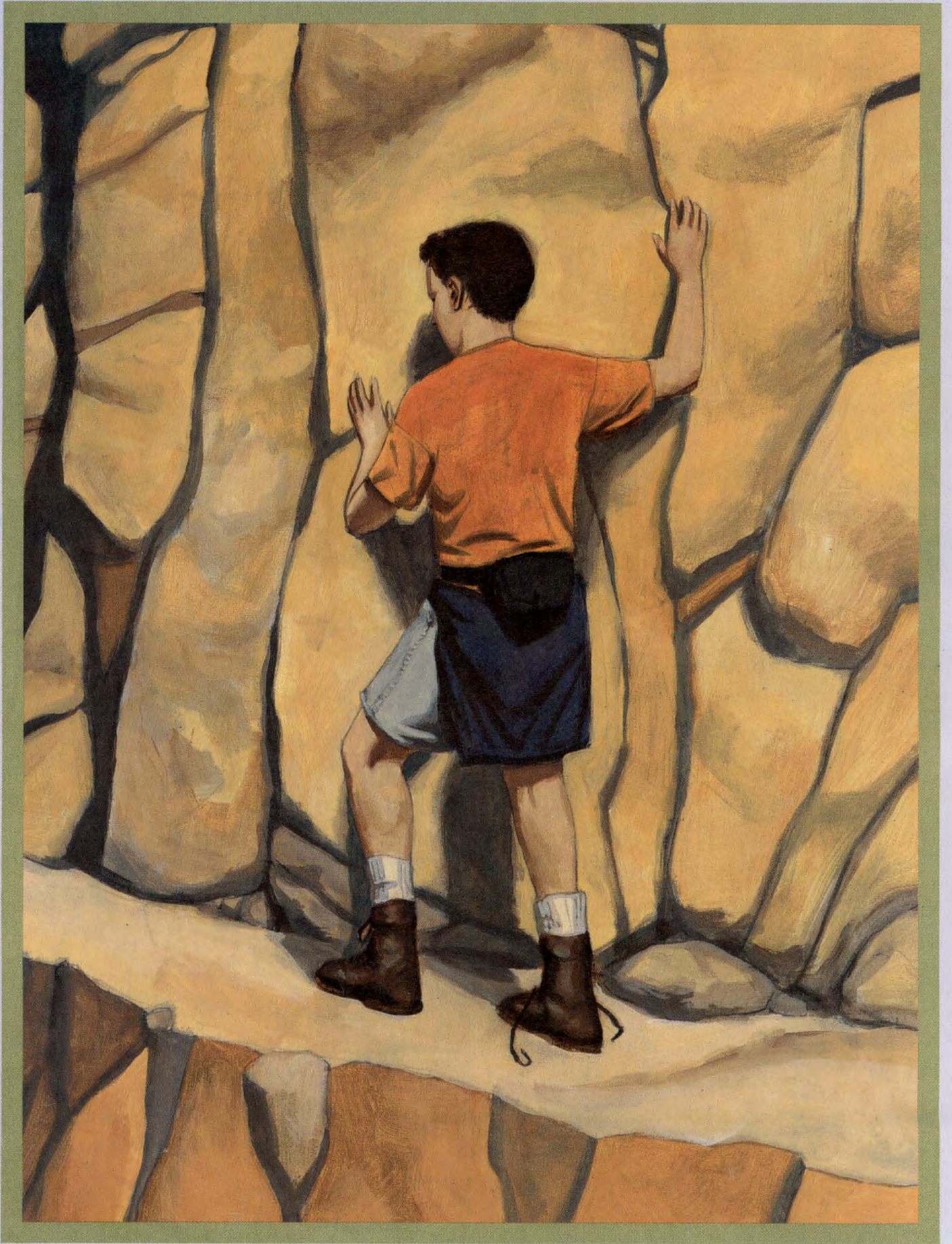
Okay, then. He had twenty inches, minimum. Do it, he told himself. It was the cougar who showed him how.

The cat simply walked out on the ledge, hugging the side of the mountain, but not too closely. Not leaning inward, as Doug tended to do. As he followed, and as he thought about it, Doug realized that were his body at an angle and he slipped, his feet would be pointing toward the edge of the cliff. He needed to keep upright. He would remember that chalk line on the sidewalk.

It wasn't so bad at first. The ledge varied in width between three and three and a half feet.

