

Thin Air – Reading Group Questions

The Himalayas, 1935.

Kangchenjunga. Third-highest peak on earth. Greatest killer of them all.

Five Englishmen set off from Darjeeling, determined to conquer the sacred summit. But courage can only take them so far – and the mountain is not their only foe.

As the wind dies, the dread grows. Mountain sickness. The horrors of extreme altitude. A past that will not stay buried.

And sometimes, the truth does not set you free.

- How do you think the author maintains and heightens the tension in the novel?
- How is the ghost itself foreshadowed?
- This novel is firmly set in the 1930s – how does the author portray this and did this feel authentic to you? Explain why you felt this way.
- There's a palpable tension between whether the ghost exists in reality or purely in Stephen's mind – how does the author conjure this? At what point does it become clear that the ghost is real?
- Madness, isolation, unhealthy competition and the spirit of adventure are all themes in the book – where are these most clearly exposed and what other themes feature?
- How would you describe the relationship between Kits and Stephen? Does this change throughout the novel?
- What do you think is the reason the team chose not to rescue Ward? Is it because of the awful conditions, mountain sickness, or simply because he was the odd one out among them?
- Why do you think the ghost haunts the mountain?