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1. Living on the Amazon - Teacher

Lesson plan

Lesson Objective(s)

This is a level B1/B2 skills lesson, focusing on writing structure and the use of linking words. The specific lesson objective is:

By the end of the lesson, students will understand how to structure an appropriately-paragraphed opinion essay from a given question prompt, using linking words to help the essay flow.

The theme is 'living on the Amazon' – how local people are affected by the seasonal rise and fall of the river, and tasks include reading, listening and pair & class discussion in exercises that lead to the main matching task. The plan leads to an optional writing task to be done as homework or as part of a second lesson.

I hope that the strength of the plan lies in relative simplicity combined with flexibility. It can be delivered as a 45 -60 minute lesson, although there are optional exercises that can be used to extend the lesson or can be used in a follow-up lesson. These include an optional matching exercise for pre-teaching vocabulary, an exercise on the Amazon river, an essay task and a Kahoot for reviewing the material afterwards (all optional exercises are included at the end of the teacher's notes).

Students will need access to the internet and ideally to a tablet or laptop, in order to use Google Earth, and for the Kahoot, if required. To shorten the lesson, this work could be done by the class to an interactive whiteboard. All the other materials are available with this document or from the links therein.

There is one audio to listen to and one video to watch.

<https://audio.com/clive-maguire/projects/1816598109648565> (4 mins, personal narrative)

<https://www.dw.com/en/water-levels-hit-record-lows-in-amazon-region/video-70411456> (2 mins, news report)

PART I - A journey through the Amazon.

Board screenshot image of the amazon region, or use Google Earth.

Students in pairs or groups.

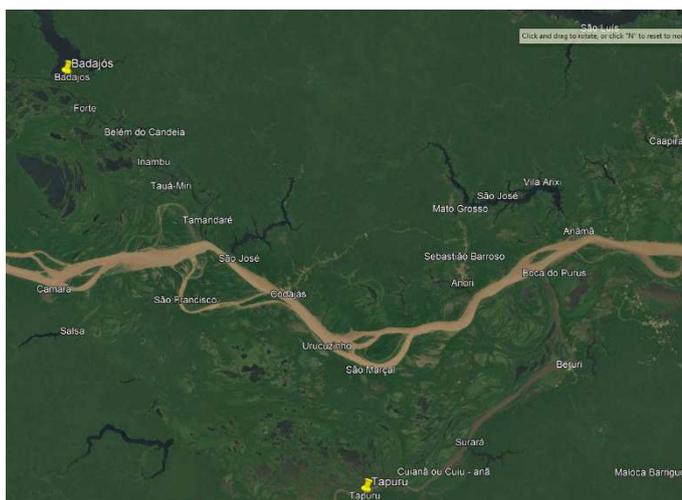
1.1 Scaffold by getting students to brainstorm facts about the Amazon basin region. Elicit as necessary.

1.2 Find the locations in Google Earth.

Students will need internet access for this, or it could be done directly by the class, using Google Earth and the references. Using the coordinates is the harder way to get the points; searching for the towns within the area is easier.

Badajós 3°25'8.75"S 62°40'42.41"W

Tapuru 4°17'27.66"S 61°48'20.74"W



Answers to questions

1.3 b. The only viable route at low water is down the Purus River (NE), W up the Amazon and N up the Badajós River.

1.4 a. Allow students to match the numbers with the images.

1.4 b. Students can use the tick boxes to tick the animals they think were spotted. The 3 animals that are not found in the Amazon are the crocodile, the salmon and the leopard. All the other animals were spotted on this trip.

Listening (link above) 2 minutes. Students check their answers.

1.5 a. It is so much quicker because it is sometimes possible at high water to travel almost directly north from Tapuru to the Amazon, **through the floodplain**. The section on the Amazon is difficult and dangerous at this time because of the amount of detritus in the fast-flowing water, but the Badajós river at high water is a slow-moving, wide channel which is like skimming fast over glass.

1.6 a. Difficulties mentioned in the video are: **getting freshwater** for drinking, eating, bathing; **transport/getting basic goods, isolation**

PART 2 Essay Structure and linking words

2.1 a. Possible answers

Introduction Introduce the theme or subject matter to the reader and say what's coming

Body 1 (possibly good points or similar)

Body 2 (possibly bad points or similar)

Conclusion summarise the main point or points made, without introducing new material.

Make sure students understand that there may be more body paragraphs.

2.1 b.

Ordering	Contrasting	Logical argument
as well as	although	because
to begin with	however	as a result
in addition	on the other hand	(despite)
secondly	(despite)	(in spite of)
in conclusion	(in spite of)	
finally		

2.2 a. See complete essay for the correct order. There are many different solutions to the linking words exercise. Allow students to use the words in the word list or their own linking word or phrase, disallowing and explaining any that are grammatically incorrect or where the collocation is incorrect.

