

# ENGLISH 11 HONORS

SUMMER READING 2019

Ms. SCHARL, MR. HENDRICKS, MRS. STEELMAN

## MAN VS. NATURE IN THE WORK OF JON KRAKAUER

### *INTO THE WILD -OR- INTO THIN AIR*



Born in 1954, Jon Krakauer grew up in Crvallis, Oregon, where his father introduced him to mountaineering as an eight-year-old. After graduating from Hampshire College in 1976, Krakauer divided his time between Colorado, Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest, supporting himself primarily as a carpenter and commercial salmon fisherman. For the next two decades, however, his life revolved

around climbing mountains.

In 1996, Krakauer climbed Mt. Everest, but a storm took the lives of four of the five teammates who reached the summit with him. An analysis of the calamity he wrote for *Outside* magazine received a National Magazine Award. The unsparingly forthright book he subsequently wrote about Everest, *Into Thin Air*, became a #1 NYTimes bestseller and was one of three finalists for the Pulitzer Prize.

In 1999, Krakauer received an Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, intended "to honor writers of exceptional accomplish-

ment." According to the Academy's citation, "Krakauer combines the tenacity and courage of the finest tradition of investigative journalism with the stylish subtlety and profound insight of the born writer. His account of an ascent of Mount Everest has led to a general reevaluation of climbing and of the commercialization of what was once a romantic, solitary sport; while his account of the life and death of Christopher McCandless, who died of starvation after challenging the Alaskan wilderness, delves even more deeply and disturbingly into the fascination of nature and the devastating effects of its lure on a young and curious mind."

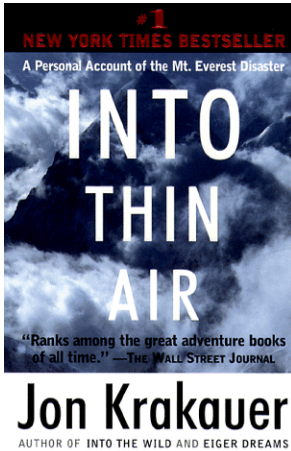
### CONTACT INFORMATION AND EXPECTATIONS

- This is an individual assignment, and it is expected that the work you submit is your own and that it was not done with any form of outside assistance, be that the Internet, your parents, or your friends.
- Your work is due during the second week of school
- If you have any questions or are having trouble getting a copy of the book, please email Ms. Scharl at [jascharl@fcps.edu](mailto:jascharl@fcps.edu)
- Keep in mind that Ms. Scharl may be too busy during the week before school starts to respond to your emails, so don't wait until the last week to get started!

## ASSIGNMENT SPECIFICS

1. Pick your book (either *Into the Wild* or *Into Thin Air*) and obtain a copy. You may choose to purchase, borrow, or check a copy out from the school or community library. There will be a select number of copies available in Hayfield's main office.
2. As you read the book, keep a list of vocabulary words that are new to you. Write down the sentence and page number where you found the word, and look up and write down the definition and the word's part of speech. Finally, write an **original** sentence using the word. *A minimum of 10 words is required.* (5 points)
3. As you read, take notes on the book that will help you answer the Socratic Seminar Questions (found on the back of this sheet). You will be required to use your notes and responses to all questions during your class's Socratic Seminar, which will take place during the second week of the new school year. *Keep in mind that you must show proof of preparation in order to participate in your class's discussion.* (10 points)
4. You will also write an in-class essay about the book. More details about the essay topic and grading requirements will be shared during the first week of school. (25 points for essay)

## BOOK CHOICES



A handful of people have stood atop Everest, and Krakauer is one of them. Sent to Nepal in May 1996 after his success with *Into the Wild* (1995), he was to report on the commercialization of ascents of the mountain but was instead compelled to tell an icy story of survival and death.

