

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ERIK WEIHENMAYER

Erik was born with retinoscheses, a degenerative eye disorder that progressively unraveled his retinas and claimed his eyesight by the age of thirteen. He was determined from an early age to rise above his disability. In his book he tells how his family played an important role in his battle to break through the barriers of blindness. Erik is one of the few mountaineers to have climbed five of the seven highest peaks in the world. He was the first blind person to reach the summit of the world's highest mountain, Mt. Everest. Despite losing his vision at age thirteen, Erik has become not only a world-class mountaineer, but also a former middle-school teacher and wrestling coach, acrobatic skydiver, long distance biker, marathon runner, skier, wrestler, scuba diver, ice climber, and rock climber. He has recently written the story of his life, *Touch the Top of the World: A Blind Man's Journey To Climb Farther Than the Eye Can See*.

Erik is married to his long-time sweetheart Ellie. They were married at 13,000 feet on Kilimanjaro. He lives with his wife and one-year-old daughter, Emma, in Golden, Colorado. Erik's deceased mother, Ellen Baker Weihenmayer, was a native of Jay, Florida.

REFLECTION STARTERS

I was surprised when...
I liked the way the writer...
This book reminded me of...
These excerpts made me feel...
These excerpts made me think...
These excerpts made me realize...
While I was listening, I pictured...
I'd like to tell the writer...
I'd like to ask the writer...
If I were Erik, I would (wouldn't) have...
I admire Erik for...
If I could talk to Erik, I would say...
Erik reminds me of myself because...
Erik reminds me of somebody I know because...
I think the main thing the writer was trying to say was...

BIO-POEM

A bio-poem is a poem that relates specific information about a person. It is a formula for creating a quick picture of someone. Follow the pattern below to create a characterization of Erik Weihenmayer. There is an example below.

- Line 1...Your first name only
- Line 2...Four traits that describe you
- Line 3...Sibling of... (or son or daughter of)
- Line 4...Lover of...(3 people or ideas)
- Line 5...Who feels...(3 items)
- Line 6...Who needs...(3 items)
- Line 7...Who gives...(3 items)
- Line 8...Who fears...(3 items)
- Line 9...Who would like to see...(3 items)
- Line 10...Resident of (your city and/or state)
- Line 11...Your last name only

Sample bio-poem:

Michael
Strong, intelligent, sensitive, loyal
A brother to many
Loves competition, nature, and freedom
Who feels joy and anger
Who needs love, support, and understanding
Who gives the same things that he needs
Who fears death and loneliness
Who would like to see rugged beauty
A resident of Florida
Brock