



Quicklet on Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* (CliffsNotes-like Book Summary)

Vivian Wagner

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ABOUT THE BOOK

When I first read Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster*, I was enthralled and amazed. The story he tells about a doomed Mt. Everest expedition in 1996 is both thrilling and terrifying, and it also has a lot to say about the problems with the commercialization of adventure expeditions on the highest mountain in the world.

It's a well-researched and extraordinarily well-written first-hand account of the tragic expedition, and Krakauer's excellent storytelling makes for gripping reading. Not only was he a member of this expedition, but he knows how to tell a story - how to introduce characters, build drama, and describe situations. He also has a gift for researching and writing history.

When I first read *Into Thin Air*, I was prompted to read everything I could get my hands on about Mt. Everest. You could spend several years reading through this material, since there have been many books published about Mt. Everest, including several about this same disaster. Reading as many as you can will throw you into a fascinating, complex, and sometimes contradictory world of adventurers, scientists, business people, Tibetan and Nepalese guides, socialites, swindlers, politicians, artists, dreamers, and many other characters - as well as the frigid and challenging character of the mountain itself. Whether this is your first or fiftieth foray into the literature of Mt. Everest, you won't be disappointed by *Into Thin Air*, and it will certainly draw you into its subzero spell.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Freelance writer Vivian Wagner has wide-ranging interests, from technology and business to music and motorcycles. She writes features regularly for ECT News Network, and her work has also appeared in *American Profile*, *Entrepreneur*, *Bluegrass Unlimited*, and many other publications. She is also the author of *Fiddle: One Woman, Four Strings, and 8,000 Miles of Music* (Citadel 2010). For more about her, visit her website at www.vivianwagner.net.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

Into Thin Air (1997) began as a 1996 article for *Outside Magazine*. Krakauer wanted to develop the story more fully, however, and thus the book was born. He'd originally been assigned to examine the commercialization of Mt. Everest for the *Outside* article. That ended up being the focus of the story after all, but with a much more tragic outcome than he or his editors could have imagined.

For the article and subsequent book, Krakauer joined an expedition led by Rob Hall's Adventure Consultants. During that season, a number of other expeditions were also on the mountain along with Krakauer and Hall, including Scott Fischer's *Mountain Madness*. Both Hall and Fischer were killed in the May 1996 disaster, along with six other climbers.

Since its publication, *Into Thin Air* has been at the center of controversy surrounding Krakauer's account of events, particularly in regards to questions about who was responsible for tragic errors made on the mountain. Much of the initial criticism of the book came from the Russian climbing guide Anatoli Boukreev, who disputed Krakauer's depiction of him as neglecting his mountain guide duties. In response to Krakauer's book, Boukreev published his own account of the tragedy, co-authored by G. Weston DeWalt, called *The Climb* (1997). In postscript to a later edition of *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer took up this debate and defended his account of the tragedy against Boukreev's criticism.

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

Quicklet on Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster*

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