

15 piranhas a day!

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2–B1 and above)

Comment

This eLesson is about a two-and-a-half year long trek through the Amazon rainforest by a man who became the first person to walk the entire length of the Amazon from source to sea. It is approached as a jigsaw reading. Give clear time-limits to students, both at the reading stage and at the information exchange stage.

How to use the lesson

- 1 Write up the words *Amazon River* on the board and ask students what they know about it, eg where it is, where it goes, how long it is, if it's safe, etc. If you have the facilities, show a map of South America or some of the images or one of the videos of the Amazon trek, without giving too many specific details about the trek at this point.
- 2 Elicit some reasons why the Amazon river and the rainforest might be a dangerous place, putting students' ideas on the board. At this point, elicit/introduce the words: *snake, eel, anaconda, piranha, scorpion, mosquito and jaguar*. The simplest way to do this is by using visuals, which you can get from the internet by doing an image search. These words appear in the text, but will also give a sense of the dangers in the jungle.
- 3 Divide students into AB pairs, and give each student the worksheet with Text A or Text B. Give all students page 3. Explain that they are going to do a 'jigsaw reading', so each student has a different text. Students discuss exercise 1 in pairs. Encourage them to give reasons if they can. Take some whole class feedback to raise interest.
- 4 Tell students that they are going to read about an incredible journey along the whole length of the River Amazon, made with just a backpack. Ask them to look at the table in exercise 2. Explain that they may not have the answers to all the questions in their text. With less confident readers, you could tell them which questions their particular text answers, to narrow the focus (see Answers). Monitor as students work to assist where necessary. If students find it difficult, let them work with same-text partners, to check their answers before the next stage.
- 5 Prepare students to exchange information (exercise 3). Ask them to turn over the text and think about whether they can explain their information clearly just from their notes. When ready, put students in mixed pairs to listen and take notes. If you feel it is necessary, let students at the end read the other text, just to round off this stage.
- 6 Students work in pairs to decide what the numbers refer to in exercise 4, without looking at the text. At the end, let them read to check their predictions, if necessary.
- 7 Students work alone to find and underline the regular past simple / past participle endings in each text, and then to categorise them (exercise 5). They then compare answers in pairs, before feedback. Answers are given for the first of each category in Text A. If you have a stronger group, you could choose a more challenging focus such as the passive (eg *he was forced to ...*); phrasal verbs (eg *set off ...*); *despite* and *although* sentences (eg *although he had originally imagined it would take a year, despite their situation ...*).
- 8 Let students consider the points in exercise 6 for a few moments, then put them in groups of three to discuss them. Take feedback on any issues which are of particular interest as a whole class.

Answer key

1 Students' own answers.

2, 3

- 1 Text A: an ex-soldier from Britain who has made this journey
- 2 Text A: he had to walk even further than planned because of flooding; swamps; poisonous snakes; insects; risks of disease; dangerous tribal people
Text B: he was bitten and stung; he got a skin disease; he was very hungry at times and lost weight; they had to eat some very strange food; he saw many dangerous animals; he was chased and held prisoner by local tribespeople; they found villages had disappeared because the area had been cleared by loggers; they found their maps to be out of date
- 3 Text B: he travelled with a Peruvian man called 'Cho' who joined him after 5 months and stayed the whole journey
- 4 Text A: to raise money for charities and to raise awareness of the Amazon rainforest and also to get into the record books
- 5 Text A: he walked nearly 10,000 km, for 859 days (5.5 km per hour per day)
- 6 Text B: he stayed in contact by blogging and by tweeting and used satnav
- 7 Text A: the biggest danger was in fact from people (we don't know if this actually surprised Ed, but the adverb *surprisingly* is used)
Text B: the fact that villages had been cleared by loggers; perhaps the fact that in the end he loved the rainforest so much and felt it was 'home'

4

7 kg: Ed's weight loss

April 2008: the start date of the journey

10,000 km: the distance he walked

9: pairs of shoes he wore out

50,000: estimated number of mosquito bites he received

859: the number of days the journey took

1 year: the time he thought the journey would take

5.5 km: the average number of miles per hour he walked per day

15: he sometimes ate this many piranhas per day (see title)

5

/t/ walked, forced, trekked, reached, faced, chased

/d/ determined, described, involved, killed, joined, called, lived, relied, discovered, cleared, disappeared, declared

/ɪd/ completed, decided, admitted, estimated, contracted, intended

6 Students' own answers.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10852783>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/leicester/hi/people_and_places/nature/newsid_8417000/8417893.stm

<http://www.walkingtheamazon.com/>

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/07/31/americas.amazon.walk/#fbid=v09PhgP23du&wom=false>