Student Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _2022__ Score:_____
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Classwork

READING 2B

Reading Explorer 5 Unit 2 Lesson B

DIRECTIONS: Choose the best answer for each question.

The Free Soloist

[A] *In June 2017, Alex Honnold completed a stunning scramble up El Capitan, a 3,000-foot granite wall in Yosemite National Park. Mark Synnott recounts how Honnold's meticulous planning and training prepared him for "the ultimate climb" - a four-hour vertical ascent without a rope.*

[B] It's 4:54 a.m. on a chilly November morning in 2016 in Yosemite National Park. A full moon casts an eerie glow onto the southwest face of El Capitan, where Alex Honnold clings to the side of the granite wall with nothing more than the tips of his fingers and two thin edges of shoe rubber. He's attempting to do something that professional rock climbers have long thought impossible - a free solo ascent of the world's most famous cliff. That means he is alone and climbing without a rope as he inches his way up more than half a mile of vertical rock.

[C] A light breeze rustles his hair as he shines his headlamp on the cold, smooth patch of granite where he must next place his foot. Above him, the stone is blank for several feet, devoid of any holds. Unlike parts of the climb higher up, which feature shallow divots, pebble-size nubs, and tiny cracks that Alex can cling onto with his amazingly strong fingers, this part - a barely less than vertical slab on a section called the Freeblast - must be mastered with a delicate balance of fine skills and poise.[1] Climbers call it friction climbing. "It's like walking up glass," Alex once said.

[D] He wiggles his toes; they're numb. His right ankle is stiff and swollen from a severe sprain he sustained two months earlier when he fell while practicing this part of the route. That time he was attached to a rope, but now, falling isn't an option. Free soloing isn't like other dangerous sports. There is no "maybe" when you're 60 stories up without a rope: If you make a mistake, you die.

[E] Six hundred feet below, I sit on a fallen tree watching the tiny circle of Alex's light. It hasn't moved in what feels like an eternity, but is probably less than a minute. And I know why: he's facing the move that has haunted him ever since he first dreamed up this scheme seven years ago. I've climbed this slab myself, and the thought of doing it free solo makes me nauseated. The log on which I'm sitting lies less than a hundred yards from where Alex will land if he slips.

[F] A sudden noise jolts me back to the present; my heart skips. A cameraman, part of the crew recording the feat, hustles up the trail toward the base of the wall. I can hear the static of his walkie-talkie. "Alex is bailing," he says. Thank God, I think, Alex will live.

* * *

[G] Some in the climbing world view free soloing as something that isn't meant to be. Critics regard it as reckless showmanship that gives the sport a bad name, noting the long list of those who've died attempting it. Others, myself included, recognize it as the sport's purest expression. Such was the

LIVEWORKSHEETS

attitude of Austrian alpinist Paul Preuss, considered by climbing historians to be the father of free soloing. He proclaimed that the very essence of alpinism was to master a mountain with superior physical and mental skill - not "artificial aid." By age 27, Preuss had made some 150 ropeless first ascents, and was celebrated throughout Europe. Then, on October 3, 1913, while free soloing the North Ridge of the Mandlkogel in the Austrian Alps, he fell to his death.

[H] But Preuss's ideas would live on, influencing successive generations of climbers and inspiring the "free climbing" movement of the 1960s and '70s, which espoused using ropes and other gear only as safety devices, never to assist a climber's upward progress. The next serious free soloist of note appeared in 1973, when "Hot" Henry Barber shocked the climbing community by scaling the 1,500-foot north face of Yosemite's Sentinel Rock without a rope. In 1987, Canadian Peter Croft free soloed two of Yosemite's most celebrated routes - Astroman and Rostrum - back-to-back in the same day.

[I] Croft's achievement stood until 2007, when Alex Honnold, a shy 22-year-old from Sacramento, showed up in Yosemite Valley. He stunned the climbing world by repeating Croft's Astroman-Rostrum masterpiece. The next year he free soloed two famously tough routes - Zion National Park's Moonlight Buttress and the Regular Northwest Face of Yosemite's Half Dome - climbs so long and technically difficult that no serious climber had imagined they could be scaled without a rope. As sponsorship offers poured in and journalists and fans hailed his achievements, Alex was secretly contemplating a much bigger goal.

[J] It's important to note that Alex's quest to free solo El Capitan wasn't some adrenaline-fueled stunt that he'd come up with on a whim. In 2009, during our first climbing expedition together, he had mentioned the idea to me. There was something about his supreme confidence, though, and the way he effortlessly moved up incredibly difficult rock faces that made the comment seem like more than just an idle boast.

