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Part 1
Read Passage A carefully, and then answer Questions 1 and 2.

Passage A

Climbing the Nose of El Capitan

Dean Potter is a famous rock climber whose specialty is going to often refuse to use any climbing equipment, relying only on his agility and lack of fear. This is Rob Buchan's account of watching Dean and his partner O'Neill climb one of the most difficult mountain faces in America.

"Three, two, one, go!" Dean Potter punches a button on a plastic wristwatch looped around his climbing harness. His partner leaps at the rock below him, jamming tightly spaced fingers into a slender crack. Above them, soaring into an azure sky, is the great, granite, curved wall of the most famous climb in Yosemite Valley or indeed the world: the Nose of El Capitan. Climbers either fear or loathe it, but all of them respect anyone who has the ability to negotiate its incredibly difficult layout. After a grueling vertical climb of over 2,000 feet, the rock face begins to curve out above the climbers – indeed lies the underside of a large nose – and they must attempt to overcome this overhanging shelf in order to get to the top.

Potter often climbs without the benefit of ropes or protection, but on this late autumn day their goal is speed, so the two are carrying hardware. Still, by any sane standard, they're ridiculously under-equipped: no packs, no shirts, no food and no water. A single 200-foot length of rope between them, plus a handful of spring-loaded devices to be placed in cracks for protection, and their only concessions to safety. Even Potter's climbing harness is minimalist: a homemade thing fashioned from 11½-inch webbing and stitched together with dental floss.

Potter doesn't wait for his partner to reach the safety of the permanent metal peg at the top of the first stage, but instead starts climbing straight away. This is a risky procedure, but it's the fastest way to climb. Five minutes later, the two are already 200 feet up, and my neck is sore just from watching them. As I back away from the Nose to get a better view, I hear it – a horrible screeching of hands and feet on rock, followed by a desperate yell: "Falling!" Looking up, I see O'Neill dropping through space, arms flailing, legs splayed like a mannequin out of control. Suddenly he jerks to a stop. This suggest now looks as though someone, out of pity, has cut all of his strings except one, and he hangs there, dangled, after plunging more than 20 feet. I can't believe he hasn't hit the bottom.

There's a moment's silence. Potter has arrested his partner's fall by holding on to the rope from his position 70 feet below. The bass boom of his voice echoes off the great sounding board of El Capitan. "Cliff" he yells. "Get back on it! Go! Go! Go!"

The intensity is starting. Potter is normally a very calm person, slow talking and sometimes painfully shy. One man who knows him well, his promotions manager, calls him a gentle giant. In Patagonia, he has a different nickname: "Tazzer." Potter says that's because of the monomelic way he speaks Spanish when he's on an expedition in Argentina. Maybe, but the name seems to capture a lot of Potter's other qualities too. With his wide-set brown eyes, prominent and slightly battered looking nose, tumbling mane and barrel chest, he could be the original facan come back to life, a brooding inhabitant of the wild who is occasionally roused to fantastic bouts of action and daring stunts.

Whether propelled by Potter's war cry or his own desire to get back on solid ground, O'Neill surges his way upward, simultaneously pulling himself hand over hand and walking up the cliff.

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