Mount Everest is the world’s highest mountain peak at about 8847 m. On October 5, 1982, Laurie Skreslet, born in Calgary, Alberta, was the first Canadian to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Laurie has participated in more than 30 expeditions and is a motivational speaker. He connects the challenges of climbing a mountain with those challenges people face in daily life.

In the following text, Laurie has just reached Base Camp, a safe spot midway up the mountain. Bill March, the team leader, is closer to the summit of Mount Everest, and in need of extra help after losing expedition members. The Icefall (Khumbu Icefall) is a dangerous area of crevasses and falling ice. This area lies between the two men.

When I arrived back at Base Camp from Kunde, I was told the Icefall had been closed. I couldn’t go through? Well, maybe—maybe not. I radioed Bill.

“Laurie, it’s too dangerous. Stay in Base Camp!” Bill barked. “Do NOT—"
I flicked off the radio. That wasn’t what I wanted to hear. After a year and a half of working on this expedition, I had too much energy invested to sit at the bottom of Everest. I’d gained a lot of experience in my years of climbing. I knew I could make an important contribution to the climbers struggling high on the mountain. It would all be wasted if I waited in Base Camp. So I took the risk.

Next morning, I shouldered my pack and set off. Base Camp had radioed Bill, and he did the only thing he could—he ordered that no one come with me. Bill also insisted that I radio Base Camp every time I crossed a crevasse. If I fell, I was still on my own—the radio call would just let them know where to find my body.

At first, the climb wasn’t too bad—I’d done it many times before, and with a heavier pack. The route was in much worse shape than my last time there, three weeks before, but most ladders were usable. The Icefall was quiet and the wind light.

Then I came to a crevasse about 3.5 m wide. There was a ladder across it, but the ice had shifted since it had been put in place. Now, the bridge ended 1.5 m from the far wall. On my side, the end of the ladder was frozen into the ice, but the other end hung 30 m above the bottom of the crevasse.
No problem, I thought, I’ll just find another place to cross.

For more than an hour, I searched desperately, but there was no other place. I had to admit defeat. Slowly, I started down to Base Camp.

Then I stopped. *Did you give that your best?* I asked myself.

Yes, I thought. But then I asked, *Did you give it more than your best?*

No, I had to answer. More than my best was to go back and jump from the ladder to the far side. I knew the impossible is often the untried. I couldn’t leave without trying, so back I went.

I decided to use the handrail ropes that were still there, adding new anchors and Petzl ascenders pointing both forward and back. I figured I had a 50–50 chance of making it across.
The ladder bobbed up and down as I edged my way out. At the end of the ladder, I focused all my concentration—and jumped.

Thwack! My ice pick bit into the ice on the lip of the crevasse. It held. I dug my crampons into the icy wall and used all my strength to pull myself up.

As I lay gasping on the far side, I realized that something powerful had happened. I seemed to be seeing things differently—everything was clearer and colours more vivid. It was like a different world. In making that leap, I'd let go not only of the ladder, but of some of my fears, too. I knew then that things would work out for me as long as I kept giving more than my best.

As I climbed to Camp One and on toward Camp Two, I thought about Bill. What would happen when I had to explain face to face why I'd disobeyed his order to stay in Base Camp? Would he allow me to keep climbing?
He was right there when I arrived.
“Laurie!” Bill shouted. Then he smiled and said,
“It’s great you’re here!”
“Huh?” I said, stunned by his good humour.
“Look,” said Bill, “four people have died. If I’d asked you to come up and something had happened to you, I couldn’t bear to have another death on my conscience. I had to tell you to stay put.” Bill paused. “But I knew you’d come up no matter what. So, welcome. I need you here.”

Reflecting

**Reading Like a Writer:** What lines in the text really help you visualize the scene and understand what Laurie experienced?

**Metacognition:** How does paying attention to word choice affect your appreciation of the text?

**Media Literacy:** If you were going to produce a movie based on this selection, what would your opening scene show? Why?