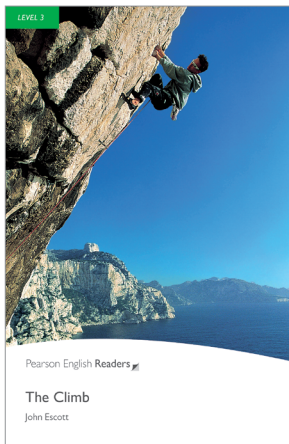


The Climb

John Escott



About the author

John Escott writes books for students of all ages. He especially enjoys writing mystery and detective stories. When he is not writing, he enjoys going for long walks by the sea, along empty beaches. He also enjoys searching out old books in bookshops. He lives in Bournemouth at the south coast of England. John Escott has also written *The Missing Coins*, *Lost in New York* and a number of other books published as Pearson English Readers.

Summary

Costas loves climbing but he has never climbed Eagle's Rock, with its crumbling handholds and its dangerous overhang. He is determined to climb it one day and be famous all over the island he lives on with his father, Mr Kazakou, and his sister, Eleni. Eagle's Rock stands on one side of a C-shaped bay. At the top of the rock is a villa owned by a rich businessman, Mr Vitalis, a place known to be full of priceless paintings. On the cliff top on the other side of the bay is a holiday villa owned by Costas's father. One day, the mysterious Mr Holland arrives to stay in the holiday villa, and Costas recognises him as none other than David Ashken, the onetime famous mountain climber – before, that is, he had a bad fall and lost his nerve. Costas sees Ashken looking at Eagle's Rock through binoculars and realises that he, Ashken, is going to climb it. But what for?

Chapters 1–2: In Chapter 1, a strange man called Holland arrives on an island near Greece. He is to do a secret job for one of the richest men in the villa. Holland is to stay at a small holiday villa owned by Mr Kazakou, a man who has a son, Costas, and a daughter, Eleni, while he works on his mission. In Chapter 2, Costas dreams about climbing Eagle's Rock, one of the steepest and most

dangerous cliffs in the villa, and becoming famous. The only one house at the summit is Eagle House, Mr Vitalis's place, whose long garden stretches to the edge of the cliff. The house has an electric fence around three sides of the garden. There is no need for a fence in the fourth side, since only a professional climber could get there. Mr Holland arrives at Mr Kazakou's villa. He introduces himself as a writer who is to stay there for fifteen days. Yet Costas feels that Mr Holland looks particularly familiar to him.

Chapters 3–4: Eleni holds a job at a small art-gallery shop, owned by Mr Papas, which also sells books and postcards. Mr Vitalis comes to the shop to buy some paintings but ends up buying none. He is having serious financial issues but doesn't want anybody to find out. He meets a man at the café opposite the shop who is no other than Mr Holland. They have a drink and talk for a while. Mr Vitalis goes away leaving his newspaper behind. Mr Holland grabs the newspaper and leaves. In Chapter 4, Costas day-dreams of climbing Eagle's Rock when he notices that Mr Holland is looking at the steep cliff through his binoculars and especially at Mr Vitalis's house. Costas tells Eleni what he saw as they look at some books on climbing. Suddenly Costas realises why Mr Holland looked so familiar: he is no other than the very writer of his books, David Ashken, the famous climber who had a terrible accident in Austria and was now too frightened to keep climbing. Costas second-guesses that Ashken is the only man who could possibly climb up and break into Mr Vitalis's house, and steal the paintings. But he couldn't allow this because Eagle's Rock was his!

Chapters 5–6: In Chapter 5, Ashken is in two minds. He is to steal the paintings – not for himself, but for Mr Vitalis! Months ago, he met Mr Vitalis in London when he was working as a bar tender. Mr Vitalis recognised him and wanted to set up an insurance fraud together with Ashken. David was the only man who could climb up Eagle's Rock, burgle into his house and steal the paintings. Then Mr Vitalis could get the insurance money and re-sell the paintings as well. This would solve all his financial troubles. David needs the money but he is still too afraid to climb. So Mr Vitalis offers him more money. In Chapter 6, Costas wakes up very early determined to make the climb before he is beaten to it by Ashken. Eleni is scared to death that something might happen to her brother so she stays at the foot of the cliff. The climb proves too difficult for Costas and he gets stuck on the overhang.

