

Amazing Amazon

by Jocelyn Cranefield



Overview

Using dramatic photographs and simple diagrams, this book provides information about the Amazon River, which is forever changing shape as water flows along it. (Big idea: The land can change shape over time).

Suggested purposes

This book supports the following comprehension strategies:

- understanding the author's purpose **AP**
- identifying the main ideas **MI**
- determining cause and effect. **CE**

It supports the following non-fiction strategies:

- using photographs to support the text
- using a contents page, glossary (boldface type), and index
- reading captions to gain information about photos
- reading maps, charts, and diagrams
- using aerial maps to get a wide view.

Key vocabulary

The vocabulary that is focused on includes:

- Anchor words – *change, land, shape, water*
- Content words – *animals, banks, basin, birds, boat, Earth, frogs, ground, habitat, houses, insects, journey, lungs, mountains, oxygen, planet, plants, rain, rain forest, riverbank, river mouth, rocks, satellite, season, silt, snakes, soil, space, streams, trees, world*
- High-frequency words – *again, along, around, behind, eat, into, live, long, look, many, other, people, their, through, where*

Features of the text

- Non-fiction features:
 - cover flap, which provides support for identifying the big ideas and anchor words
 - the topic (Amazon), which expands on pages 8 and 9 of the anchor book *Discovering My World*
 - preview question on the back cover
 - headings that introduce new aspects of the topic and support students to read information in sections
 - contents page, glossary (boldface type), index
 - captions that add information
 - aerial views
 - chart to show comparison
 - map with a key
 - captions to give information about photographs
 - diagram that explains the action of the river
 - labels to help read features on aerial maps
- Word study:
 - digraphs – “ch”, “th”, “sh”
 - compound words – *everywhere, riverbank*
 - contractions – *it's*
 - suffixes – “-ly”, “-est”, “-ing”
 - silent letters – *high, through, mighty, climb, knocks*
- Possessive apostrophe – *Earth's*
- Exclamation marks
- Comparison words – *long, wide, widest, longest, tiny, giant, slowly, quickly, fast-moving, slow*
- Descriptive language
 - metaphor – *the lungs of planet Earth*
 - alliteration – *amazing Amazon*



Setting the scene

If you have already introduced the topic using the Whole-class Introduction and the anchor book (*Discovering My World*), you can review the discussion and show the students pages 8 and 9 of the anchor book.

Ask the students what they know about rivers. Write “where”, “what”, “who”, “why”, “when”, “which”, and “how” on the board to prompt their thinking. Ask:

- *What rivers do you know?*
- *Where do rivers start?*
- *How do rivers start?*
- *Which river is the longest in the world?*
- *When did you last go to a river?*
- *Why did you go there?*

ELL support

Even though ELL students at the fluent level are becoming proficient in English, it’s important to recognise that they may struggle with specialised or technical language.

Introducing the book

Front cover – Read the title and discuss the photo. *What is the Amazon? What clues does the photo give us?* Read aloud the title. *What letters has the author repeated? What does this do?* Explain that the repetition of the first sound is called alliteration. It is used to capture the reader’s interest and focus them on particular words.

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Lead a discussion to build the students’ background knowledge.

Using the flap – Read aloud the text on the flap, and (if relevant) remind the students that they have read this in *Discovering My World*. Read aloud the anchor words on the other side. Tell the students that they can point out the words when they find them in the book. Ask them to leave the flap open as they read.

Title page – Read aloud the title. Discuss the photograph. *What do you think this book will tell us about the Amazon? What information does this photograph give us? How does this photo show us that the Amazon is amazing?*

The first reading

MI **Pages 2 and 3 – (Main idea)** Read the headings on the contents page. *What does each heading refer to? (Amazon) What starts with a trickle? How do you know? What information will be in this section? How do you think the information will be organised? (journey of the river from beginning to end)*

MI **Pages 4 and 5 – (Main idea)** *What does this page tell us about the formation of the river?* Have the students look at the photograph and point to the caption. Explain that this caption is a non-fiction feature that gives extra information. *What information does it give us?*

AP **(Understanding the author’s purpose)** *How does this photograph make the Amazon look amazing? Where was this photograph taken? Would it be as effective if it had been taken from the ground? Why/why not?*

MI **Page 6 – (Main idea)** *What does this page tell us about the Amazon?* Explain that “Andes” is written in bold to tell the reader that this word is in the glossary. Have the students look it up in the glossary. *Why is the Andes important to the Amazon? (birthplace of the Amazon). Look at the chart. Which river is the longest? Where is it? How much shorter is the Amazon?*

Page 7 – Discuss the map. Ensure that the students know what the colours mean, how to use the key, and the significance of the inset of South America. *Where do you think the “trickle in the mountains” starts? Where does the Amazon River start? Have the students point to this area. What is a basin? What information does the map give you?*

Pages 8 and 9 – Read the first sentence. Look at the photograph. *How does the photograph add to the text? Does this photo look like a river, a lake, or the sea? Why?* Have the students compare the width of the Amazon (40 kilometres) with the same distance from their school. **(Determining cause and effect)** *What causes the river to widen? What effect does this have on people and animals?* **CE**

Pages 10 and 11 – Point to the title. **(Main idea)** *What do you think this section will be about? How might the Amazon change shape? Look up “silt” in the glossary. (Determining cause and effect) Read the text and look at the diagram on page 11. What information does this show that isn’t in the photograph on page 10? What did you learn about how the river changes shape?* **CE**

Pages 12 and 13 – Look up “basin” and “oxygen” in the glossary. What does “the lungs of planet Earth” mean? Explain that this is a metaphor. It compares one thing with another to give the reader a better understanding. What do lungs do? (breathe) What information does this photo give you? How do the labels help us to read and understand the information?

