Building background knowledge to visualize a difficult scene: This is from the book *Deathwatch* by Robb White. To put the scene in context, Ben—the boy who is climbing—is fleeing from Madec, who is trying to frame him for a murder. Madec has cut off water supplies from Ben, and Ben is close to death from dehydration.

Read this scene, and then look online to see if you can find information about rock climbing that will help you visualize the scene. Draw pictures in the margin that show how you visualize the scene. (Stick figures are fine.) Tomorrow we'll figure out a way to act this out.

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around so that his chest and knees and stomach were against the butte.

It gave him an odd, shivering feeling to stand this way, his naked back to Madec and his face pressed against the stone. Again he felt his flesh trembling as he waited for the first touch of the bullet.

The only sound was of the birds wheeling around high above him.

The crack was wedge-shaped, wide across on the outside with the two walls coming together on the inside.

The width of the crack where he stood was, Ben estimated, about six feet from wall to wall. The crack was about fifteen feet deep. Above him it seemed to go right to the sky without changing shape, a straight, vertical V of stone, an opensided chimney, the walls very smooth, almost slippery looking, and since they were not yet in sunlight, impossible to see clearly.

Although he had not noticed it as he moved along the ledge he could now see that it curved a little outward and, as he looked back along it, discovered that it petered out at the lower end, coming finally to a point which blended into the stone face about ten feet above the ground.

Leaning over as far as he could, he looked down the dark chimney.

It shocked him. Although he knew that it could not be more than thirty or forty feet to the bottom, it looked immensely farther than that, a terrifying distance. To fall down it would kill you. DEATHWATCH

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A dark place, the sunlight seeming to have been cut off by a knife as it lay on sharp stones jumbled together and then ended in blackness.

Craning his head back, he looked up along the wall.

There was nothing. For as far up as he could see the stone face was smooth, almost glassy in the sunlight; smooth and golden looking. He did not see a place where he could get so much as a finger grip in that stone.

To be sure he lowered his head, resting it against the wall and reached up with his hands, feeling all over the stone above him.

There was no grip there.

Lowering his arms he looked again at the wide mouth of the V.

It seemed wider now. His guess of six feet across to the other wall seemed short. Seven? Eight?

Turning, his shoulder pressed against the wall, he moved until he was standing sideways, his feet together on the narrow ledge, his side hugging the wall, as he faced the wide opening of the V.

Far away—in another world—he heard the Jeep starter grinding, then grinding again. Finally the motor started, with Madec gunning and choking it. He didn't handle motors well.

Without looking back, Ben inched forward until the front pads of his feet were over the edge of the ledge and only half his arches and his heels still touched the stone.

Then he let himself fall.

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Holding his body stiff, his arms out ahead of him, his hands flat open, he fell toward the far wall of the V.

Something was wrong, something was happening that he had not expected. It was all wrong.

And there was nothing he could do about it now.

Then he realized that he had fallen out of the sunlight and was in the darkness of the V.

His hands struck the far wall with much more force than he had expected, and even as his palms and finger pads strained to grip the smooth wall, the weight of his falling body came against them. He felt his hands skidding down and could not stop them.

Ben tried desperately not to let his body sag, to keep his back straight and flat so that he could ram power against his feet, which were still on the cut of the ledge. His hands against the far wall, Ben hung there, slowly sliding down, his body stretched out at full length, the muscles of his stomach gradually loosening and breaking the rigid bridge his body formed as he lay straight across the open end of the V.

He could not hold it, his stomach muscles were jerking again, giving up and letting his body sag downward to add its sliding weight to the thin pressure on his hands.

Below him he could see the exact cutoff line of the sunlight, the stones in it sharp and strongly marked by shadow, the stones directly below him only dim shapes in the shade. Somehow, never knowing how he did it but knowing he could never do such a thing again, Ben flung himself in toward the angle of the V and as his body moved he turned it, rolling over in the air, his feet scampering along the stone on one side, his outreaching hands scrabbling against it on the other.

He wound up five feet below the ledge, on his back, suspended from his hands and feet which were pressed against the stone, his little bundle of leaves and the slingshot lying on his belly. He arched his back, putting more pressure against the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet.

Moving only one hand or one foot at a time and moving them only an inch or so before slamming the pressure back against them, he edged deeper into the angle of the V, moving until the top of his head scraped the stone and on, his head hard against his chest as his shoulders touched stone, and on until he was compressed into the V, his back against one wall, his knees up against the other.

Ben did not look either up or down as he began working his way higher, the rock face cruel against the skin of his back as he ground his way up.

All of his flesh hurt so that he could not even tell whether the stone grinding the skin off his back was more painful than the skin being ground from his knees and shins and the tops of his feet.

His tongue was now so swollen that it filled his