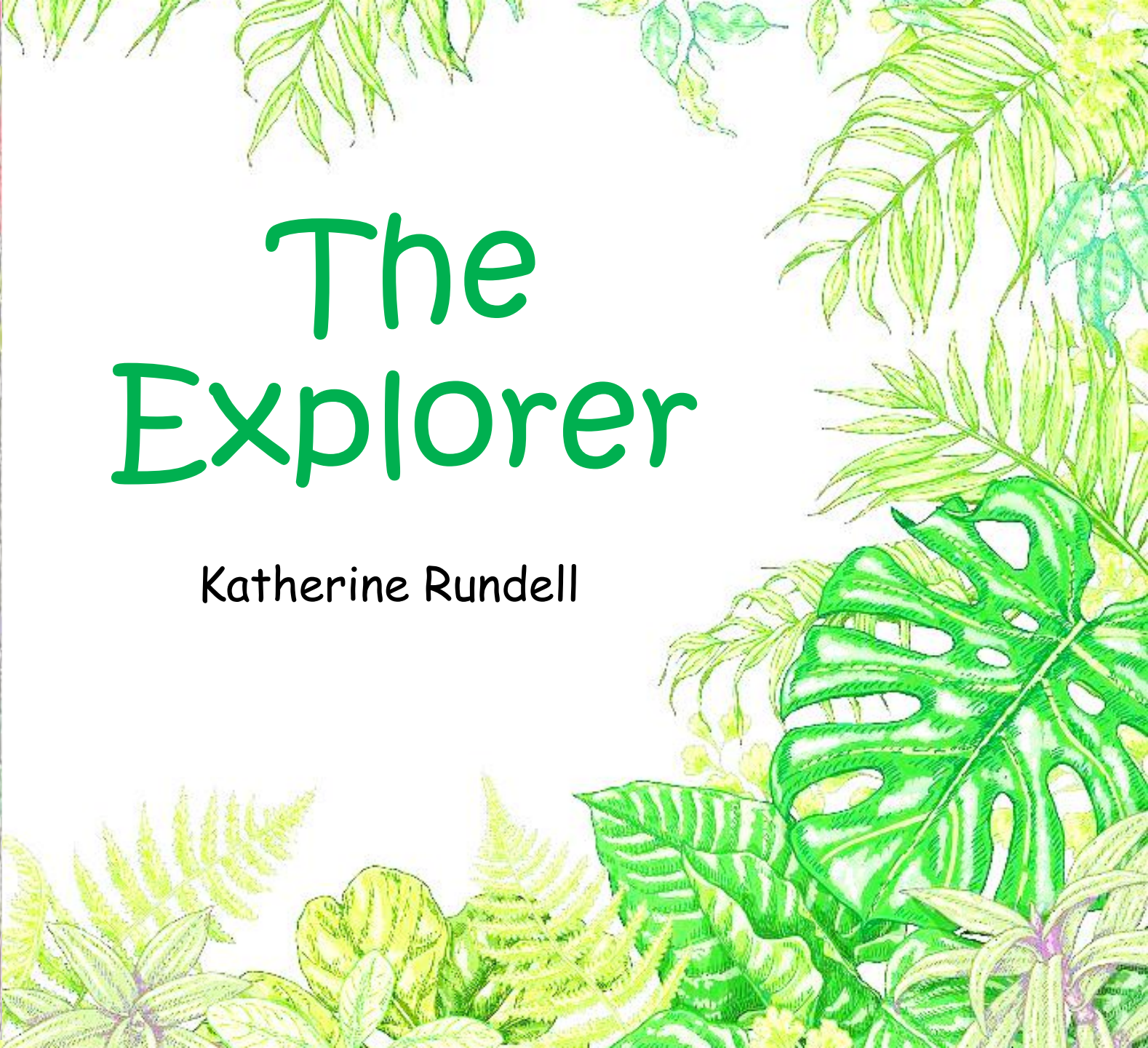
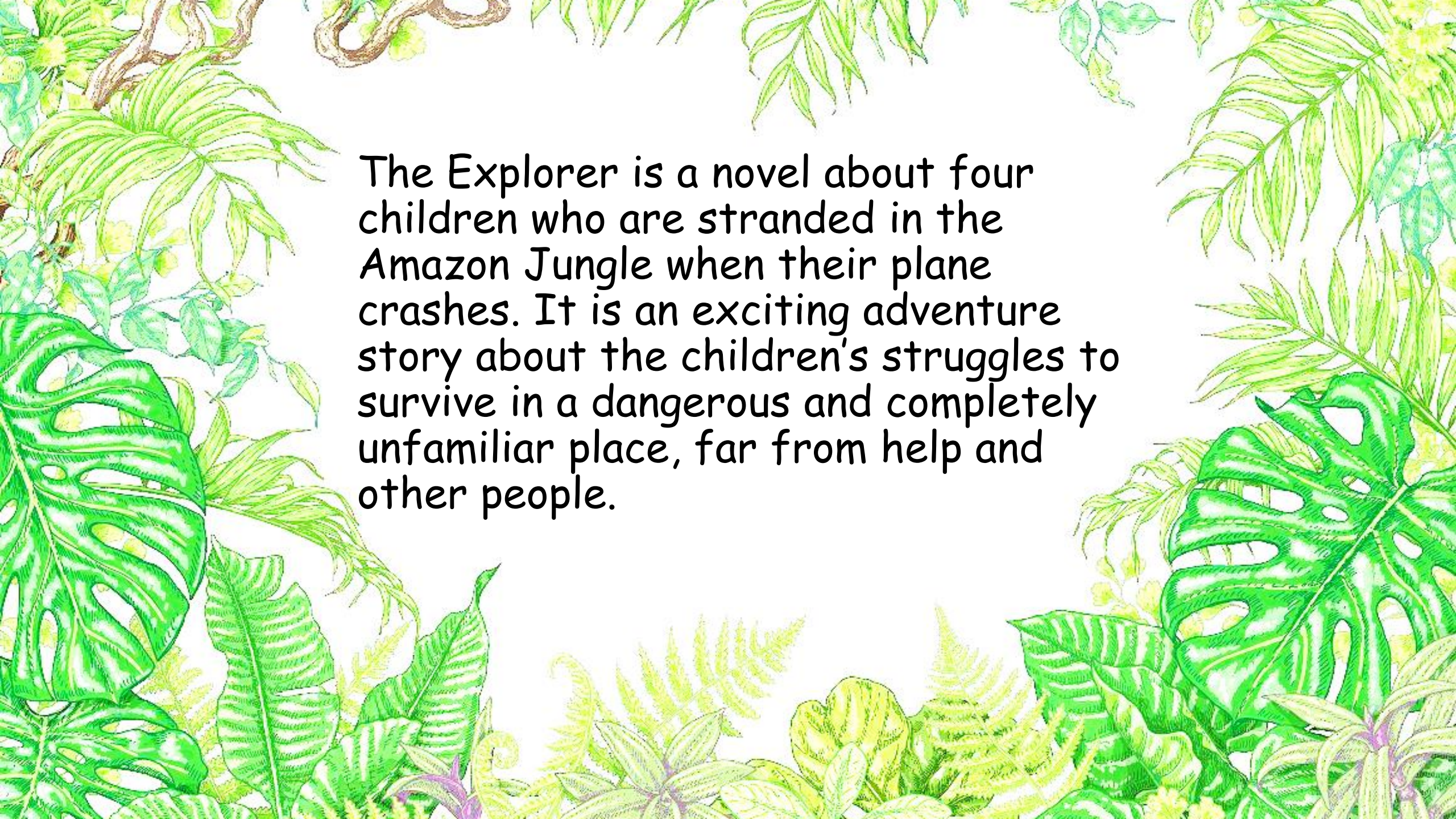




