

# Close reading and interpretation of an abstract from touching the void



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This text is an extract from "Touching the Void." The style is autobiographical and provides us with two accounts; one being Joe and the other being Simon. This text describes the fall of Joe, and how both climbers have experienced this event. Hopelessly, Joe hopes he hasn't broken his leg, but moments later he realizes that it is a bad break. On the other hand, Simon discovers that Joe has fallen and displays an emotionless, dispassionate, and heartless feeling. I believe this text has targeted people who are interested in climbing mountains and extreme sports. Simon being selfish, and emotionless towards his friend-partner he chooses the option in which he has the best chance of survival. Both characters' of the story have told us their side of what happened in a different structure, and technique. Joe dives straight into panic mode; therefore he uses lots of graphic and grotesque imagery in his account of the event. We know this because in the text when Joe had fallen and was testing to see if his leg was broken he said, "My knee exploded. Bone grated, and the fireball rushed from groin to knee." This indicates on the actual fact that Joe uses graphical imaging based mostly over false belief to indicate and distribute the pain he's prying, the utilization of the verb, "Grated" indicates to as his bones colliding along and with the force of friction, they started shuddering and obtaining smaller, causing further pain: like after you grate cheese as each moment passes. In addition, Joe also uses metaphor "Knee exploded" to show the seriousness of the injury as only two of them are at the top of the mountain. This gives the reader an impression of Joe suffering roughly whilst hanging down the mountain and a vivid picture into their minds making them feel really uncomfortable. The use of the short sentence gives the reader an

imaginative and emotional effect. Example of an imaginative effect is when the writer said, " Bone grated", this made the reader imagine himself grating cheese, except his bones instead. The emotional effect to the reader was the intensity of pain happening to him from all sides of his body, and the technique that was used to create the emotional effect is, short sentences that also included a metaphor. In contrast, Simon uses straightforward language whilst describing the incident that has happened. This has been shown when Simon said, " He looked pathetic, and my immediate thought came without any emotion... You're dead...No two ways about it!" This determines that Simon shows very little emotion whilst weighing the incident. We have been given the impression of Simon as a very cold and emotionless person towards his climbing companion, as he says ' pathetic.' Simon has also used short sentences like, " you're dead" because it has been said in a very calm way, this has left the reader to be in an awkward/itchy situation. Therefore we have seen Simon as a very cold individual, because of his matter of fact language, which is pretty straightforward.

Both Joe's and Simon's account use the ellipsis; both creating different types of effects on the autobiography. For example in Joe's account he says, " Everyone said it... if there's just two of you a broken ankle could turn into a death sentence ... if it's broken ... if ..." and, " left here? Alone?..." In this phrase I believe the ellipsis has been used by Joe as a pause for him to take a thought (pausing for thought). And by Joe using the word " if" he is showing us that he has really high hopes of it just being a strain and not broken. He hopes it is only a sprain so that he can continue his climbing, and

get out of it alive, without him suffering a horrendous death. At the same time, Joe uses the word, " Alone?... " as this almost shows that Joe is afraid of him being left alone to suffer an atrocious death. This can also mean that Joe has high expectancy list from his friend/partner Simon, and he really trusts him. The use of the short emphatic statement of " left here? Alone?... " makes the reader feel sorry for him as he is showing how he is lonely, this is a very good type of technique as it makes the reader sympathies with Joe and convey his current emotions. Going back to the point of Joe using it as a pause for a thought, likewise the reader will too. To take in the magnitude of what is slowly being exposed to both the reader and Joe simultaneously. Thus creating an effect of a quick pace of the action, allowing the tragedy to deteriorate into the reader's mind. It can also affect the reader into thinking that Simon is a traitor and a bad example of what a friend is actually meant to do, in this kind of situation. Just as Joe uses the ellipsis, Simon uses it as well. But Simon says, "... You're dead ... " and, " expecting him to fall..." thus changing the effect of the ellipsis. The use of the ellipsis in Simon's account has been used to emphasize the certainty of the situation and the tragedy of it all. The use of the second person, in this phrase makes it look like a death sentence; by Simon not using Joe's name he is making it seem more clinical, dispassionate and detached. Moreover, he is making it seem like he is trying to avoid his friend, to keep himself alive. The use of " expecting him to fall..." just literally makes it clear that Simon wants his friend to die; therefore he doesn't have to do anything related to murder, and that he wants to leave/escape really quickly. This creates a huge effect on the reader, as the suspense is real and it just adds up to how they feel towards selfish Simon. It can also make them feel awkward, as they have just witnessed a murderer.

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