[K] Alex researched several El Capitan routes, finally settling on Freerider, a popular test piece for veteran climbers and one that usually requires multiple days to ascend. Its 30 or so pitches - or rope lengths - challenge a climber in practically every possible way: the strength of fingers, forearms, shoulders, calves, toes, back, and abdomen, not to mention balance, flexibility, problem solving, and emotional stamina. Certain times of the day the sun heats the rock so much that it burns to touch it; hours later the temperature can plummet below freezing. Storms blow in, powerful winds lash the wall, water leaks out of cracks. Bees, frogs, and birds can burst from crevices during crucial moves. Rocks of all sizes can suddenly give way and tumble down.

[L] The Freeblast may be the scariest part, but more physically demanding sections await higher up: a chimney-like crack he'll have to climb through; a wide gap where he'll have to perform almost a full split, pressing the rock with his feet and hands to inch his way up. And then 2,300 feet above the valley floor is the Boulder Problem - a blank face that requires some of the most technically challenging moves of the climb.

[M] But before he could tackle the Boulder Problem, he would have to get over the Freeblast. In 2016, the vertical slab proved to be an insurmountable obstacle and he was forced to give up his attempt. But Alex knew he would try again.

* * *

[N] **Saturday morning, June 3, 2017.** Seven months after Alex's failed attempt, I am in a meadow near the foot of El Capitan. The tall grass is covered with dew, and the sky is gray, as it always is just

LIVEWORKSHEETS

before dawn. I squint through a telescope, and there is Alex, 600 feet above the valley floor, moving up onto the Freeblast, the glassy slab that has frustrated him for nearly a decade.

[O] Alex's movements, normally so smooth, are worrisomely jerky. His foot tap-tap-taps against the wall as if he's feeling his way tentatively into the slab. And then, just like that, he's standing on a ledge several feet above the move that has been hanging over his head for years.

[P] I realize I've been holding my breath, so I consciously exhale. Thousands of moves are still to come, and the Boulder Problem looms far above, but he won't be turning back this time. Alex Honnold is on his way to completing the greatest rock climb in history.

[1] If someone has **poise**, they have calm self-confidence.
[2] **Alpinism** refers to mountain climbing in the Alps and also other mountains.
[3] If something is **insurmountable**, it is a problem too great to be overcome.

1. Which would be the best alternative title for this passage?
   a. Conquering El Capitan
   b. Climbing for Fun and Fitness
   c. The Greatest Alpinists of the World
   d. Climbing Without a Rope

2. In paragraph A, what does *meticulous* mean?
   a. costing a lot of money
   b. requiring a lot of effort
   c. paying great attention to detail
   d. taking a very long time

3. According to paragraph C, the Freeblast section ____.
   a. has to be climbed more quickly than other parts of the climb
   b. is completely smooth, without any holds
   c. is the last segment before the summit of El Capitan
   d. can only be climbed using ropes

4. In paragraph D, what can you infer is the reason for why Honnold's toes are numb?
   a. Because they were tired.
   b. Because his shoes were too tight.
   c. Because he had sprained them.
   d. Because they were attached to a rope.

5. Why does the author include his thought that *Alex will live* in paragraph F?
   a. to illustrate how dangerous the climb is
   b. to show that he doesn't believe in Honnold
   c. to explain that Honnold is being reckless
   d. to remind the reader that life is short

LIVEWORKSHEETS

6. In paragraph G, what does the author mean by *isn't meant to be*?
   a. not going to be popular
   b. not certain to succeed
   c. has not been done before
   d. should not be done

7. Why does the author mention "Hot" Henry Barber and Peter Croft in paragraph H?
   a. to demonstrate that Alex is a better climber than those who came before him
   b. to illustrate that free climbing is an international sport
   c. to give an overview of different types of free climbers
   d. to show that there have been significant free climbers in previous generations

8. In paragraph I, what does *they* refer to?
   a. serious climbers
   b. ropes
   c. climbs
   d. journalists

9. In paragraph J, what is the author's purpose for including when Honnold first mentioned the idea to free solo El Capitan to him?
   a. to show that Honnold always boasts about his climbing skills
   b. to explain that Honnold was a seasoned free soloists
   c. to show that Honnold had been thinking about it for a long time
   d. to emphasize how easy free soloing was for Honnold

10. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a climb that Honnold has successfully free soloed?
   a. Zion National Park's Moonlight Buttress
   b. the North Ridge of the Mandlkogel in the Austrian Alps
   c. the Regular Northwest Face of Yosemite's Half Dome
   d. Yosemite's Astroman and Rostrum

DIRECTIONS: Choose the best answer for each question.