The Climb

Eleni runs to the villa seeking for help. Ashken has already seen the boy and recalls the incidents in which other climbers had lethal accidents.

Chapters 7–8: In Chapter 7, Eleni, desperately worried about her brother, raises the alarm with Ashken, who would need to overcome his fears and climb the rock to rescue Costas. Eleni tells him that she knows who he actually is and what he is planning to do, rob Mr Vitalis of his paintings. Yet Ashken confesses to her how he was actually hired by Mr Vitalis to frame the insurance company. Eleni also tells Ashken how much her brother used to admire him and now he considers him a coward. Ashken is finally persuaded to rescue Costas. In Chapter 8, Ashken starts climbing up Eagle's Rock. At first he is terrified but he soon begins to feel confident. He forgets about the death of his friend and solely focuses on helping Costas, who is in shock. Ashken guides Costas towards him and then puts a rope around the boy. They climb down and are soon safe. Now that Ashken knows he can climb again he doesn't need to become a thief, and leaves Mr Vitalis looking for another way out of his money troubles.

Background and themes

There are two basic themes in this story, linked by fear and the lack of it. On the one hand, there is Costas, the fearless youth who dreams of becoming famous by climbing a rock which would be dangerous even for a team of experienced mountaineers. By the end of the story he has learnt that good climbers don't go into unnecessary danger. On the other hand, there is David Ashken, a famous mountain climber who is too afraid to climb any more, after a fall in which he was seriously injured and a colleague was killed. He has lost not only his nerve but also his livelihood, since he cannot get paid for climbing or for writing about it. In desperation, he has almost turned to crime. But the necessity to rescue Costas from the overhang forces Ashken to confront his fears and, in the process, regain his love of climbing. He can return to his previous career and become famous again without risking a criminal record. A minor theme is the notion that individuals turn to crime when they are not able to become rich by legal means, although to be fair to Ashken, he had already decided not to steal the painting even before he is involved in Costas's rescue. Fear of climbing rather than fear of the long arm of the law appears to have been the spur, however.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- Group work:** Find out what students already know about mountain climbing and high-risk sports. Give them a time limit of three minutes to write down one or two facts about each of these sports: *In groups, (a) write as much as you can about these sports in only three minutes; (b) discuss how you feel about climbing in two minutes.*
climbing racing bungee jumping rafting boxing
- Pair work:** Students work in pairs. They should imagine they are going on holiday to Greece: *In pairs, what would you do if you could spend a holiday in Greece for free? Write down your ideas.*
- Predict:** Ask students to look through the pictures in the book and work out a possible story from the pictures. Elicit ideas from different groups but don't confirm or correct any of the ideas: *In groups, look at the pictures in the book and the titles in the content page. Discuss what the story will be about.*
- Write:** Ask students to work in groups. They should write a short paragraph about mountain climbing using at least ten of the words below: *In groups, pick ten words and write a paragraph about mountain climbing to include in a special sports magazine.*
alarm burglar cheat cliff crack eagle fence gallery nerve villa binoculars coward insurance rope slip
Ask students to look up the words they do not know in the Word List at the back of the book.
- Group work:** Tell students to work in groups and to talk about the films they have seen about climbing or Greece. Then write them down on the board and discuss them briefly: *In groups, discuss the films about mountain climbing and/or Greece you have seen.*

Chapters 1–2

While reading

- Guess:** Ask students to work in groups and to discuss the following: *As you read pages 1 and 2 discuss who you think Mr Holland is, what he does, what he is doing in Greece, what his 'job' will be.*
- Read and check:** Tell students to work in groups and fill out the following chart as they re-read pages 1–3: *Write down as much as you know about what each of these people are like and what they do:*

Mr Holland	Mr Kazakou	Costas	Eleni

- Discuss:** Ask students to pair up and do the following activity: *In pairs read page 4 and discuss (a) who the strange man in the car is; (b) what he is doing there; (c) what Eleni thinks of him.*