AP **Pages 14, 15, 16, and 17** – (Understanding the author’s purpose) Have the students look at the animals on pages 14 to 17. How does this make the Amazon more amazing? Why is the Amazon so important for these creatures? Reflect on the questions on the back cover. Can you answer this question now? Compare this information with your prediction.

Pages 18 and 19 – Look at the photograph. How would living on the Amazon be different from where you live? How do you think the Amazon affects these people?

AP **Pages 20 and 21** – (Understanding the author’s purpose) Read aloud the heading. Whose journey is at an end? The Amazon? The reader? Both? Discuss the students’ thoughts. Look at the photograph. Where was it taken from? Why is it more effective than one taken from the ground? How can we know that it is the end of the journey? What does “river mouth” mean? How does the label help us understand the photo? (**Determining cause and effect**) Why do you think that the river mouth is sometimes up to 500 kilometres wide? What causes this?

Page 22 – Discuss the photograph. How is this photo similar to the one on the title page? How is it different? (sunset/sunrise, water, difference in land) Why is it a good photograph to end with? Discuss the connections between the photograph and the sentence “It’s the end of the Amazon’s amazing journey.” (sunrise/sunset, morning to night, river to ocean, ending of a day)

Vocabulary activity

Focus word: banks

1. Turn to page 9. Read: *As the water rises, it spills over the banks and flows onto the land.*
2. Say “banks” with me.
3. Explain that “banks” is another word for the side or edge of something. Look at the photograph on page 10. Where are the banks of the Amazon?
4. Give some examples that show how “banks” can be used. For example:
 - *The snow plough made huge banks of snow along the road.*
 - *The plane banked when it turned south.*

- *I put extra money into my piggy bank.*
- *My mum gets money from the bank.*

5. Ask the students to do the following activities:
 - Create a web for “banks”. They can write “banks” in the centre and write ideas that show how “banks” can be used. (side or edges, things that tilt when they turn, something you put money into)
 - Pretend to be a family that has to move from your home on a riverbank. Describe how it feels.
 - Tell a partner that they will spend a day at a favourite picnic spot on the banks of a river. They can draw a picture and display it under the heading “At the Riverbank”.
6. What is the word we’ve been learning that means “side” or “edge” of something? Say the word with me.

ELL activity

Language objective: Comparative language – comparatives and superlatives

- List the following words on the board: long, longest, wide, widest, large, largest. Ask the students to share what they notice about these sets of words.
- Highlight the “est” ending. What’s the difference between wide and widest? Long and longest?
- Write “wider” and “longer” on the board. Ask the students how these words compare with the other sets of words.
- Explain that adding “er” and “est” endings onto descriptive words (adjectives), helps us compare two or more things. Descriptive words with “er” endings are called comparatives, and descriptive words with “est” endings are called superlatives.
- Reread pages 6, 8, and 12, to find examples of superlative language.
- What type of words did we learn about today? Let’s say “comparatives” and “superlatives”. What do these words help us do? (compare things)

Ideas for revisiting the text

1. Review and check

- Listen as the students reread the text. Observe their fluency and confidence when reading new vocabulary. Monitor the strategies they use to solve any difficulties.
- Review the anchor and content words. Ensure that the students understand the meaning of each word and know how to use it in context.

2. Stop and learn

a. Decoding/word attack activities

Comparative adjectives

Write “tall”, “taller”, and “tallest” on cards. Hand out the cards to three students according to their height. Ask them to arrange themselves in order of height next to each other and hold their cards in front of them. Point to the first person holding the card with “tall” on it. Explain that this person is tall. Point to the person holding the “taller” card – this person is taller. Ask the students if they can guess how to describe the third person. *That’s right, this person is the tallest.* Write “taller” and “tallest” on the board. *What are the differences between these words?* Point to the word endings.

BLM – Practising using comparative adjectives

The students can add “er” and “est” to the words to make two or more words that can be used to compare things. If a word ends in “e”, they only need to add “r” or “st”.

b. Comprehension activity

BLM – Cause and effect

The students can reread *Amazing Amazon*. Explain that they are going to write about the effects of the Amazon on the land, people, and animals. The BLM provides them with the causes. Read through the example on the BLM and check that they understand their task.

c. Writing activities

The students can:

- Draw a story map (using pictures and headings) to capture the events that occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the Amazon’s journey. They can use this story map to retell the journey to another person.
- Write “A Week in the Life of the Amazon” diary. Have them discuss what it would be like to be the Amazon River. *As the Amazon, what would you see, smell, hear, and feel? How would you feel at the end of your journey?*
- Hold a student quiz. Write questions on cards using information from the text such as “How long is the Amazon?” or “What ocean does the Amazon flow into?”
- Write a newspaper report about an animal that has been affected by the Amazon flooding. They can include an eye-catching title and picture to support what they have written.

3. Suggestions for further activities

- Display books about life in the Amazon and other rivers that the students can read.
- Imagine the Amazon is dying. Investigate the effects of this. Focus on the special habitats, species, and the oxygen the Amazon provides. Have the students make a poster that shows why the Amazon is so amazing and why we should take care of it.
- Be in the hot seat! Choose a student to be something from the book (the river, a person living on a houseboat, or an animal). The other students can then think of appropriate questions. They can then take turns asking the questions.