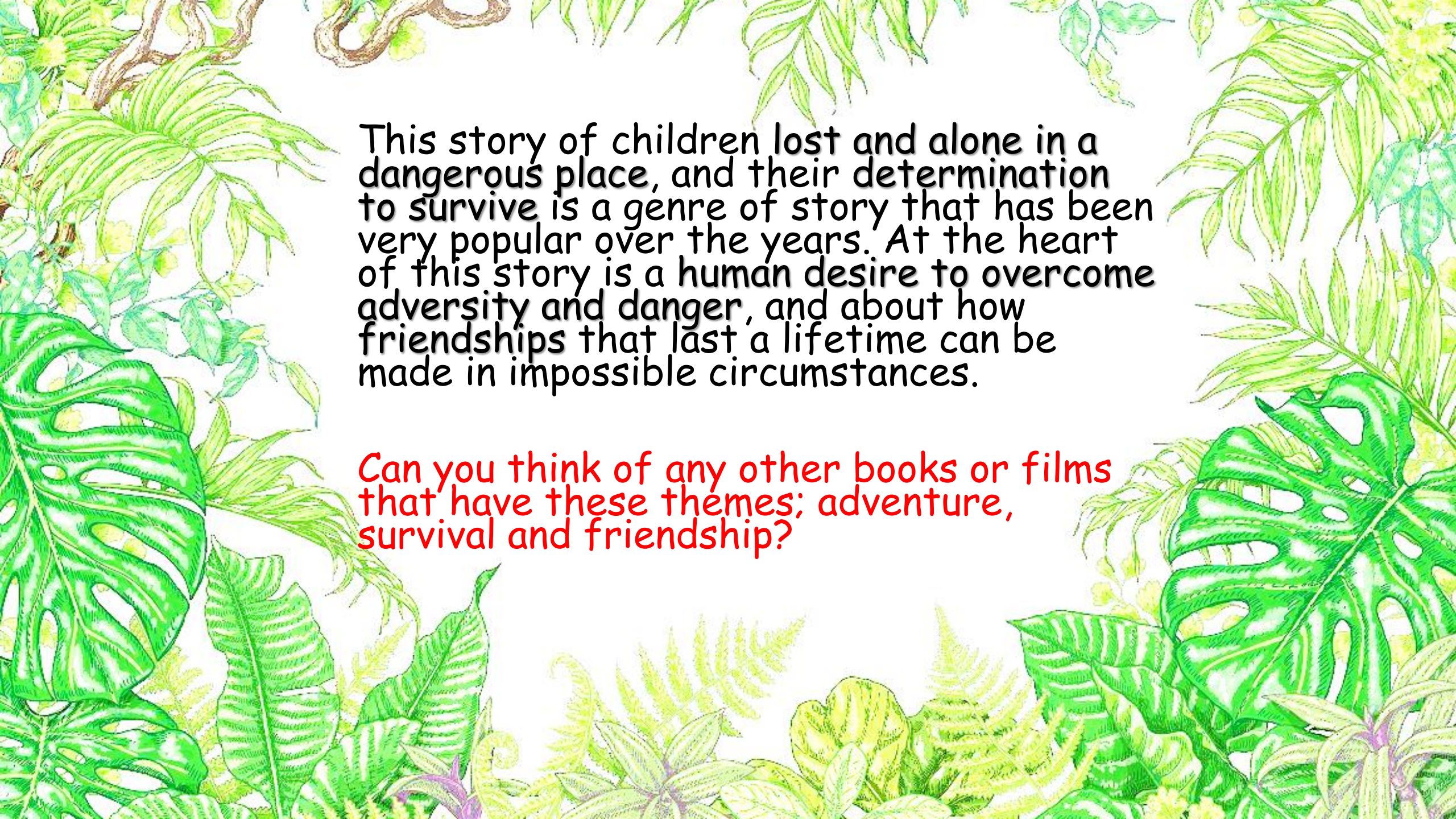
# The Explorer

Katherine Rundell





The Explorer is a novel about four children who are stranded in the Amazon Jungle when their plane crashes. It is an exciting adventure story about the children's struggles to survive in a dangerous and completely unfamiliar place, far from help and other people.