The Climb

9 Predict: Pair students up and tell them to work on the following questions: *Who do you think will stay at Mr Kazakou's villa? Who will Eleni see again? Will Costas keep climbing? If so, how dangerous will it be?*

10 Read and check: Tell students to work in pairs and to do the following activity: *In pairs as you read pages 4–6, find information about Eagle's Rock and Eagle House. What are they like? How important and dangerous are they? Go back to page 3 and find 'Eagle's Rock' and 'Eagle House'. After discussing these topics, complete this chart:*

Eagle's Rock	Eagle House

11 Write: Ask students to work in pairs as they read pages 7 and 8: *In pairs, one student is Eleni and the other is Costas. You have both met Mr Holland. At the end of the day each of you writes how you feel about this in your diary. Then read what you wrote to each other.*

After reading

12 Role play: Students pair up and work on the following activity: *In pairs, imagine you are Costas and Eleni. Costas has climbed down and Eleni has finished swimming. They meet at the beach. What do they say?*

13 Research: Ask students to work in groups and look at page 3. They will discuss what they know about Greece and mountain climbing: **(a)** Discuss what is important for a mountain climber: what they should and shouldn't do, what they should know, etc. **(b)** Discuss what you know about Greece. **(c)** Choose one of the two topics discussed and find more about it in your library, magazines, newspapers or the Internet. Then tell the rest of the class.

14 Compare: Tell students to pair up with the same students they worked with in activity 9 for these chapters: *In pairs, re-read your predictions about these chapters and discuss how close you were.*

Chapters 3–4

While reading

15 Role play: Students work in pairs. They read pages 8–11 and they work on the following activity: **(a)** You are Eleni. Something really strange happened at the shop. Call Costas and tell him what you saw. Costas asks many questions. **(b)** Write a small conversation and act it out.

16 Read and check: Tell students to work in groups and do the following activity: *As you read pages 12 and 13 (a) complete this chart about what Mr Vitalis's life was like in the past, what it is like today and what it could be like in the future; (b) discuss what he is afraid of and why.*

Mr Vitalis in the past	Mr Vitalis at the present	Mr Vitalis in the future

17 Read and discuss: Ask students to read pages 13–17 and to make notes on all the new things they find about Mr Holland. Then they should discuss the following: *Who is Mr Holland? Why is he lying? Why is he not a climber anymore? How does Costas feel when he learns all this? Why?*

After reading

18 Discuss: Ask students to work in groups and to discuss the following: *What do Mr Vitalis and David Ashken have in common? Why are they 'working' together? Are they doing the right thing?*

19 Predict: Ask students to work in pairs and to work on the following prediction activity: *What will happen next to Costas, Mr Vitalis, Mr Kazakou, Eleni and David Ashken?*

Chapters 5–6

While reading

20 Pair work: Ask students to work in pairs as they read pages 17–20 on the following activity: *As you read, (a) make notes of the most important things Mr Vitalis and David Ashken talk about in their secret meeting; (b) decide how to continue their conversation. What else do they say?*

21 Write: Tell students to imagine they are David Ashken as they read pages 20–22: *You are David, still sitting at the beach. What do you write in your personal diary?*

22 Group work: Ask students to work in groups as they read pages 22–25: *In these pages, we are told the story from the point of view of Eleni. Imagine that Costas told us the story. How would he retell it? Write it down.*

After reading

23 Role play: Ask students to work in pairs on the following activity: *You are Ashken. You see Eleni coming to you. She is desperate. What does she want from you? What do you say? Write down the conversation and act it out.*

Chapters 7–8

While reading

24 Write: Ask students to read pages 27–29 and to imagine they are Ashken: *In groups, write down David's thoughts as he runs towards the dangerous cliff.*

After reading

25 Group work: Put students in groups to role play the conversation between Costas, Eleni, Mr Kazakou and David: *Costas explains everything that happened with the help of Eleni and David. Mr Kazakou is angry at first and then pleased when he realises that Costas has learned his lesson. He is grateful to David and offers him something.*