Three feet is a yardstick, he told himself. Three feet is the width of a kitchen table, the width of a cot. Probably wider here than his sleeping bag. Yet he lay on top of it on hot summer nights and never rolled off, not even in his sleep. He could do this. Piece of cake. He swallowed.

Ahead, the cougar's left hind foot seemed to displace a small stone at the side of the path, and it rolled over the edge. Doug heard it hit a rock below, then another. The cougar glanced toward the gorge and kept going, ears up.



The path was narrowing now, and somewhere ahead was the curve where it was narrowest of all, where he couldn't see what he was getting to. Somewhere, right on the bend, was the place he had flattened himself against the rock. *I can't*. The words seemed to be building up already in his throat.

He felt the needle pricks in the palms of his hands again, and in the soles of his feet. Felt the tightening of his body, the rigidity of his chest, as though, if he tensed himself enough, he might be too stiff or too hard or too impenetrable to topple.

Ahead, the cougar's body swayed with every motion, limbs sleek and relaxed. She took the curves as easily as a tire rolling along on its own momentum. She didn't walk carelessly, but in a deliberate, rhythmic manner, joints loose, paws secure.

As he approached the curve, Doug took a deep, shaky breath and let it out. Then another. He looked down at his feet and blew upward, to fan his face.

His right bootlace was untied, the ends dangling.

He would not try to tie it here. Bend over here and he might lose his balance altogether. He would have to go around the bend dragging that lace.

Hollow-eyed with terror, his mouth dry, he began to maneuver himself around the narrow curve, watching each step to see where his foot would go next, scanning the wall of rock to see what his hand could clutch.

He would not allow himself to look down at the canyon. Would not let himself even glance at the large birds that were circling, soaring, just off in the huge space to his left. The cougar had gone on, probably so far ahead Doug would find it sitting beside Gordie's tent.

"Remember Dad on the raft," he said aloud, his voice trembling. He tried to remember the day Dad had told him about, when he was sure the sun would kill them all, broil them there in the open sea. They had seen a rowboat and paddled toward it, and when they got there it had four men in it, all refugees like themselves, and all of them dead. Was this as bad as that?

Then, answering his own question, he said aloud, "No."

He lied. It was worse.

He was still moving forward. Had decided not to face the wall and walk sideways for fear his repositioning himself might be more dangerous than walking straight. But just as he rounded the narrowest spot on the ledge, he came face-to-face with the cougar.

His strength almost gave way.

Was this it, then? He had come all this way to face a cougar who wanted to turn around and go back? Who would nudge him backward, step over step, possibly pushing between him and the cliff wall, sending him over the edge?

Their eyes were on each other — fixed solidly on each other for the first time.

"Ch-Charlie," Doug said. "I can't get by. You've got to move."

The cat came on, so close her muzzle was almost against Doug's hipbone. Nudged him. And then the animal backed off. It seemed to Doug that her long body must be moving backward in sections, like a caterpillar. He couldn't see the rest of her, only that tawny head, the amber eyes, moving slowly away from him, leading still. She had not wanted to go back, perhaps; only wanted to see how Doug was doing.

Any minute Doug expected to hear the clawing, scratching sounds of a cougar falling over the edge. Things happened, even to the most expert of animals. And then Charlie disappeared silently from view. But when Doug took the last few steps along the ledge, he saw the cougar's tail ahead of him, Charlie having turned herself around again.

The path was widening here — on ahead, wider still. And finally there were scrub bushes to the left, making a safety rail between him and the canyon below.

He'd made it. Done it.



Responding



Think About the Selection

1. Of all the obstacles Doug faces, which one is the most difficult for him to overcome? How do you know this?
2. What does Doug do to keep his mind off the danger he is in? Do you think his strategy works?
3. What do you think happened before at Doug's "fear place"? Find clues in the story that suggest what might have occurred.
4. Doug says that his scout troop would have enjoyed the hike. Would you enjoy it? Explain why or why not.
5. Do you think Doug would have succeeded if the cougar hadn't been there? Give reasons for your answer.
6. What do you think will happen next in this story? Why?
7. **Connecting/Comparing** Compare Doug's act of courage in *The Fear Place* with Manuel's act of courage in "La Bamba." How are the boys' actions alike? How are they different?



Narrating

Write About an Experience

Write a few paragraphs about a time when you had to overcome an obstacle to reach an important goal.

Tips

- First, list the most important details of the experience.
- Check your verbs to be sure they are all in the right tense.