This story of children lost and alone in a dangerous place, and their determination to survive is a genre of story that has been very popular over the years. At the heart of this story is a human desire to overcome adversity and danger, and about how friendships that last a lifetime can be made in impossible circumstances.

Can you think of any other books or films that have these themes; adventure, survival and friendship?



# Preparing to write

As an author, it is highly recommended that you keep a jotter or notebook, otherwise known as a *magpie book*, by your side to capture any ideas you may have as the unit unfolds. This book can be used to make notes, jot down any ideas and draft initial thoughts. *The Explorer* is a story that is rich in imagery, designed to evoke emotion in the reader. As we explore the story, we will pause and consider how it has been created. Noting down these tools, trying them out for yourself and trying to identify them in other fiction, will enhance your skills as a writer.



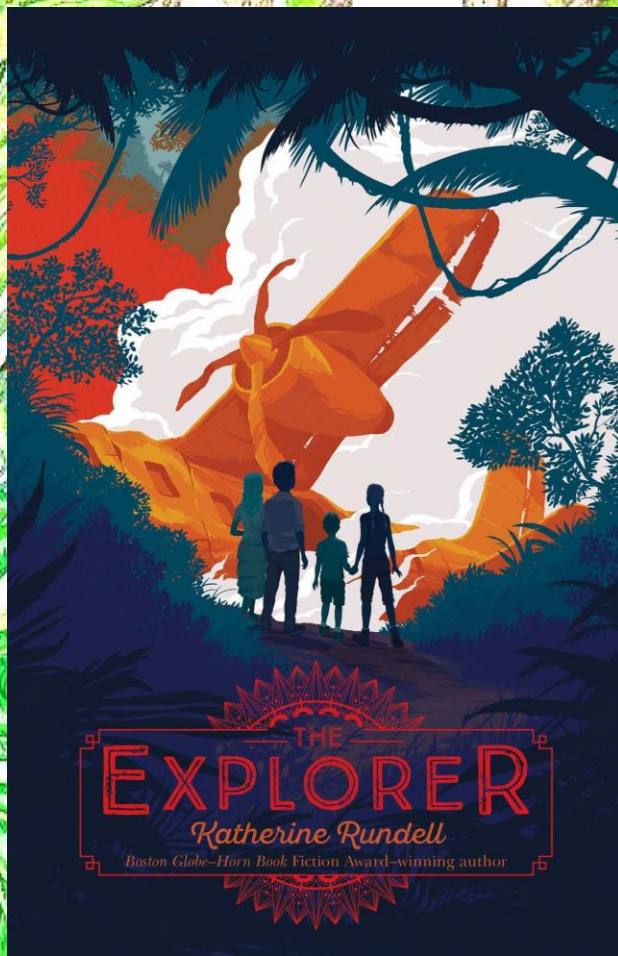
# Activity 1: Tuning in to the genre and exploring the setting

Before we read, let's think about the genre of the short story.

Let's think about the title:

## The Explorer

1. What words do you associate with explorers and explorations?
2. How does the word *explorer* make you feel?
3. What genre do you think this book will be and why?



Now look at the front covers.  
Do these give you more clues about the story?  
Which is your favourite cover and why?



Watch this short animation about the book.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI\\_YJ4yThPE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI_YJ4yThPE)

As you watch, listen to the **background sounds** and think about the **illustrations** on the screen.

What do you think the book will be about now?

Were your predictions correct?



The book is set in the Amazon Rainforest. You might already know some things about the Amazon Rainforest. Can you share these with the group?

Here is a ten minute documentary about the Amazon Rainforest. It might help you to imagine the setting.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEsV5rqbVNQ&list=PLOgbpqEsoxrzo7\\_afgybspX-GwEA1ZIU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEsV5rqbVNQ&list=PLOgbpqEsoxrzo7_afgybspX-GwEA1ZIU)

As you watch, make notes about the RAINFOREST and the PLANTS and ANIMALS that can be found there.







**Now read the opening two chapters  
of the story:**

<https://cdn.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/blogs/2017/september/the-explorer-katherine-rundell-extract.pdf>

A decorative border of various tropical plants, including palm fronds, monstera leaves, and other green foliage, surrounds the text.

## Activity 2: Initial response

Now you have read the story, take a moment to reflect on how it made you feel as a reader.

**Write down your initial responses to the story.**

*You may like to reflect on some of the following elements:*

- what you enjoyed or disliked
- what surprised, puzzled or intrigued you
- how the story made you feel
- what other stories it may have reminded you of
- what themes lie at the heart of the story
- What do you think will happen to the children in the rest of the story

A decorative border of various green plants and leaves surrounds the central text area. The plants include large monstera leaves with characteristic holes, ferns, and other tropical foliage in shades of green and yellow.

Now think back to the work you did in Activity 1.

How does the story compare/ contrast to your predictions and your links to genre and setting?

**Make a list of the similarities and differences.**



# Activity 3: Vocabulary

Let's revisit some of the vocabulary and turns of phrase within the text.

**Complete the 'never heard the word' grid on the next slide.**

Have a look at the words and phrases I have chosen and assess your understanding by ticking and commenting in the relevant box. If you know the word, jot down a definition in your own words.

Next, if there are any words that you do not fully understand, **look them up and add them, along with their definitions, into your exercise books.**

**Challenge** yourself to try to use these words in your own story later on to expand your vocabulary knowledge.

A decorative border of various tropical plants and leaves surrounds the table. The plants include green leaves, some with purple veins, and yellow flowers.

Word or Phrase	Never heard of it	Heard it but not sure of meaning	Heard it and here's a definition/explanation of it's meaning
swerve			
grimacing			
lurched			
ceased			
cascade			
quench			
haunches			
Soot			
Sodden			
feverishly			
concussion			



## Activity 3: Establishing the theme

At the heart of any story lies an underlying theme. Sometimes there are many, entwined through complex plots and backstories, but once you get to the heart of the story, there is always an over-arching theme.