Essay - Living on the Amazon

Living on the Amazon River is a challenge that indigenous populations have faced for hundreds of years. Today there are more people who have built remote communities along the length of the 7,000km long river, as well as in the thousands of tributaries that feed it. One of the major problems is the fundamentally different environments faced in the low water and high water periods. People often confuse high and low water with wet and dry seasons although these are not exactly the same – for example, when the wet season begins, river levels remain very low until water from upstream rainfall arrives – in other words, local rainfall means very little in terms of local river levels. Here, we are talking about river levels, not rainfall. Each season brings its own challenges, although in the author's experience low water is the hardest to deal with. _____ ?

The first obvious problem with high water is that navigation can be really difficult. This is because all the channels overflow (imagine all the roads and paths near you disappearing under water), and you must find your way only by recognising physical features (which, in the Amazon, means knowing all the big trees in your area). If some of them fall or are uprooted in the floods, it can be like someone removing all your local signposts!

_____, there is the problem of flooding of crops and also buildings. Although many river dwellers live on floating platforms, all riverine communities have areas where they grow food such as manioc, or plants such as hemp, and if they get the timing wrong, and don't harvest them in time, these crops can be ruined by floodwater.

_____, there is the threat from the abundance of animals and plants. This may sound strange, but there are some plants that grow quickly across stretches of water and can cut off important routes. The abundance of animals poses threats too. In some areas, it is illegal to hunt caiman, for example, and when there is a lot of water around, caiman breed and thrive because of the huge quantities of prey they can access. In turn, this can make the rivers and lakes much more dangerous for local communities. More animals also means more mosquitoes, which increases the risk of diseases like malaria and dengue.

_____, low water is even worse. At least during high water it is easy to get around and see people and visit other communities far and near. At low water, no such luck. This might sound like an inconvenience rather than a major problem, but the issue is an important one. When the river is low, you can no longer rely on deliveries of food, water, equipment, fuel, material for maintenance or repairs or anything else. At the same time, you cannot get any of your own produce to market. You may not even be able to move a metre from your house, because of the abundance of thick mud.

Low water brings other problems, _____. At this time of year, animal life retreats into the distant forest, so hunting becomes difficult. Fishing, although initially easier (because the fish become trapped in certain areas), eventually becomes impossible, because the lack of oxygen in reduced rivers and lakes kills off the fish.

_____ although there are fewer animals around generally, the lack of water brings other bugs and insects and animals closer to the community – snakes, scorpions, spiders, for example – and some of the insects can bring disease.

_____ major problem at low water is simply the lack of fresh water for drinking and cooking. Water from a dried up river bed is full of sediment and detritus from decomposing plants, fish and animals. It carries a high quantity of bacteria, which can often bring infection and parasites.

_____, although both seasons bring their share of issues, it is probably true to say that low water is the one most people dread. If it is a relatively kind year, then it is simply an arduous period where you have to work much harder to eat, drink, stay healthy and maintain connections with friends and family; but if it is a year like 2024, then what was merely arduous before, becomes life-threateningly difficult.

You become isolated, with no way of earning money or exchanging goods, and gradually your food and water supplies disappear. With no-one around to help, you just have to wait and hope and pray for the rains further up the river to come as early as possible – because if they don't, you will quickly become ill and may never see high water again.

Clive Maguire

Part 3

Living on the Amazon

Exit Slip

Write down the translation of **at least 5 linking words or phrases** and give it back to the teacher before you leave.

