

Touching the Void-Chapter Questions and Revision Points

Chapter Questions:

Chapter One-Beneath the Mountain Lakes:

1. Joe is looking back on, and writing about, events after they have happened. Do you think he remembers them accurately or is he influenced by the fact that he knows what is about to happen?
2. Joe is clearly worried by the weather but sets off on the journey regardless. Why do you think he does this?
3. Do you think Joe would have set off if he had been travelling alone?

Chapter Two-Tempting Fate:

1. Given that Joe has narrowly escaped death before, and that both he and Simon have a bad feeling, why do you think they continue their journey?
2. Given that Simon is the more positive and optimistic of the two men, does the mood change when Simon says he, "...doesn't like it here."?

Chapter Three-Storm at the Summit:

1. Why do you think Joe describes to the reader the size of the icicles? What is the effect of this on the reader?
2. What is the effect of the description as, "...snow and cloud merged into a uniform blank whiteness."?
3. Who saves who in this chapter?

Chapter Four-On the Edge:

1. Why is "On the Edge" an appropriate title for this chapter?
2. Remembering that Joe is writing about events after they have happened, do we believe that Joe has some kind of sixth sense?
3. Joe informs us that "...anxiety had returned with a vengeance..." What is the effect of this description?
4. In what way do you think "...fear is infectious..."?

Chapter Five-Disaster:

1. Why do you think Joe chose to write a section from Simon's viewpoint?
2. At the end of the book Joe thanks Simon for his "...honesty in telling me how much he had been through, and his trust in allowing me to write these sensitive emotions in my own words..." (P216) Given that Joe is writing from Simon's viewpoint, do we trust what Joe says?
3. Does your opinion of the men change in this chapter? Explain.
4. Why do you think an 'uncrossable gap' comes between Joe and Simon in this chapter?

Chapter Six-The Final Choice:

1. Why does the accident happen?
2. Does Simon prove to be a good friend?
3. Is his decision to cut the rope the right one?
4. Why do you think Simon feels a 'sense of condemnation'?

Chapter Seven-Shadows in the Ice:

1. What thoughts would go through your mind if you were in Joe's position?
2. Do we admire Joe or think he is weak in this chapter?
3. Why do you think Joe has a change of mood as 'day dawns'?

Chapter Eight-Silent Witness:

1. We tend to forget about Richard. How might he have been feeling as Joe and Simon fail to return to base camp?
2. How can Simon's anger and resentment be seen as a positive thing?
3. What do you think Richard's initial thoughts were when Simon recalls events to him?

Chapter Nine-In the Far Distance:

1. What does Joe mean when he says he has "...been fighting someone too strong for me for far too long..."?

Chapter Ten-Mind Games:

1. Why do you think Joe refers to sleep as 'dark comfort' and a 'black stupor'? Can we relate this back to the title of the book?
2. How do you feel when Simon burns Joe's clothes/ Why do you think he does this?
3. In what way has Simon's 'healing process' begun?

Chapter Eleven-A Land Without Pity:

1. Why does Joe describe the 'stab of sharp pain' from his knee as rewarding?
2. Joe is alone on a mountain. When he sorts out his stuff sack on page 161, why do you think he says, "It was good to leave things tidy and organised."?
3. Look at the description of the landscape on page 163. How does it compare with the description in Chapter 1? Why do you think this is important?

Chapter Twelve-Time Running Out:

1. At the start of the chapter Simon says, "...something prevented me from leaving..." What do you think he means?
2. Joe is weak, injured and exhausted. What motivates him in this chapter?
3. On pages 182 and 183 Joe says, "It had been with me from the very beginning. In the crevasse it had been overshadowed by terror, on the glacier by loneliness, but once past all the dangers it had mushroomed into a consuming hollowness." What is he referring to?

Chapter Thirteen-Tears in the Night:

1. Why do you think Richard is described as staring at Joe with "...wide eyed apprehension..."?
2. Why do you think Simon's expression is one of "...pity and horror and alarm fighting in his eyes..."?
3. Why do you think Simon cries when Joe thanks him?
4. How would you describe the relationship between Simon and Joe in this chapter? Is it reminiscent of the early chapters?