



# Mount Rainier National Park

## Sister Mountain Project

### The High Tower

<b>Overview</b>	This is the opening lesson designed to introduce and set up a series of literary analysis selections highlighting the human connection and experience with mountains.
<b>Grade Level</b>	8-12
<b>Objectives</b>	Students will gain an understanding of the cultural significance of mountains in the human experience by reading and analyzing an ancient Chinese poem.
<b>Setting</b>	Classroom
<b>Timeframe</b>	1 period
<b>Materials</b>	Copies of poem with questions
<b>Standards</b>	Washington State G.L.E.S:  <b>1. The student understands the meaning of what is read.</b>  1.1 Demonstrate evidence of reading comprehension 1.2 Expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas in literary text.  <b>2. The student reads different materials for a variety of purposes</b>  3.4 Read for literary experience in a variety of genres.
<b>Assessment</b>	The teacher will be able to assess student understanding through observation of the paired activity in the reading, as well as written answers to questions.
<b>Background</b>	Explain to students that the human fascination with mountains dates back to the first recorded history. Not surprisingly, the ancient Chinese were among the first to celebrate and dramatize this fascination with mountains. <b>The High Tower</b> is a poem attributed to Sung Yu that dates back to c. 400 B.C.E. during the late Zhou dynasty of China. At this time, the Zhou dynasty was disintegrating and China was at war. Much like today, many people sought refuge in the natural world as an escape from the chaos and unpredictability of society.

<p><b>Procedure</b></p>	<p>Teacher copies and distributes the poem to students. Students read the poem on their own or listen to it read aloud.</p> <p><b><u>Instructions to Students:</u></b></p> <p>Answer the following questions, using complete sentences where necessary.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use a dictionary to find out the meaning of: cirques, abyss, escarpments and any other words you are unsure of.</li> <li>2. What kind of an experience does the poet convey about climbing?</li> <li>3. How does the language used by the poet connect with the reader?</li> <li>4. What does the line: “transfixed with anguish, out of yourself” mean?</li> <li>5. Sit with a partner. Read the poem together, alternating lines. Then go back and re-read, only this time choose one word from each line that you think is the most important and say that word. What do you notice about the kinds of emotions that emerge from these words?</li> <li>6. Students may work together to answer all the analysis questions, or they may work alone after going through step 5.</li> </ol>
<p><b>References/ Resources</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>The High Tower</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Climb higher and gaze into the distance, Your heart will be gripped with fear. Cirques of chasms surrounded by peaks, Frowning cliffs all around; Loose rocks that lean over the abyss, Escarpments that overhang each other. Clinging like a climbing bear, You remain frozen in place, Perspiration dripping down to your feet. You feel yourself lost, reeling, Transfixed with anguish, out of yourself; And your spirit, shaken loose, Plunges into terrors without cause.</p>

	<p>From <b>"A Poetic Description of the High Tower"</b>, attributed to Sung Yu. China, c. 400B.C. cited in Bernbaum, Edwin, <b>Sacred Mountains of the World</b>, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1990.</p>
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