Social Studies

Study the Geography of a Region

Find details in the story that give information about the terrain where Doug is hiking. These may include details about rock types, landforms, and wildlife. Use this information to write an entry for a guide book about the Rocky Mountains.

Bonus Read more about the geography and wildlife of the Rocky Mountains. Then write a description of the region.

Viewing

Describe an Illustration

Choose an illustration from the selection that you think best represents the “fear place.” Then write a paragraph that tells why you chose that illustration.



Internet

Post a Review

Would you recommend *The Fear Place* to a friend? Why or why not? Write a review of *The Fear Place* and post your review on Education Place.

www.eduplace.com/kids

Writing

Demonstrate understanding (W2.2.a)
Support judgments (W2.2.b)

**Skill: How to Skim
and Scan**

Skim for Main Points

Before you read, skim each page for an overview of the topic and main points:

- 1 Read the **title**, the **captions**, and the **introduction**.
- 2 Read the first and last **paragraphs**.
- 3 Read the first **sentence** in the following paragraphs. Note **key words**.

*Scan to Find
Information Quickly*

- 1 Scan the article by looking quickly at the **paragraphs**.
- 2 Look for **words or phrases** with the information you want.



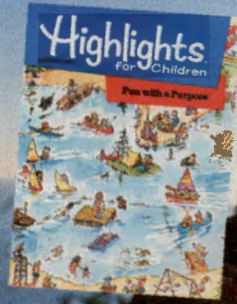
**Standards to
Achieve**

Reading

- **Discern main ideas (R2.3)**

Blind to Limitations

By Brent H. Weber



With the wind howling at their backs, the five climbers cautiously made their way up the unforgiving stretch of mountain. The icy trail was only two feet wide, with a drop of 9,000 feet on one side and 2,000 feet on the other.

And Erik Weihenmayer could not see a thing.

"I was just so tired and dizzy, my head was spinning," says Weihenmayer, who is blind. "I took this giant step up, and the guy in front of me said, 'Congratulations, you're on top of North America.'"

**Erik Weihenmayer
climbed North America's
highest peak despite
being unable to see.**



From left, Jeff Evans, Erik Weihenmayer, and Sam Epstein display the American Foundation for the Blind flag at the top of Mount McKinley.

With that giant step, Erik had reached the top of Alaska's Mount McKinley, the highest peak in North America.

Erik is a modern-day adventurer. The fifth-grade teacher has quite a list of accomplishments for someone who lost his sight at age thirteen because of an eye disease. He hiked the Inca Trail in Peru, trekked the Boltera Glacier in Pakistan, and crossed jungles in New Guinea. He has been scuba-diving and skydiving.

Erik knew that a blind woman named Joni Phelps had climbed the

20,320-foot Mount McKinley in 1993. He decided to try to become the first blind man to do it. He knew it would be his most ambitious adventure yet. He hoped the climb would help raise money for the American Foundation for the Blind.

But Erik was not completely prepared for what he would face. Even in midsummer, with its daylong sunshine, temperatures on Mount McKinley can drop to forty degrees below zero. Huge crevasses, unexpected snowstorms, and even an occasional avalanche can present perilous conditions for any climber.

After they were about a third of the way up the mountain, one of the other climbers said to Erik, "I want you to point to the summit."

"I was standing at seven thousand feet," Erik recalls. "I pointed up to where I thought the summit would be. He said, 'Nope.' And I kept pointing higher and higher until I pointed where I honestly thought the sun would be. He said, 'There it is.' I was just blown away, and thought, 'Am I going to be able to do this?'"

Sighted people often wonder if Erik's experiences are incomplete because he is not able to see.

"I use my other senses to gain pleasure from what I do, so even though I can't see what's around me, I experience it in a different way," he says. "I have the sense of feeling the snow and hearing the wind, and I even have a sense of space around me."

Erik's family have supported his many adventures. They even rented a small plane and flew over Erik as he neared the top of Mount McKinley.

"We heard this buzz coming through the air; they had timed it perfectly," Erik says. "We all waved our ski poles. It was just an incredible

feeling. That was probably my proudest moment, to know that my whole family was up there watching me."

Two days later, Erik had another surprise as the climbers made their way back down the mountain toward their base camp.

