



## *Pushing the Limits of Survival*

### Suggested Reading and Discussion Questions

This theme explores the fundamental urge to survive and how it has manifested in society in the past and today. Issues to consider in group discussions include the ways in which we strive for the survival of the planet, of our families, and as individuals.

#### ***Into Thin Air: A personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster***

**Jon Krakauer, Nonfiction.** A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more--including Krakauer's--in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster". *Goodreads.com*

In 1999, Krakauer received an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters - a prestigious prize intended "to honor writers of exceptional accomplishment." 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. *Amazon.com*

- How would you feel about a loved one who was passionate about climbing, who felt the pull toward Everest or K2? Would you encourage him/her to pursue the dream...or be more mindful of leaving behind families should something happen to you? Why do some people have an urge for adventure like this, even though it may lead to death? Is it nature or nurture?
- What do you think about the decision to leave Beck Weathers and Yasuko Namba to die, knowing both were still alive? What do you think you would have done in that situation? Do we humans have an instinct to survive that overrides our culture or beliefs?
- Which individual did you find yourself most sympathizing with ... which did you most admire ... which least admire?