English	

Name: _____

Class: _____

Optional Materials

1. Kahoot Living on the Amazon

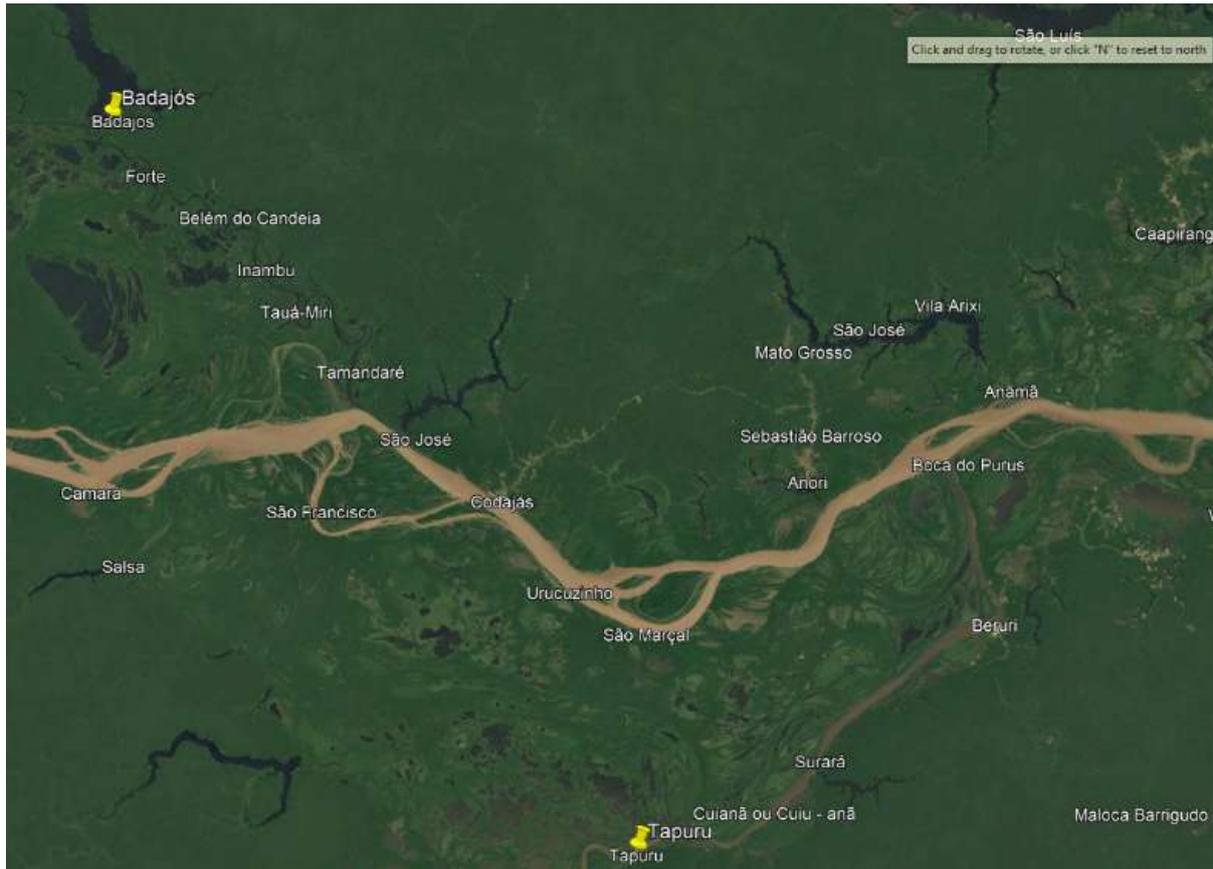
<https://create.kahoot.it/share/living-on-the-amazon/a01786f1-c1f1-4f67-9fc1-2d8b8295cbd1>

2. Vocabulary matching for possible pre-teaching

floodplain	living by a river
stranded	move someone from their home
parched	liquid in small quantities
drought	seasonally flooded land
moisture	very dried out
tributary	unable to move from a place
uproot	a river or stream flowing into a larger river
riverine	fibrous plant used for making string or rope
hemp	period when there is too little rain

3. Essay title (homework or second lesson)

Write an essay using the structure you studied today on “Living in my City”. Remember to use linking words to make your essay flow smoothly and logically.



- a. Look carefully at the two locations and the connecting rivers. The rivers Purus and Badajós are very different. Can you see any obvious difference from the map? What do you think is the reason?
- b. What route do you think Clive took? What bits do you think were most difficult or dangerous? Why?
- c. Clive travelled only during daylight hours. Why do you think this is?

Optional activity – Learning more about the Amazon’s rivers

TEACHER

Students will need to use Google Earth to zoom into the two rivers. Alternatively, this could be a whole class viewing done by the teacher to the interactive whiteboard.

Responses

a) Short answer: one is brown water (younger river, faster flowing, from the Andes, has more sediment and nutrients); the other is black water (older, slower, from the Guiana Shield, stained black, nutrient deficient). Details:

The **Rio Badajós** is a dark- or black-water river. These rivers draw their water from one of the oldest rock formations on earth, the Guiana Shield. The soil in this region has been eroded over millions of years and therefore the slow-moving water has very little sediment in it. Much of the organic matter in the river instead comes from leaf-fall from the trees, and the water is stained black by the acidic tanins in the decomposed leaves – like tea.