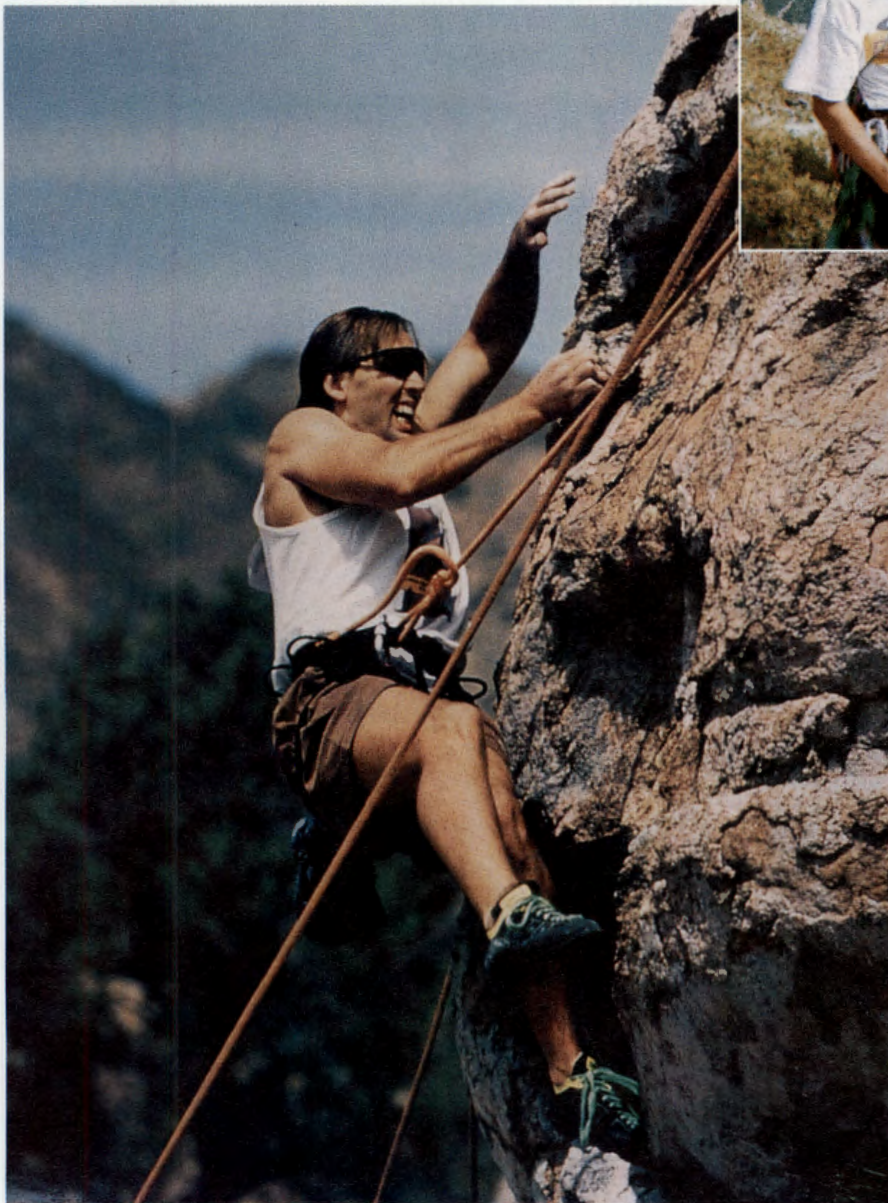
"We were near the bottom of Heartbreak Hill, and I heard 'Hip-hip-hooray!' It was my family. They had flown to our base camp and were standing in a big chorus, cheering us on." Erik's brothers ran to him as he approached. "One brother grabbed one side of my pack, the other grabbed the other side, and I was kind of floating over the last half of that hill."

"When I got to the base camp, my girlfriend, Ellen Reeve, was waiting with chocolate milk and Oreo cookies."

Erik is looking forward to his next challenge.

"People can do extraordinary things," he says. "Although mountain climbing has nothing to do with blindness, I told myself that it would be an awful tragedy if blindness had to change and limit the enjoyment I get out of life. I can get to the top of most of the things I set my mind to. I just have to get there differently."

"If you ask the kids in my class if there is anything that holds them back, almost everyone will say something," Erik says, referring to his students at Phoenix Country Day School in Arizona. "So, in a way, the climb up Mount McKinley was to say that whatever your obstacles in life, you can get around them."



"I can get to the top of most of the things I set my mind to. I just have to get there differently."

Erik does some rock climbing in Arizona.