In *The Explorer*, the theme being explored is survival. If you refer to the survival of something or someone, you mean that they manage to continue or exist in spite of difficult circumstances. The survival of a person means that they live through a dangerous situation.

**Discuss the theme of survival. How many other stories that you know or have read explore this theme? What can we learn from these characters? Why do you think author choose to explore this in stories designed for young children?**

A decorative border of various tropical plants, including monstera leaves, ferns, and other green foliage, surrounds the central text area.

Now consider a few books that you love. What are the underlying themes of each story? For example, the underlying themes in:

- Romeo and Juliet - hatred and love.
- Beowulf - heroism.

As a reader, is there a theme that you enjoy reading about? Consider how this may influence you as a writer. Share your thoughts with someone and discuss how your interests differ or are similar.

The background of the slide is a vibrant, detailed illustration of various tropical plants. It includes large, deeply lobed monstera leaves in shades of green, delicate fern fronds, and clusters of small yellow flowers. The overall style is that of a watercolor or fine-line drawing, creating a lush and naturalistic setting.

## Activity 4: Comprehension

We are now going to revisit the story and try to dig a little deeper in terms of our understanding.

The following four slides have reading strategies that I would like you to explore. For each, you will need to go back and find evidence in the text that supports your opinion. Try to form a calculated, cohesive response. For some questions, it may help if you follow this simple pattern:

1. Answer the question with a statement.
2. Back up your statement with evidence found in the text.
3. Explain how the evidence supports your statement.





# Strategy 1: Summarising

In no more than 30 words, write a summary of the extract from *The Explorer*. Think about the key events that are instrumental in the story.



# Strategy 2: Questioning

Re-read the story and make a list of questions you have as a reader.

Such as:

Where is the plane flying to? What do you think has happened to the pilot?

You may like to question the character's actions as well as the author's intent.



# Strategy 3: Clarifying meaning

What is your impression of Fred at the beginning of the story? What led you to this opinion? How does your impression of Fred change as the story unfolds?



# Strategy 4: Predicting

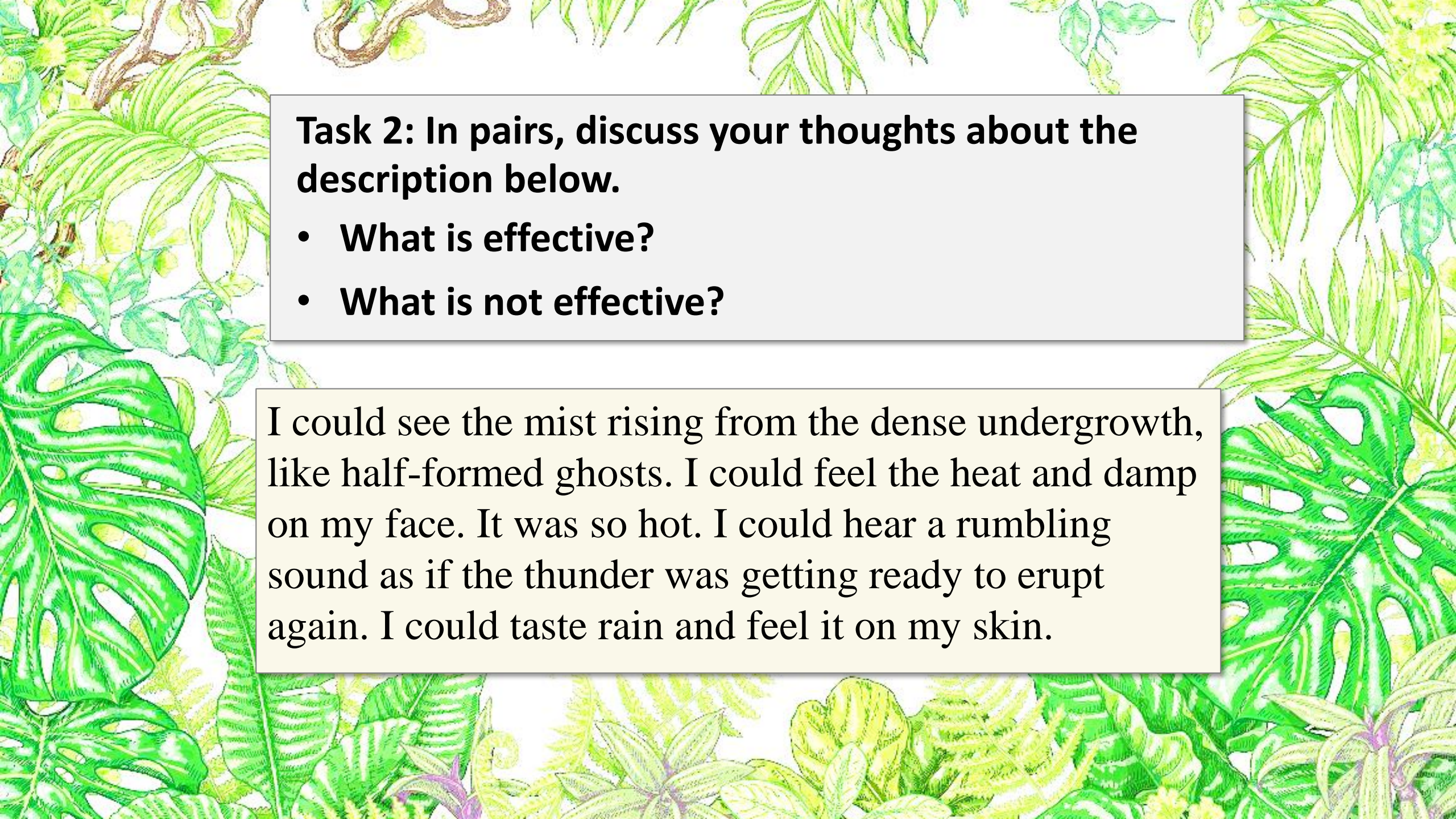
The story ends on a cliff-hanger.  
What do you think will happen next  
and what led you to this prediction?  
Have a go at writing the next  
paragraph of the story.