As an inquiry into the outer limits of human strength and into the inner turmoil of survivor's guilt, Krakauer's narrative leaves a reader virtually breathless, sweating as he sweats, gasping as he gasps, crying as he cries over dying friends. The disaster made worldwide headlines, and its immedi-

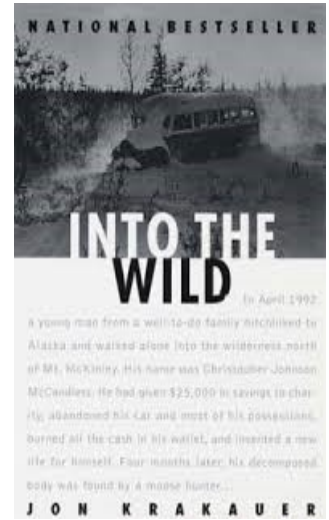
ate cause was natural--a freak blizzard caught dozens of people near the summit. But the enabling condition was the mere presence at Everest of amateurs, some with minimal mountaineering skill. Guides, Sherpas, and \$65,000 was all one needed to make the attempt. At the summit, the pressures of the guide-client relationship were immense, even overwhelming the imperative to flee the storm that overwhelmed the victims.

Krakauer's eyewitness to the unfolding tragedy makes a transfixing drama of hubris, responsibility, and sacrificial heroism, which will mark the memory of all who read it.

In April 1992 a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. His name was Christopher McCandless. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. How McCandless came to die is the unforgettable story of *Into the Wild*.

Jon Krakauer reassembles the disquieting facts of McCandless's short life. He searches for the clues to the drives and desires that propelled McCandless. He takes an inherently compelling mystery and unravels the larger riddles it holds: the profound pull of the American wilderness on our imagination; the allure of high-risk activities to young men of a certain cast of mind; the complex, charged bond between fathers and sons.

When McCandless's innocent mistakes turn out to be irreversible and fatal, he becomes the stuff of tabloid headlines and is dismissed for his naiveté, pretensions, and hubris. He is said to have had a death wish but wanting to die is a very different thing from being compelled to look over the edge. Krakauer brings McCandless's uncompromising pilgrimage out of the shadows, and the peril, adversity, and renunciation sought by this enigmatic young man are illuminated with a rare understanding--and not an ounce of sentimentality. Mesmerizing, heartbreaking, *Into the Wild* is a *tour de force*. The power and luminosity of Jon Krakauer's storytelling blaze through every page.



Please note that the books on this list may contain mature content and/or controversial material (i.e. offensive language, violence, and/or implied or explicit sexual situations). The resources listed below can be used to see book reviews and get more information about the books we will use in our class. Fairfax County Library <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/>, Bartleby.com: Great Books Online <http://www.bartleby.com> Book Reporter <http://www.bookreporter.com>, Book Spot <http://www.bookspot.com/>, Teen Reads <http://www.teenreads.com>

## SOCRATIC SEMINAR QUESTIONS

1. Did you detect any sort of bias in your book? Where? What role might it have played in the telling of the story?
2. Discuss Krakauer's use of other literary sources at the beginning of each chapter—what purpose did they serve?
3. What is the point of view in your book? Does it change? Where? For what possible reason?
4. Where do you find evidence of Krakauer's attitude toward nature? Does it change?
5. Compare and contrast Krakauer's views toward nature with the other people's views toward nature in your book.
6. What are some themes of your book? What evidence do you have to support your idea? (*Hint: Think about universal themes, such as "the dangers of ignorance." Theme should always be stated as a phrase, rather than a single word.*)
7. What lessons about life can you take away from this book? How has reading it changed you? What parts of the story caused you to think differently or to change in another way?
8. Write at least one other question for the seminar. Remember to make it a general question that could be answered by someone who read the other book as well as by someone who read your book.

**This assignment meets the following learning objectives:**

I will be able to make predictions, inferences, draw conclusions, and connect prior knowledge when reading a non-fiction American text.

I will be able to actively share information with my peers in a public forum.

I will be able to use a variety of active listening strategies to make evaluations.