The **Purus river**, and the Amazon itself, are younger rivers originating in the Andes. They crash down from the mountains, moving relatively quickly, and bring huge volumes of mud and earth with them, which is what gives them their characteristic brown colour. They are faster-flowing, more nutrient-rich, and support more vegetation, animals and insects.

b) The route is the only viable one in the dry season – NE down the Purus to the river Amazon (this can be fast, unless the river level is too low), then W up the Amazon (much slower, against the current), and finally NW up the winding Badajós river, which takes a long time because it has so many bends in it and is narrow in places. The most difficult sections are the Amazon itself, because of the fast-flowing water and the dangers in crossing it at low water because of sandbanks and submerged trees; and the Badajós because in the dry season the winding channels are sometimes reduced to a trickle.

c) It is incredibly dangerous to be on the river at night because of the risk of running into partially submerged tree-trunks, sand banks or even large river boats with inadequate lighting. Also, it is possible to get lost in narrow channels, even on a wide river, and get stranded. Finally, there are river pirates, and smugglers on the river at night.

Living in the Amazon – Student

PART 1 – A journey through the Amazon

1.1 In pairs or groups, make a note of what you know about the Amazon basin. There are some ideas in the table below. Be ready to share your ideas with the class.

Location		Geography	
Size		Climate	
Language		Biodiversity	

1.2 In 2018, Clive Maguire travelled by speedboat from the village of **Tapuru** on the Purus River to the town of **Badajós** on the Rio Badajós. It took two days, covering a distance of over 300km.

1.3 In your pairs or groups:

a. Use Google Earth to find the two locations in the Amazon:

Badajós 3°25'8.75"S 62°40'42.41"W

Tapuru 4°17'27.66"S 61°48'20.74"W

b. What route do you imagine Clive took?

1.4 There is a great **biodiversity in the Amazon**.

a. Match the photos below, with the names.



- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Arara | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5 Pink dolphin | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9 Leopard | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12 Giant Otter | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Mosquito | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 Anaconda (snake) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 Salmon | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13 Nail monkey | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Caiman | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 Blue morpho butterfly | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 Crocodile | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14 Titan beetle | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Howler monkey | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8 Arapaima | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | |

b. Which of these do you think Clive saw on his trip? Decide with a partner, and then **listen to see if you were right**. (Tip: there are 3 animals in the list that don't belong in the Amazon).

 **AUDIO (4 mins)** <https://audio.com/clive-maguire/projects/1816598109648565>

1.5 Read the following information about the Amazon floodplains.



Figure 1 Amazon River in flood - NASA

High water in the Amazon Basin, measured at the Port of Manaus (photo) can be as high as 30m above sea level (amsl). At **low water**, it has been as low as 12m amsl. At this level, the Amazon River itself is usually no more than a few kilometres wide, but at high water, it can be over 100km wide across the floodplains.

Six months after his first visit to Badajós, Clive made the same journey, in the same speedboat, at the same average speed, but this time he arrived in 8 hours and covered a distance of 160km.

a. Why do you think it only took 8 hours for the second

journey? (Hint: Measure the straight-line distance).



Figure 2 Port of Manaus - Source: SGB

1.6 Now watch the DW news video about the Amazon region in 2024.

<https://www.dw.com/en/water-levels-hit-record-lows-in-amazon-region/video-70411456> 2 mins

a. What difficulties are mentioned in the video? Can you think of any other difficulties communities might face because of the low water levels?

In the video	Our ideas
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

PART 2



2.1 We are going to think about the structure of an **expository essay**. An expository essay is a piece of writing that provides a _____ overview of a subject. In an expository essay, the writer uses facts, data, and examples to illustrate or clarify a topic.

Expository essays do not show emotions or write in the first person since they are based on facts rather than personal feelings.

Expository adj, 'intended to explain or describe something'. From Latin *exponere* "set forth"

a. In pairs, think about how to structure an expository essay. What sections or paragraphs would you use, and in what order? Make notes in the table below.

Section	Content
INTRODUCTION	

b. What linking words or phrases can you use to join sections to make them flow logically? Complete the table below by putting the words in the correct category.

although	to begin with	despite
as well as	therefore	firstly
however	in addition	in spite of
because	secondly	as a result
on the other hand	in conclusion	finally

Ordering	Contrasting	Logical argument

2.2. In groups, read the cut-ups of the essay “Living in the Amazon”.

a. Put the cut-ups in order, adding appropriate linking words to make the essay flow. Ask another group if you’re not sure about a word or phrase. If you’re still not sure, ask the teacher.

b. Share your solution with the class. Your teacher will help you identify any words that are used incorrectly. Did everyone use the same words in the same position? Were you right about all the difficulties you identified? Was there anything that surprised you? Do you think the writer used an appropriate structure to present his points?

PART 3

Reflection

Use the ideas below to think about what you did and what you learned today.

Could I write an expository essay now? What new words did I learn today? Did I learn anything new about how to use linking words in an essay? Did I learn anything new about living in the Amazon?

In the exit slip the teacher gives you, write down the translation into your own language of 5 linking words and give it back to the teacher before you leave.