## Activity 5: Using verbs to describe your senses

**Task 1: a) On a mini-whiteboard or in a notebook, list your five senses.**

**b) Now write a list of sentence starters that you might use if you were describing your senses in a piece of writing.**



**Task 2: In pairs, discuss your thoughts about the description below.**

- **What is effective?**
- **What is not effective?**

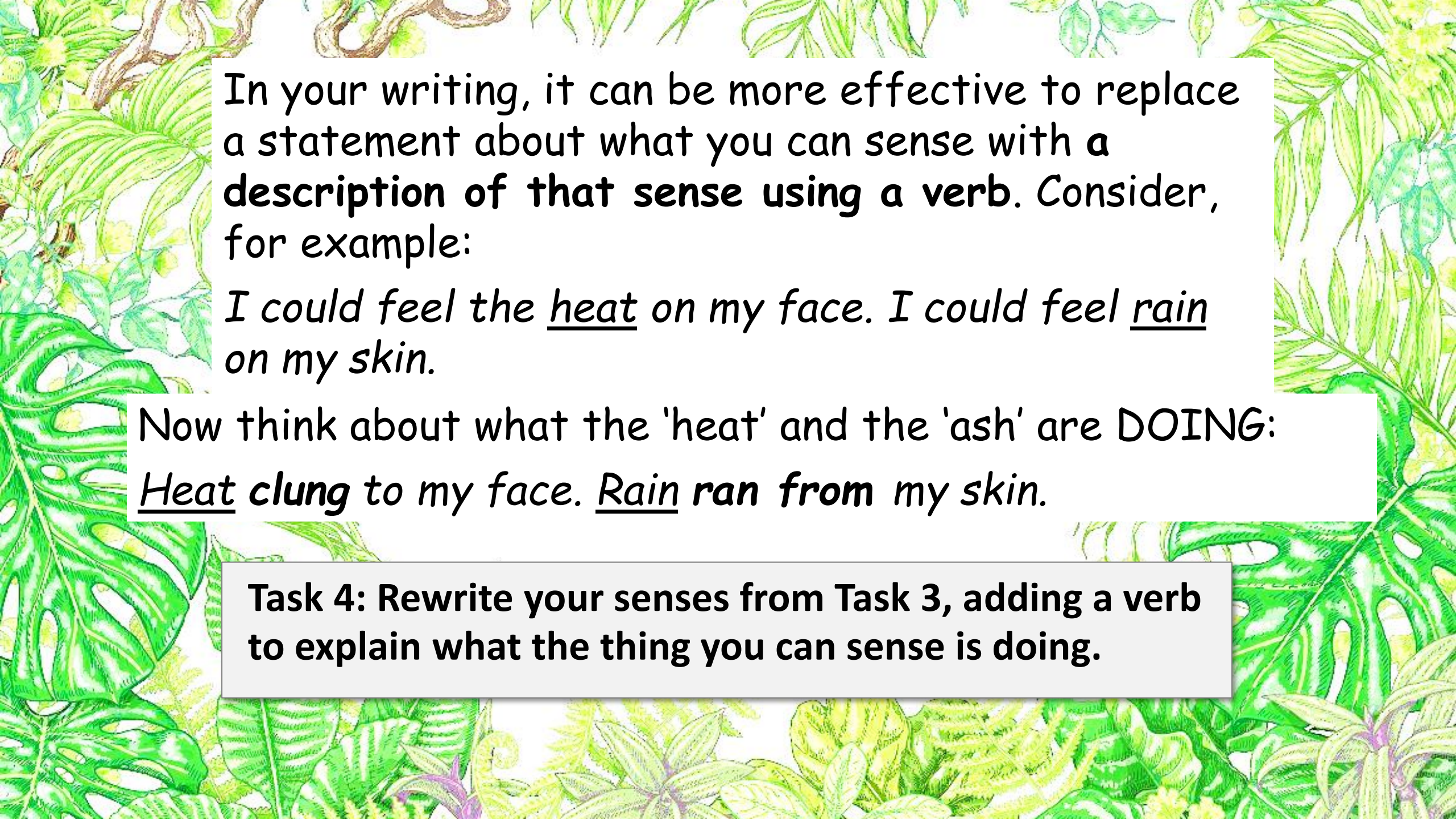
I could see the mist rising from the dense undergrowth, like half-formed ghosts. I could feel the heat and damp on my face. It was so hot. I could hear a rumbling sound as if the thunder was getting ready to erupt again. I could taste rain and feel it on my skin.



# In the Jungle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKSx-6MSWIs>

**Task 3: Working in your groups, list all the things you would be able to sense if you were there.**

The background of the slide is a vibrant, detailed illustration of various tropical plants. On the left, there are large, green, deeply lobed leaves characteristic of a Monstera. To the right and in the foreground, there are smaller, more delicate leaves and ferns in shades of green and yellow. The overall style is that of a watercolor or fine-line botanical illustration, creating a lush, naturalistic setting for the text.

In your writing, it can be more effective to replace a statement about what you can sense with a **description of that sense using a verb**. Consider, for example:

*I could feel the heat on my face. I could feel rain on my skin.*

Now think about what the 'heat' and the 'ash' are **DOING**:  
*Heat **clung** to my face. Rain **ran** from my skin.*

**Task 4: Rewrite your senses from Task 3, adding a verb to explain what the thing you can sense is doing.**



## Here's my example to help you:

I could see the mist rising from the dense undergrowth, like half-formed ghosts. I could feel the heat and damp on my face. It was so hot. I could hear a rumbling sound as if the thunder was getting ready to erupt again. I could taste rain and feel it on my skin.

