

Touching the Void

Joe Simpson

- 1 a They wanted to have a fun climbing adventure. They had already climbed mountains in the Alps and wanted something more challenging, where they would feel alone and free with the mountain. They wanted to be the first people in the world to climb the West Face of Siula Grande.
- b *Student's own answers. Possible problems might be:*
bad weather/cold, falling, injuries, getting lost, not having enough food and drink.

2

Parts of a mountain	Equipment for climbing	Equipment for camping
slope	helmet	tent
peak/summit	rope	stove
	ice screw	sleeping bag
	crampon	gas canister

3

Mountain range	Cordillera Huayhuash
Country	Peru
Continent	South America
Highest peak in the range	Yerupaja
Height of highest peak	6634m
Second highest peak in the range	Siula Grande
Height of second highest peak	6356m

- 4 Joe Simpson chose 'void' because it suggests terrible loss and emptiness, as well as a sense of being completely alone (page 5). He felt it was better than ordinary words like 'loneliness', 'fear' and 'pain'.

5	Problems and dangers	How they deal with the danger
	darkness	<i>daylight/head torches and batteries</i>
	injury (a broken leg and frostbitten fingers)	pills/medicine/Simon let Joe down the mountain side on a rope/crawling/making a splint for the leg
	falling down the mountain side	using rope to tie to partner, using ice screws to fix to ice
	falling down crevasses	progressing slowly, Joe followed Simon's footprints
	storms and bad weather	digging snow holes for protection, getting inside sleeping bags
	hunger/thirst	heating snow with a stove to make hot drinks/eating food/eating snow/reaching the lakes
	losing hope and dying	not wanting to die/keeping moving/Joe listened to the Voice

6 *Student's own answers. Possible points to mention:*

Joe cried when he realised the rope had been cut. He thought there was no way out and that he would die in the crevasse.

He tried climbing back up the ice wall, but the pain was terrible and it was impossible. He knew Simon had gone, so no-one would come and rescue him and he didn't want to stay on the ledge. He considered jumping, but didn't want to die, so the only choice left was abseiling down the crevasse.

7 **a** *Student's own answer. Possible details:*

Simon was falling off the mountain and knew he could not hold the rope any longer without killing himself. It was a quick decision because he felt there was no choice. Joe may have already been dead.

b *Student's own answer.*

8 *Student's own answer.*

9 *Student's own answer. Possible details:*

It is a film about survival in a very difficult situation and it can be enjoyed by everyone because it is not just about mountain climbing. It deals with subjects which are interesting to us all, including friendship, trust, loneliness and coping with facing death.

10 *See website for reference.*