How Jimmy Chin Filmed Alex Honnold's Death-Defying Free Solo

Honnold planned to climb Yosemite's El Capitan without a rope. Chin would film it. But first they had to figure out how to talk about it.

[A] When you are Jimmy Chin, you make a long list of rules for filming your friend Alex Honnold's historic attempt to climb Yosemite's El Capitan without using any ropes. First you will hire a team of world-class climber-cinematographers to rappel beside him as he ascends the nearly 3,000-foot granite face. No one is allowed to whisper, sneeze, drop a lens cap, dislodge a pebble - any of which might create the distraction that sends him plummeting to his death. Most important, no one is allowed to talk to Honnold about the epic climb, at least not directly. This is to avoid putting any pressure on him but also to keep from upsetting his precisely calibrated mind-set, a mixture of acute

LIVEWORKSHEETS

concentration, bulletproof confidence, and deep Zen calm. Instead of using the term "free soloing," which means climbing without ropes or safety gear, you use his preferred euphemism - "scrambling."

[B] You follow these rules knowing that any notion of rules is contradictory to the very idea of free soloing, because in this ruthlessly unforgiving sport there really aren't any rules, at least no written ones. That's much of the point. Climbing without ropes is decidedly against all the rules, especially the rules of mountain safety, not to mention human logic.

[C] Some veteran climbers say there is no *if* a free soloist falls - only *when*. You can think of many who have fallen to their deaths, some you knew personally. And suddenly there it is: the vividly horrifying image of your friend flailing into the void.

[D] But wait. That's exactly what you're not supposed to picture when your buddy is trying to do what some experts say is the most daring ascent ever attempted - what Honnold's friend and fellow elite climber Tommy Caldwell called "the moon landing of free soloing."

[E] Such thoughts looped in Chin's mind for more than a year as he and Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi, his wife and filmmaking partner, documented Honnold's efforts to make climbing history. (Spoiler alert: He makes it.) The film, aptly titled *Free Solo*, was released in theaters.

[F] "To film a climber with both the physical and mental ability Alex has, combined with the desire to take on something so ambitious and scary," Chin says, "it's the project of a lifetime, no doubt."

[G] Chin, 45, and Honnold, 33, first climbed together in 2009 as part of an expedition to Borneo to explore Low's Gully, one of the world's deepest slot canyons. Honnold had recently burst onto the climbing scene with a series of headline-grabbing free solos, including Yosemite's Half Dome. Chin remembers being struck by Honnold's boyish face and large brown eyes, which would inevitably earn him the nickname *Bambi*.

[H] But Honnold's youthful appearance belies his most exceptional gift - an uncanny ability to control his fear and focus on perfectly executing the task at hand (never mind that the task is reaching for a fingertip of rock while clinging to a cliff 1,000 feet up). It's a gift that Chin shares in some measure. Three years before meeting Honnold, he climbed Mount Everest and skied down its icy, nearly vertical face.

[I] After Borneo, the men started climbing together regularly, with Chin filming some of Honnold's free solos. "We built up a lot of trust," says Chin. "He trusted me to safely film him, and I trusted him to climb only what he felt good about and not to feel compelled to do rad stuff for the camera."

[J] Meanwhile Honnold had been privately contemplating what it would take to free solo El Cap. "After Half Dome it seemed like the next obvious thing," Honnold says. "At the end of each season, I'd think I'd be ready to do it the next year, but then I'd look up at it and think, 'Whoa, that's still too scary.'"

[K] Finally, in late 2015, Honnold told Chin and Vasarhelyi he was ready, and they agreed to work together in secret on a film about the climb. "It was very important that the film would be about Alex's process," Chin says. "Whether it ended with him summiting El Cap or deciding not to go for it didn't matter. It was always about how do you even think about doing something so mind-bending."

[L] Honnold chose a route called Freerider, one that often takes skilled climbers using ropes multiple days to ascend. He set about perfecting a hand-by-hand, foot-by-foot choreography up the famous

LIVEWORKSHEETS

cliff.
Meanwhile Chin hired a crew of hard-core Yosemite climbers and began planning the extensive logistics.

