
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE GIRL WHO WALKED OUT OF THE AMAZON

High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Reading Passage
- ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key
- ✓ Teacher Guide

GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4

Reading they'll actually do.

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

THE GIRL WHO WALKED OUT OF THE AMAZON

On Christmas Eve 1971, seventeen-year-old Juliane Koepcke was flying over the Peruvian rainforest when her plane was torn apart by lightning. She fell two miles through the sky, still strapped to her seat, and somehow survived. Then she had to walk out of the Amazon jungle—alone.

LANSA Flight 508 had been traveling from Lima to Pucallpa when it flew into a severe thunderstorm. Lightning struck the plane, igniting a fuel tank. The aircraft broke apart at 21,000 feet. All 92 people on board fell into the jungle. Juliane was the only survivor.

She later remembered tumbling through the air, seeing the jungle spinning below her, and then nothing. When she woke, she was lying on the forest floor, still buckled into her row of seats. The seats may have acted like a helicopter blade, slowing her fall. The dense jungle canopy may have cushioned her landing. No one knows for certain why she lived.

Juliane's injuries were serious but survivable: a broken collarbone, deep cuts on her arms and legs, a swollen eye, and a concussion. She had lost her glasses, one shoe, and most of her belongings. She was alone in one of the most remote rainforests on Earth.

But Juliane had an advantage. Her parents were zoologists who ran a research station in the Amazon. She had grown up in the jungle and knew its dangers. She remembered her father's advice: follow water downstream, and it will eventually lead to civilization.

For eleven days, Juliane walked. She waded through streams filled with piranhas and alligators. Maggots infested a wound on her arm. She had no food and survived only on a small bag of candy she found in the wreckage. Mosquitoes and insects covered her constantly.

On the eleventh day, she found a boat and a small shelter. Loggers discovered her there, barely alive. She was rescued, recovered, and eventually returned to Germany to finish her education.

Today, Juliane Koepcke holds a doctorate in zoology. She returned to the crash site 30 years later to make a documentary about her survival. The jungle that almost killed her became her life's work.

Word Count: 361 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: BBC

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1

What caused LANSA Flight 508 to crash?

- ☐ A) Engine failure
- ☐ B) Lightning struck the plane and ignited a fuel tank
- ☐ C) The pilot made an error
- ☐ D) The plane ran out of fuel

2

How many people survived the crash?

- ☐ A) None
- ☐ B) One—Juliane Koepcke
- ☐ C) Twelve
- ☐ D) Forty-five

3

What does the passage suggest about why Juliane survived the fall?

- ☐ A) Scientists have proven exactly how she survived
- ☐ B) Her seat may have slowed her fall and the jungle cushioned her landing
- ☐ C) She used a parachute hidden in her seat
- ☐ D) She landed in a river

4

According to the passage, what 'advantage' helped Juliane survive in the jungle?

- ☐ A) She had a satellite phone
- ☐ B) Her parents were zoologists and she had grown up in the Amazon
- ☐ C) She was an experienced pilot
- ☐ D) She found other survivors to help her

5

Juliane remembered her father's advice: 'follow water downstream, and it will eventually lead to civilization.' How did this single piece of knowledge help save her life? What does this suggest about the value of practical survival knowledge?

6

The passage ends by saying 'the jungle that almost killed her became her life's work.' Juliane became a zoologist and returned to study the Amazon. What do you think motivated her to return to the place that caused her so much trauma? What does her choice suggest about how people process difficult experiences?

ANSWER KEY

The Girl Who Walked Out of the Amazon

1. B) Lightning struck the plane and ignited a fuel tank

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'Lightning struck the plane, igniting a fuel tank. The aircraft broke apart at 21,000 feet.'

2. B) One—Juliane Koepcke

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'All 92 people on board fell into the jungle. Juliane was the only survivor.'

3. B) Her seat may have slowed her fall and the jungle cushioned her landing

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage states: 'The seats may have acted like a helicopter blade, slowing her fall. The dense jungle canopy may have cushioned her landing. No one knows for certain.'

4. B) Her parents were zoologists and she had grown up in the Amazon

DOK 2 — Text evidence. The passage explicitly states: 'Her parents were zoologists who ran a research station in the Amazon. She had grown up in the jungle and knew its dangers.'

5. Sample Response:

This advice gave Juliane a strategy when she had almost nothing—no map, no supplies, no help. Following water gave her direction and purpose instead of wandering randomly. Streams also provided drinkable water and eventually led to the loggers' shelter where she was found. This shows that a single piece of practical knowledge can make the difference between life and death in survival situations.

6. Sample Response:

Answers will vary. Juliane may have returned because the jungle was part of her identity—she grew up there with her zoologist parents. Facing the trauma directly might have helped her process it rather than avoid it. Her choice suggests that some people heal by confronting difficult experiences rather than running from them. She transformed a place of tragedy into a place of purpose and scientific work.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Girl Who Walked Out of the Amazon

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- NGSS — Connections to scientific practices
- C3 Framework — Historical thinking skills

PACING OPTIONS

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Juliane's father taught her: 'Follow water downstream.' One piece of advice saved her life. What simple knowledge could save someone in an emergency?
- She returned to study the jungle that almost killed her. Why might someone choose to face their trauma rather than avoid it?
- Of 92 passengers, only Juliane survived. How do we make sense of survival when it seems random?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Survival Guide: Create a one-page survival guide based on what Juliane did right. Include illustrations.
- Research: Investigate the crash of LANSA Flight 508. What caused it? Create a timeline of events.
- Writing: Write a letter from Juliane to her younger self, offering advice for the journey ahead.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

SOURCE

- BBC / Juliane Koepcke memoir 'When I Fell From the Sky'