Smoke rose from the dense undergrowth like half-formed ghosts, and heat clung to my face. It was so hot. The taste of rain invaded my mouth and ran from my skin as the thunder rumbled in the distance, getting ready to erupt again.



# Activity 5 (part 2): Using nouns

There are ten of thousands of nouns in the English language that we use to name things and ideas. When we are writing, usually we encourage you to be as precise as you can be to help your reader picture what you describe.

For example

Generic noun = car

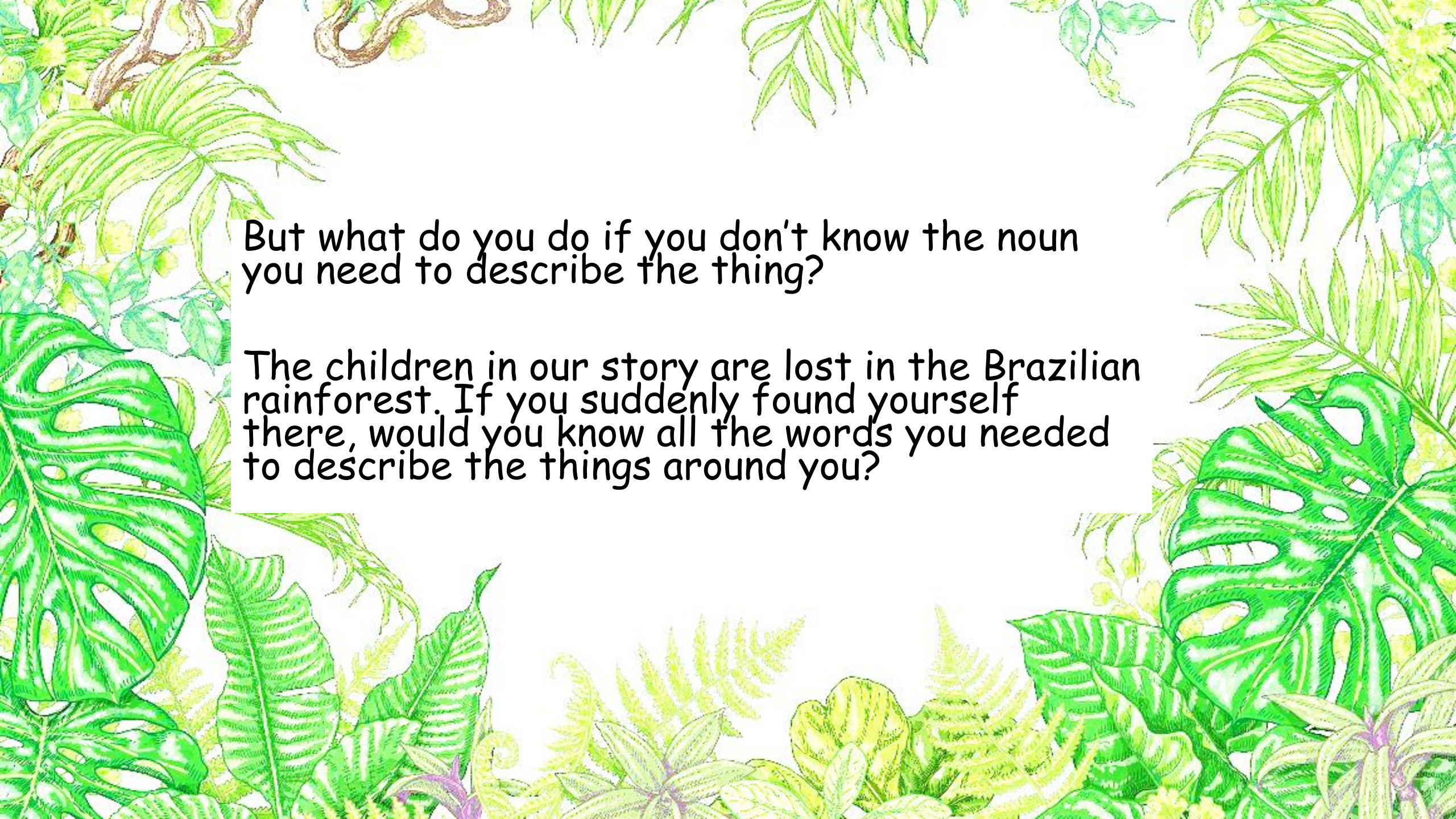
Specific nouns = hatchback, SUV, 4x4, estate, sports car, coupe



# Using nouns

**Task 1: a) On your mini-whiteboard or notebook, list as many jungle animals as you can.**

**b) Now compare your list to your partner's list. How many animals can you add to your list**



But what do you do if you don't know the noun you need to describe the thing?

The children in our story are lost in the Brazilian rainforest. If you suddenly found yourself there, would you know all the words you needed to describe the things around you?



# Can you draw this creature they found?

*From one of the branches hung a small animal, unlike anything Fred had ever seen before. [...]*

*The animal on the branch let out a mew like a cat. It was grey-brown with a cream face, a dog-like snout and immense black eyes. Its arms were long and chicken-bone thin, ending in curved claws. It was small enough to cup in your hand.*

Did your picture look like this?





# Expanded noun phrases to add descriptive detail

Now look again at the description. Together, find all of the nouns.

The writer has then added more detail about the size, colour and shape of the nouns to make expanded noun phrases. Find all of these details and underline or highlight them in a different colour.

*From one of the branches hung a small animal, unlike anything Fred had ever seen before. [...]*

*The animal on the branch let out a mew like a cat. It was grey-brown with a cream face, a dog-like snout and immense black eyes. Its arms were long and chicken-bone thin, ending in curved claws. It was small enough to cup in your hand.*



# Description using similes

We can also use **similes** to help us.

A simile compares one thing with a different thing so that we can see what characteristic or quality the two things share. We use 'like' or 'as' to make the comparison. Similes help us see things in a different way, or imagine something we have never seen or heard before.