[M] Each practice session required many hours of preparation. Chin and the crew would speed climb an easy route up the east side of El Cap ahead of Honnold, lugging hundreds of pounds of cameras, ropes, and gear. Then they'd rappel down Freerider and use a type of hand winch to keep pace with him as he climbed. "We all got in the best shape of our lives," Chin says. But at the end of each marathon day, the mental loop of what-ifs would play: "Not a day went by that I didn't think about the worst."

[N] Around 5 p.m. on June 2, 2017, feeling that he was at his peak, Honnold asked Chin if the team could be ready to shoot the next day. "I think I'll go scrambling," he said. Chin nodded, acting like it was no big deal: "My mind was racing with all the things we needed to put in place before it got dark, but I didn't want to upset his mind-set, so I hung out with him for a while." Finally Chin told Honnold he'd see him in the morning and walked slowly until he was out of his friend's line of sight.

[O] Then Chin ran like hell. He jumped on the crew's walkie-talkie channel and, using Honnold's code name, alerted the team to what was about to happen. "Bambi is going for it! Repeat: Bambi is going for it!"

11. What is the main purpose of the passage?
    a. to show how difficult it was even to film Honnold's achievement
    b. to show how difficult it was to free solo while filming
    c. to show how afraid Chin was that Honnold would fall to his death
    d. to show that the film crew was just as important as the climber

12. What does the word *rappel* mean in paragraph A?
    a. to make a film on location
    b. to work as a team
    c. to climb up a mountain without a rope
    d. to climb down a mountain using a rope

13. In paragraph A, what does the expression *bulletproof confidence* mean?
    a. confidence that protects a person from harm
    b. confidence that breaks easily
    c. confidence that cannot be shaken or hurt
    d. confidence in success

14. The following sentence would be best placed at the end of which paragraph?

    If a free soloist falls, there is no denying the immutable, unyielding rule of gravity.

    a. Paragraph A
    b. Paragraph B
    c. Paragraph D
    d. Paragraph H

LIVEWORKSHEETS

15. In paragraph D, what is meant by *the moon landing of free soloing*?
    a. The climb is an important, unique achievement.
    b. The climb is in a place that no one had climbed before.
    c. The climb requires a lot of technological innovations and expense.
    d. The climb is what every climber dreams of doing.

16. Why is Honnold nicknamed *Bambi*, a name which refers to a young cartoon deer?
    a. Because Honnold looks like a cartoon character.
    b. Because Honnold is fearful and timid like a deer.
    c. Because Honnold looks young and has big brown eyes.
    d. Because Honnold likes to spend time in nature.

17. In paragraph I, what does the expression *rad stuff* mean?
    a. something against the law
    b. something really stupid
    c. something he liked doing
    d. something impressive and exciting

18. In the last sentence of paragraph K, what does *It* refer to?
    a. Honnold's process
    b. Honnold and Chin's conversation
    c. the climb
    d. the film

19. In paragraph K, what does the expression *mind-bending* mean?
    a. causing someone to see things that aren't there
    b. changing the way one sees and thinks about the world
    c. causing damage to the brain
    d. causing someone to become confused

20. Why does the passage talk about Chin and Honnold's past history before the climb?
    a. to explain how the men first got into contact with each other
    b. to show that the men had to be comfortable working with each other to ensure success
    c. to give a brief history of Honnold and free-solo climbing
    d. to show Chin's qualifications as a filmmaker

LIVEWORKSHEETS

DIRECTIONS: Complete the sentences using the words in the box.

artificial	ascend	contemplate	delicate	devoid of
plummet	scheme	stamina	successive	tackle

21. The freshly baked tarts are quite _____, so you have to treat them with care.

22. The baseball team has already had three _____ wins this season, and are hoping for a fourth.

23. He doesn't want to sign up for the marathon as he doesn't think he will have the _____ to complete it.

24. It was impossible to guess what she was thinking; her face was _____ any emotion.

25. The interviewer asked the candidate how he intended to _____ the problem of unemployment if he was elected.

26. He invested all his savings in his latest moneymaking _____, but unfortunately it wasn't successful.

27. If the company's CEO is found to be involved in illegal activity, its stock price is sure to _____.

28. It usually takes a few days to _____ the mountain and reach the summit.

29. Going for the operation would be the most logical choice, but he refuses to even _____ it.

30. Our products are made from all-natural ingredients and contain no _____ flavorings or preservatives.

LIVEWORKSHEETS