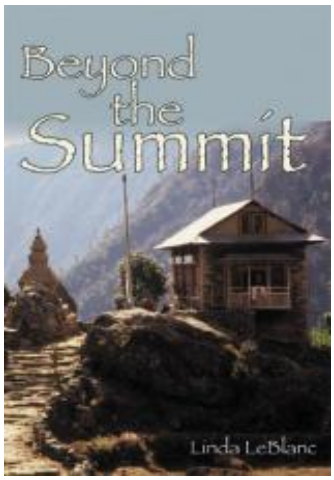
ReadingGroupGuides
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Beyond the Summit

by Linda LeBlanc



About the Book

Beyond the Summit is unique in being the first work to dramatize the lives of the Sherpa tribe of Mount Everest in fiction. Set in the Everest region in 1968 four years after Sir Edmund Hillary built a landing strip at Lukla, the story shows the impact of tourism on a culture still living in the Middle Ages. Young Dorje wants what the foreigners bring while his father resents their intrusion in the realm of the gods. Details of Sherpa culture and Buddhist religion are interwoven in a Himalayan romance and high adventure. The story has something for everyone: a love affair between an American journalist and Sherpa guide, an expedition from the porter?s point of view, Tibetan refugees, conflict between generations as the modern world challenges centuries of tradition.

Discussion Guide

1. Dorje stirs something within Beth that is missing in her relationship with Eric. What needs from her childhood does she seek to fulfill with him?

2. What sets Dorje apart from other Sherpas? How did his first experience with tourists determine his course?

3. Why does he want to summit Everest when other Sherpas work only for money?

4. Discuss how Beth represents a world Dorje yearns for.

5. What cultural obstacles must they overcome?

6. What universal family relationships exist in the book?

7. The plot is conflict driven. Discuss the various conflicts and resolutions

8. The relationship between Dorje and his father Mingma is quite complex. What creates the chasm between them and how does it change?

9. What is Mingma?s secret and how does it shape his life?

10. What elements of Sherpa culture and religion were new to you?

11. Is the Everest region the way you imagined it?

12. What role does religion play in the Sherpa culture? Buddhism, shamanism, animism.

13. The landing strip at Lukla opened the flood gates of tourism. What role have tourism and expeditions played in the lives of the Sherpas? What are the positive and negative outcomes? What is the greatest challenge they face today?

14. What is the basis for hostility between old trading partners?Mingma and Pemba?

15. How does Beth's attitude toward porters change as the story progresses? What does she learn and what does she want for them?

16. How well do western medicine and shamans coexist and what can they learn from each other?

17. What do the Norwegian tourists represent and how does Dorje's relationship with them change?

18. What drives Marty?s determination to reach the summit?

19. What are the major perils in climbing?

20. What role do the Sherpas play?

21. In chapter one, a woman tells Beth, that Buddha says until we can accept life as it is and exist in the present moment, we will never be satisfied. We must accept whatever comes along as part of a divine and perfect universe. Do Dorje, Beth, and Mingma adhere to this philosophy?

22. Will Beth go back to Eric?

23. Discuss Dorje?s relationship with his brother Nima. How do their world views differ?

Author Bio

Born in Denver, Colorado at the foot of the Rockies, Linda?s love affair with mountains began as a young child. An adventure traveler to 35 countries on six continents, she first discovered the wonderful Nepalese people in 1986. Working with a group of Sherpas, she was a founder of the first hut-to-hut system in Nepal and helped establish 18

lodges in the Solo-Khumbu region. She began organizing and leading treks to the Everest Base Camp two years later. With a BA in literature and a Masters in Library Science, she combined her love of books, other cultures, and research skills to pen the first fiction written about Sherpas. High in the Himalayas during the worst storm in memory, she was appalled by world press coverage of the many foreigners who died but no mention of the Sherpas who also perished. She returned home to write their story.

Critical Praise

"This is the book to read before you embark on your pilgrimage to Nepal. The author knows and loves the people and the country, and makes you feel the cold thin air, the hard rocks of the mountains, the tough life of the Sherpa guides, and you learn to love them too. This is a highly literate, but also very readable book. Highly recommended."

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