Look back at the description of the sloth. Can you find the two similes?





# Other similes that Katherine Rundell

- USES:**
- 'a fern-like plant'
  - 'a caiman as big as a Great Dane'
  - 'fleshy leaves as long as his arm'

Describe a plant, tree or sound from the jungle without using the specific noun by using expanded noun phrases to add detail about the size, colour, shape, texture. Try to use at least 1 simile.



## Activity 6: Short Burst Writing

Think carefully about what you have learnt so far. Next, we are going to turn your knowledge into an engaging piece of writing which will describe the beginning of a dangerous, but exciting journey into the Amazon. You must choose the mode of transport.

In '[The Explorer](#)' Fred uses a plane. However, in your story, he could sail or paddle down the river, fly overheard in a helicopter or even, parachute in like Bear Grylls! Whatever you choose, in your short-burst writing, you must describe the initial departure and the scenery.

It is time to choose your vehicle!



Now that you have chosen your mode of transport, answer the questions below in note-form:

1. What does the vehicle look, feel and sound like?
2. What is the scenery and weather like?
3. Does the vehicle develop a problem?
4. What starts to go wrong?
5. How does Fred feel as he departs?



## Activity 7: TOOLKIT TASK!

Now, we are going to look back at **pages 1 and 2** of The Explorer. Consider what the writer has taken from her **TOOLKIT** to write the powerful moment that Fred travels by aeroplane.

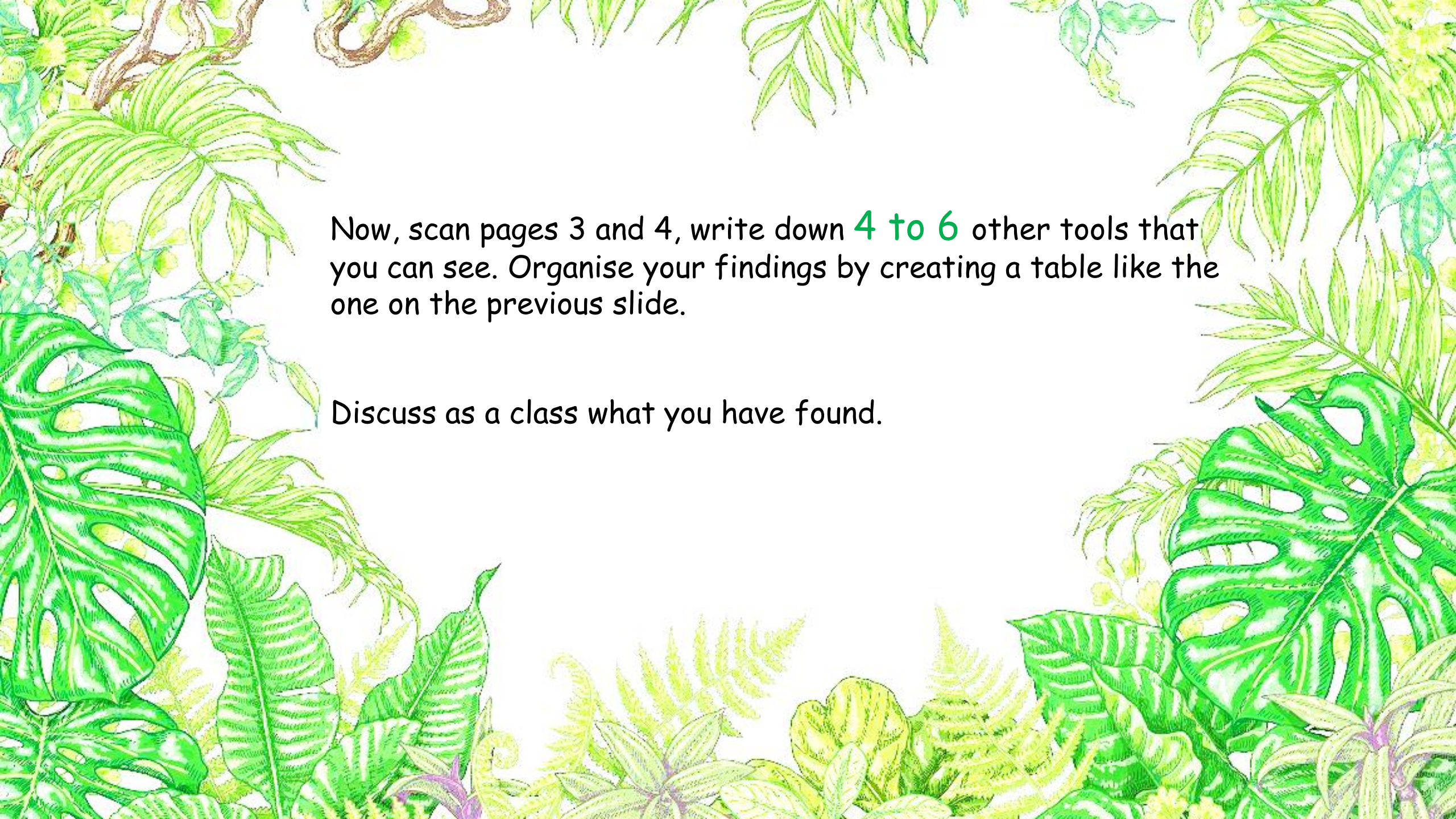
For example,

**Tool from the Text** - 'Like a man-made magic wish, the aeroplane began to rise'.

**Tool** - references to magic, the impossible and feelings of wonder.

Fill in the gaps below to identify the tool used by the writer.

Tool from the Text	Name of the Tool
'The boy sitting in the cockpit gripped his seat and held his breath'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- characters are described as frightened or nervous</li><li>- characters are not in control of their fate</li></ul>
'the reflection of the six-seater plane, a spot of black on the vast sweep of blue'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- there is a sense that the characters are vulnerable and small</li><li>- the setting is intimidating and vast</li></ul>
'Manaus'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Places are unfamiliar and words are foreign or exotic</li></ul>
'a pale girl with blonde hair '	
'The airfield they had just left had been dusty and almost deserted'	



Now, scan pages 3 and 4, write down **4 to 6** other tools that you can see. Organise your findings by creating a table like the one on the previous slide.

