

BRAILLE READING PASSAGE: WORKSHOP 19

Shortforms Set 3

Erik Weihenmayer: First Blind Mt Everest Climber

Many children dream of climbing to the top of Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world. For most of these little children, this will remain just a dream, as they quickly learn that climbing Everest takes years to accomplish. Only about 10% of the good climbers who attempt to climb Everest will ever reach the top of the 29,035 feet summit.

Mt. Everest lies in the Himalayan Mountains of Asia, connecting Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. The climate on Everest is freezing and hostile to humans, with July temperatures averaging -2 Fahrenheit. The summit is covered by frozen rock-hard snow topped with 5-20 feet of soft snow and 100 mph winds. The upper slopes are so high there is little breathable oxygen in the air, so portable oxygen tanks are a necessity. Since the first climbers in 1953, more than 300 people have died trying to reach the summit.

Erik Weihenmayer was one of those little children who dreamed of climbing Mt. Everest. After sending many application letters, he got an acceptance letter after two years of requests, and in 2001 became the first blind person in history to reach the summit. Three other records were broken on the same day. A surgeon who was 64 became the oldest person to reach the top, the first father-son team reached the summit, and Erik's team of eleven Americans and eight Sherpa guides was the largest team to ever reach the summit. Erik's team of friends wore little bells so he could hear where they were during the dangerous climb, and they called out directions so he could remain on the trail.

Born in 1969, Erik was very good at playing basketball and running with other children, even though he had been diagnosed with a rare retinal disease as an infant. By the age of 13, Erik was completely blind. His parents wanted their children to be active and independent, so Erik tried different sports with his friends. He

quickly became so good at wrestling that he earned a high school letter jacket and became a national champion.

Erik first hiked with his father and brothers, and as the little brother he quickly learned to keep up with his older brothers. He was quick to make good friends with other athletes at a rock-climbing camp for blind teenagers. While attending Boston College, Erik spent summers traveling around the world with his father and two brothers on rock-climbing trips. He was a good student and went on to Cambridge for graduate school in education. Erik sent out many application letters and got back numerous rejection letters when he first applied for teaching jobs. He was finally hired as a 5th grade teacher in Phoenix, Arizona, where he became good friends with another teacher. She later became Erik's wife.

Erik quickly made friends with other climbers in Arizona, and this led to a career in climbing. He was able to create a good team who built trust with each other as climbers and friends. Erik is the only blind person to climb the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on each of the seven continents. Other little known facts are that, with friends guiding him, Erik kayaked the entire 277 miles of the Colorado River and made more than 50 skydives.

Erik helped create two organizations called No Barriers and No Barriers Life, with the mission to help people who are blind or have other challenges team up for adventures, and make friends. Their motto is “What’s Within You is Stronger Than What’s in Your Way.” No Barriers Life works with youth, veterans, and people with all types of challenges.

The figure shows a sequence of seven dot patterns arranged horizontally. The first pattern is a single dot. The second is a 2x2 grid of four dots. The third is a 3x3 grid of nine dots. The fourth is a larger hexagonal arrangement of 13 dots. The fifth is a 4x4 grid of 16 dots. The sixth is a 5x5 grid of 25 dots. The seventh is a 6x6 grid of 36 dots.

The image displays a 6x10 grid of 60 small square patterns. Each pattern consists of a 5x5 grid of dots, with some dots being black and others white. The patterns are arranged in six rows and ten columns. The first row contains 10 patterns, the second row contains 10 patterns, the third row contains 10 patterns, the fourth row contains 10 patterns, the fifth row contains 10 patterns, and the sixth row contains 10 patterns. The patterns are organized into six rows and ten columns, showing a variety of dot counts and spatial distributions.

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