



Mary Helen Straker Award in Writing

NO BARRIERS by Erik Weihenmayer & Buddy Levy

THE CHALLENGE

This year's competition is open to Muskingum County students in their sophomore year of high school. The submission period extends from **October 6, 2023 - November 13, 2023**.

Prompts for students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 are also available for submission. Transcripts can also be submitted through the portal. Visual project responses must be delivered to the J.W. & M.H. Straker Foundation by **November 16, 2023**.

Teachers, in all Muskingum County school districts, will be receiving the online portal address and password on **October 6, 2023**. Teachers will have access to upload student submissions via the portal until the deadline date of **November 13, 2023**.

THE BOOK

Erik's story is all about perseverance, about overcoming the obstacles within his life and leading a new path forward.

Erik was a teenager when he lost his eye sight due to a genetic disorder.

Two years later, Erik lost his mother due to a car accident. With perseverance and a strong support system, Erik has been able to conquer numerous outdoor adventures, including summiting Mt. Everest and kayaking through the Grand Canyon.

Erik has trained his body and mind to live a very exciting life. Living a life filled with obstacles and challenges, Erik faces life head on, with NO BARRIERS.

Tier 1 Students - Writing prompt

The No Barriers Pledge

*I pledge to view my life as a relentless quest to become my very best self,
To always view the barriers in my life as opportunities to learn,
To find ways to build teams, serve those in need, and do good in the world,
To push the boundaries of what is possible,
And prove that what's within me is stronger than what's in my way.*

Here's the No Barriers Pledge as presented in Erik Weihenmayer and Buddy Levy's book, No Barriers. Please think of this, and use your book, as you write an essay of 750 to 1000 words addressing Parts I and II of the prompt below.

Part I: Erik's story.

Select one time when Erik Weihenmayer approached a barrier in his life.

1. Describe Erik's approach to overcoming the barrier, using specific examples to show how Erik strove to build teams, serve those in need, and/or do good in the world.
2. What was the outcome?

Part II: Your story.

Select a time when you or someone you know well approached a barrier.

3. Describe your or your subject's approach to overcoming the barrier, using specific examples to show how you/they strove to build teams, serve those in need, and/or do good in the world.
4. What was the outcome?

Conclude by considering how you will apply these steps to barriers you may encounter.



Through Erik's groundbreaking adventures around the world, he has explored and defined what it means to live a No Barriers Life, describing it as a map we build to navigate and to pursue a life that matters. (from erikweihenmayer.com)

There are different kinds of maps. For instance, you could create a map of Erik's progress down the Grand Canyon, putting in places like Lee's Ferry, where the journey began, landmarks like the Navajo Bridge and Land of the Giants, and significant rapids—among them the Roaring Twenties, Sockdolager, Upset, and of course, Lava Falls.

That creation would give you a visual, geographic picture of Erik's kayaking journey—when he confronted his barriers and came through successfully.

When Erik describes a No Barriers Life, though, he has another kind of map in mind. This map would be different for each person; it would show the barriers—things that might make us want to give up, like that infamous whirlpool of Erik's. It would show the calm, or easy passages. It might also show the guides a person needs as they make their way to a goal.

Pick one of your important goals. Create a map showing how you'll get there.

Your map can be hand-drawn or computer generated. It could be a 3-D map, as well.

It should show:

- Your starting point
- Your end goal
- The distance between the two
- The barriers you will have to overcome to reach your goal
- The people you'll need along the way
- Any tools or equipment you'll need to get there



Like Erik, we all run into barriers—or whirlpools. Think about the qualities and tools Erik used when he was ready to give up. How can you use Erik as a model when you encounter really tough barriers?

All maps need keys to help the reader understand them; when you've completed your map, create a key that explains it.

When complete, you'll have created the kind of map Erik talks about—a No Barriers Map to a life that matters.