Discuss as a class what you have found.

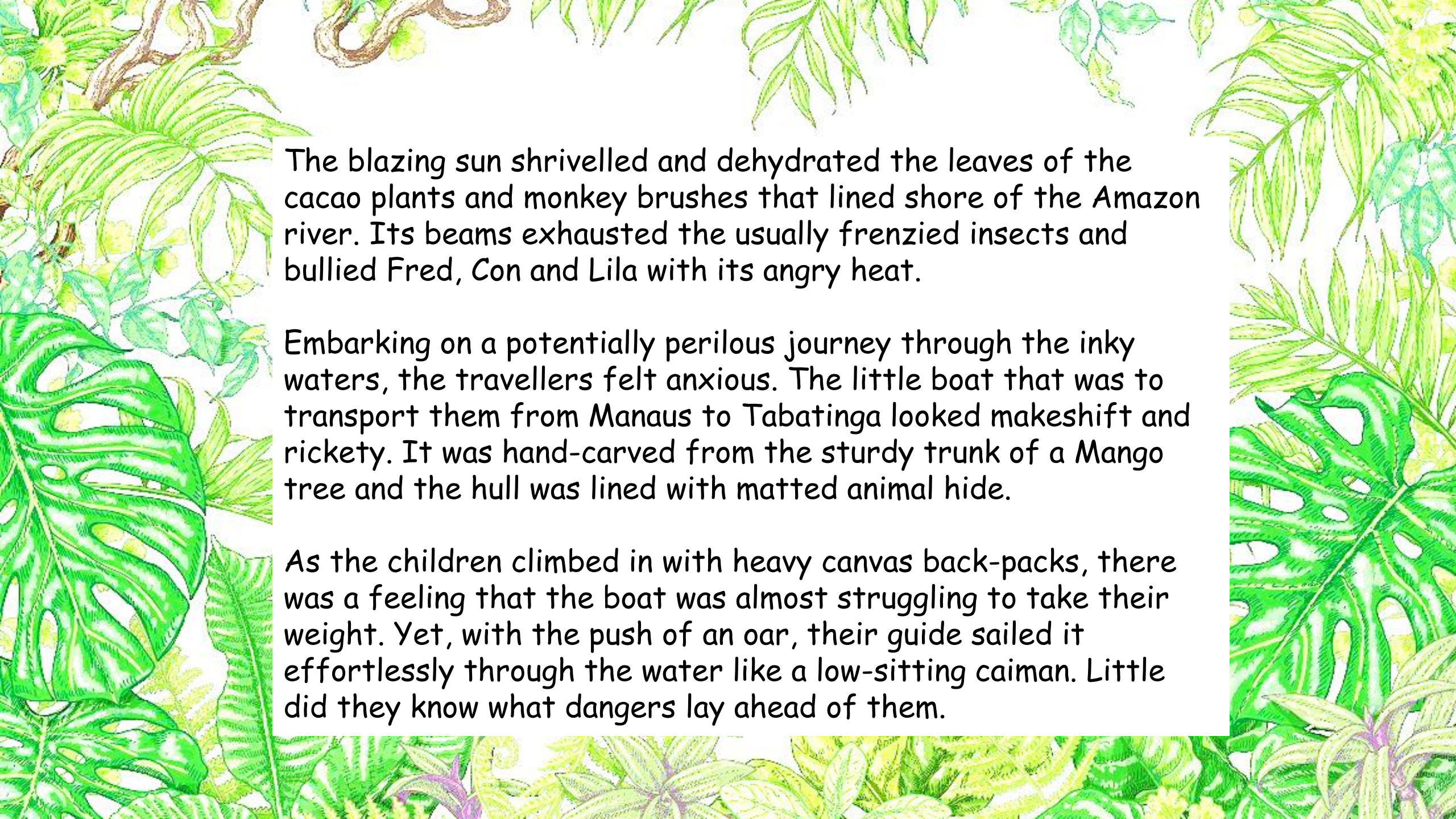


Now, have a go at completing your **short-burst** writing.

Describe the moment that your character (Fred) departs for his exciting, but dangerous adventure into the Amazon.

### Inspiration!

There is an example on the next slide to help you. Print off some images of your chosen transport and the Amazon river. Look at a map of the Amazon river. Read through the **TOOLKIT** tables.



The blazing sun shrivelled and dehydrated the leaves of the cacao plants and monkey brushes that lined shore of the Amazon river. Its beams exhausted the usually frenzied insects and bullied Fred, Con and Lila with its angry heat.

Embarking on a potentially perilous journey through the inky waters, the travellers felt anxious. The little boat that was to transport them from Manaus to Tabatinga looked makeshift and rickety. It was hand-carved from the sturdy trunk of a Mango tree and the hull was lined with matted animal hide.

As the children climbed in with heavy canvas back-packs, there was a feeling that the boat was almost struggling to take their weight. Yet, with the push of an oar, their guide sailed it effortlessly through the water like a low-sitting caiman. Little did they know what dangers lay ahead of them.





## Activity 8: Main Writing Task

Now, you are going to write **Chapter 1** of your own adventure story into the Amazon jungle.

### Section 1.

Begin with the departure. There should be excitement in the air, but equally a feeling of trepidation and unease.

### Section 2.

Describe the scenery and there should be a feeling of the Amazon and the exotic. Perhaps, name plants and animals.

### Section 3.

Things start to go wrong with the transport and there is a dramatic accident. The children are now alone. They are lost and must make it out alive.



## And there's more...

Finally, once you have written Chapter 1, you may like to continue to write more...

Alternatively, you could design your own front cover or write the blurb for your piece of writing.

And, why not give it to a friend to read. What do they think?