**Book Title:** Within Reach: My Everest Story

**Author:** Mark Pfetzer and Jack Galvin

**Genre:** Non-fiction, memoir, adventure

**Age Appropriateness**

- **Interest level** – This is the true story of a Rhode Island teenager who climbs mountains.
- **Subject/content maturity** – There is no profanity or sexual situations, but there are a number of deaths and accounts of tragic endings to several climbs. Clearly, the author, though a teenager when experiencing these events, was able to cope but some students might have difficulties with it.

**Elements of the Review**

- **Plot** – This book follows two years of Mark Pfetzer’s climbs. Bitten by the mountain climbing bug at the age of 12, Mark relates the story of how he got the money and training to climb mountains in Nepal, Peru, Tibet and Africa all before he turned 17. He made two attempts to summit Everest, but failed both times. He holds a number of records as the youngest climber to either summit or make the climb on more than 6 mountains. The story is broken up by date and is narrated by Mark. He clearly describes his training, how he solicits sponsors, the dangers and work involved in ice and mountain climbing, and the tragedies he encounters on several climbs. Mark also tells about the dangers of climbing and relates the tales of several climbers’ deaths. He survives injuries and storms, but never loses his love for the sport. Mark is genuine and exudes true passion for climbing and adventure. His family supports him and he urges readers, especially young readers, to pursue their dreams, no matter how impossible they seem.

- **Literary devices** – The book is written in the first person point of view.

- **Conflict** – Man vs. self, man vs. nature

- **Characters** – The characters are Mark, his family and climbing friends. They are real people, and Mark depicts them as honestly as a teenager can be expected to. He has a very mature outlook on things, which makes sense considering the tasks he has undertaken at such a young age. We get insight into Mark’s determination and passion, and he makes for an inspiring hero.

- **Theme** – Some of themes of this book involve family, determination, meeting challenges.
- **Style** – Very easy language and conversational style. Mark doesn’t try to be too clever but he is very straightforward in his descriptions of what happens on his climbs.

- **Cultural references** – Very intimate and unique descriptions of different countries, their cultures and religions. Mark describes not only his mountain climbing escapades, but also takes time to tell the reader about the countries and people. He offers unique details (such as how the carbonation of a Coke went right up his nose while hiking at a high altitude and the illness he suffers from eating foods that his body cannot handle).

- **Diversity** – This will appeal to a wide range of readers as it deals with real-life situations, challenges, sports, and adventure.

**Readability**

This book was rated at a 10th grade level using the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Test.

**Awards**

This book won the 1999 ALA Quick Pick for Young Adult Reluctant Readers.

**Reading Skills/Benchmarks**

- **LA.A.2.4.1** Point of view, problems/conflicts, resolutions
- **LA.A.2.4.1** Identifies relevant details, determines effectiveness of details given
- **LA.A.1.4.2** Analysis of words in text
- **LA.A.2.4.4** Organizes written information, uses text to inform a real-world task, synthesizes collected information into another form

**Connections**

- **Cross-curricular** – This would be a good book to use in conjunction with geography or science classes. It lends itself well to understanding how to research and plan for major events. This book would also be good with creating timelines and understanding planning.

- **Serial or non-serial** – non-serial

- **Recommendations of similar books** – This is Pfetzer’s only book, but might lead students to read other books about teen achievements or biographies.
Audience Recommendation

- **Select level** – This is a good book for readers of any level.

- **Reading approach** – Its exciting tales and punchy writing would make it a good read aloud book. Its short chapters would also make it easy to jump around any boring parts and make readymade cutoff points for reading to a class. It would be a good independent book, also. Adults would likely find this a good story, as it details the support Mark’s family provided for his adventures and explains how they helped him realize his dreams while still pushing him to do well in school and be held accountable for all his responsibilities.