

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Judica's Jungle

By Heidi Ayarbe  
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*Urco Miraño is a small village in the Amazon rainforest, an area in South America that covers nine regions. In this informational text, Heidi Ayarbe discusses one girl's experiences in the village. As you read, take notes on the activities that Judica and her family take part in.*

### Waking Up

[1] Stars fade in the purple morning light. The moon kisses the jungle's canopy,<sup>1</sup> making room for the burning February sun. Urco Miraño, a little village in the Amazon, comes to life. The Amazon<sup>2</sup> is the largest river in South America — and in the world! Animals, birds, insects, and fish make a chorus of noises. *"Peep... buzz... squirsh... squirsh... splash."* Their song is accompanied by the rhythmic beat of tropical rain.

Judica wakes up to the sounds of the pigs scuffling under her cabin. She peeks out from her hammock, peering through the mosquito netting at her sister, Daisy. "Let's get the water," she whispers.

Daisy gets up, and the two of them walk to the Napo River, a tributary<sup>3</sup> of the Amazon River. The Napo flows by their cabin. Its waters swirl and dance down-stream. The river gives them water to drink, fish to eat, and a place to take baths and wash clothes. Judica and Daisy are careful to stay near the shore. They are cautious of the swift current and dangerous animals: piranhas, anacondas, and electric eels.



*"The children of Urco Miraño run for cover with plantain-leaf umbrellas."* by Cartesia is used with permission.

### Helping Out

Judica lives in a home built on stilts<sup>4</sup> to protect it from floods. She lives with her parents, grand-parents, sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts, and uncles. With 14 people in one house, there are many chores to do. Judica and Daisy take care of their little cousins when the family works in the fields. Judica also makes Yagua jewelry from seeds and fibers to sell on market day. Judica and Daisy are Yagua, a tribe in the Amazon with its own language and traditions.

1. the uppermost trees or branches of the trees in a forest
2. "The Amazon" can refer to the rainforest in South America, as well as the river.
3. a river or stream flowing into a larger river or lake
4. posts supporting a building and keeping it above the ground

- [5] The morning is cool and damp. Black clouds of hungry mosquitoes swarm the village at sunrise and sunset. They carry deadly diseases, like malaria, yellow fever, and dengue. Judica and Daisy are used to the mosquitoes, but they still get many bites. Sometimes people in the village get sick and have to go to see the shaman, the village doctor, for medicine.

After chores, Judica and Daisy play soccer, tag, or *Pase el Lobo* (a game like London Bridge) with friends. The children are happy because they are on school break. They go to school from April to December. All the children study together in the same building. They learn Spanish, math, religion, science, and geography.

## Greeting Visitors

Every day in Urco Miraño is an adventure. The children especially like to meet the boatman when he comes from Mazan, a little village four hours upriver. Mazan is where the people in Urco Miraño go to sell fish, vegetables, and the jewelry Judica makes. They also buy clothes, sugar, salt, and candy there. The children listen for the sound of the motorboat, putt-putting its way down the Napo River. Judica and Daisy slip down the muddy slope in bare feet.

"*Chum!*" shouts Judica, greeting the little boat. Judica speaks Yagua and Spanish. She says, "*Chum!*" or "*Salud!*" to say "Hello."

"Visitors," whispers Judica to Daisy. "Today we have visitors." She and Daisy wave at them when they step out of the boat.

- [10] Apu Antonio, the chief of Urco Miraño, shows the visitors around the village. Judica and Daisy follow, excited to join the group.

Urco Miraño is far from Mazan and other cities. Not many visitors come. These visitors bring interesting things: funny clothes, cameras, backpacks, journals, and photographs of their families and friends. Judica looks at the pictures of new places and people. She twists her dark wavy hair around her finger and smiles at one of the visitors.

Judica touches the freckles on the visitor's arms. She giggles. "You have so many dots!"

## Making Friends

Judica's family invites the visitors to have lunch. The house smells of damp wood and caramel-sweet bananas. Judica and her family eat fish two or three times a day: boiled fish, fried fish, fish soup, fish stew, grilled fish, and more! They also eat plantain — a kind of banana — and cassava, which is like a potato.

Lunch is the perfect time to get together with new friends. The Yagua even have a special drink that symbolizes friendship and is a big part of their parties and celebrations. Judica passes the drinking bowl to the visitors.

- [15] After lunch, the village sleeps. The sun bakes the muddy riverbanks into dry, crumbly cakes. Soon, dark clouds roll in, and thunder claps overhead. Rain pours down. Judica and her friends cut plantain leaves off the trees to use as umbrellas. *Pitter-patter, pitter-patter*, they splash and giggle, running through the puddles and mud, happy for the cool afternoon rain.

The children race the river. It takes away the boatman and visitors. “*Hasta luego!*” they shout. “Until next time!” Judica watches the boat fade into the distance. Behind it, the fiery sun dips into the water, making room for the silver moon. Today was a great adventure.

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: What is the central idea of the text?
  - A. While Judica enjoys her life in the Amazon, she wishes to experience life in a more modern city.
  - B. It's more difficult than fun to live in the Amazon, as Judica encounters many dangers in her daily life.
  - C. Judica's life in the Amazon is a balance between helping her family and playing with friends.
  - D. Judica's village in the Amazon is very unique and they often receive many visitors who want to see how they live.
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "They are cautious of the swift current and dangerous animals: piranhas, anacondas, and electric eels." (Paragraph 3)
  - B. "After chores, Judica and Daisy play soccer, tag, or Pase el Lobo (a game like London Bridge) with friends." (Paragraph 6)
  - C. "'Today we have visitors.' She and Daisy wave at them when they step out of the boat." (Paragraph 9)
  - D. "These visitors bring interesting things: funny clothes, cameras, backpacks, journals, and photographs of their families and friends." (Paragraph 11)
3. How is the text organized?
  - A. The author discusses what Judica and her family enjoy about living in the Amazon, and then what they dislike.
  - B. The author compares Judica's life in her village in the Amazon with what life is like in bigger cities outside the Amazon.
  - C. The author discusses life in general in Urco Miraño, and then focuses on Judica's personal experiences.
  - D. The author describes Judica and her family's life in the Amazon, and then describes their experiences with the visitors.
4. How does the text help readers understand the relationship between the people in Urco Miraño and the Napo River?  
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# Discussion Questions

**Directions:** Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the context of the article, how important is the surrounding environment to the people in Urco Miraño? What do you think would happen to them if people began logging near them in the Amazon or polluted their river? How is the environment important to you?
  2. In the text, the author discusses the chores that Judica and her family must complete. Why is it important for the community to work together, in order to get things done? Do you have chores that you must do at home? If so, describe them.
  3. What do you think the visitors in the text learned about the people in Urco Miraño? Why do you think it's important to learn about other cultures? Describe a time when you learned about a way of life different from your own.