



## **Exploring the Amazon: A Children's Story**

## Story Dedication

"May I have your attention please?...Information from the bridge!"

This children's book is dedicated to everyone who made this trip possible...

To the UC Honors Program: Thank you for creating this seminar and helping out financially for all of us to enjoy this life changing experience.

To Debbie: Thank you for starting the trip at UC and always looking out for us along the way. Your genuine care for our growth as students and people is unmatched.

To Jodi: Thank you for teaching us so much while also allowing us to explore and learn more in our own special ways. You are a true educator and taught us so much more than plants, animals, and history.

To Amy: Thank you for easing my worries when I lost my bag right away and for putting up with all of our shenanigans along the way.

To Cindy: Thank you for your unparalleled knowledge and wisdom of the wildlife on the Amazon. You were always willing to help out and made us feel right at home.

To Junior: Thank you for making our trip so special. Your intelligence, humor, and fun-nature made us all feel comfortable and made the experience unforgettable.

To the crew: Thank you for helping us see it all, stay safe, and, most of all, have fun. We always felt safe in your hands, and we still don't know how you spotted all those animals in the dark.

To the kitchen staff: Thank you for always filling our tummies with the most delicious coffee, food, and dessert the Amazon had to offer! The fastest way to a person's heart is through their stomach, and you all were in our hearts everyday.

To my classmates: Thank you for sharing in such an incredible experience with me. It was truly a blessing to spend 10 days with you all and grow so close. I learned so much from each and every one of you and cannot wait to see where our next adventures take us.

To my parents and family: Thank you for supporting me on all of my journeys thus far in life. You always have encouraged and supported me to go accomplish my dreams. This Amazon trip wouldn't have been possible without your support. I love you all!

To the haters: Thank you for being my motivators.

To my future children: I hope this book of adventure will educate and inspire you to explore everything life has to offer, build lifelong friendships, and go accomplish your dreams. I love you and cannot wait to read this to you.

### Travel Day: The Adventure Begins

It was a dark cold morning in the Queen City that day,  
But the only thing on our minds was "hip hip hooray."  
Our group of young learners, very eager and excited,  
Couldn't wait to see what the Amazon River provided.  
Our bags were all packed and ready for flight,  
We boarded the plane, and flew like a kite.  
Over corn fields, rivers, lakes and big cities,  
The plane traveled on to a land that was pretty.  
The Amazon River region is what lied in store,  
And all the adventures and things to explore.  
When the plane finally landed, we all filed out,  
The fun was beginning, to that, there's no doubt.  
We gathered our luggage, except for one student,  
Miguel had no bag, he said "oh well, we'll get through it."  
We traveled through the muggy, dense streets of Manaus,  
And arrived to the boat that would be our new house.  
Despite the excitement, it was time for a nap,  
So we climbed into PJs and put on our nightcaps.



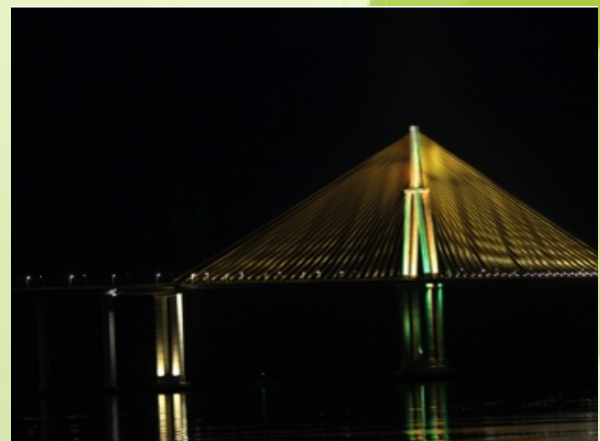
We waited for Junior to pick us up at the airport in Manaus, eager to get our trip started.



We took a "selfie" on the plane ride.



This is the boat ("Iracema") we stayed on for most of the trip. It was named after Junior's aunt.



This is the bridge in Manaus that crosses the Amazon River. It is lit up and very beautiful at night.





Look! A spider monkey!



Miguel caught a red-bellied piranha.



Cantegalo pet the sloth after bringing the furry creature down from the tree.



Radhika held a caiman.



## Day 1

The next day arrived, and the opera music blared,  
La Traviata was our alarm clock; yes at first it was weird.

We all had our coffee and we boarded canoes,  
But we weren't really sure what exactly to do!

We would all be surprised and in no way dismayed,  
On what we would see throughout that first day!

It started with a journey through the flooded canopies,  
We saw birds, and bug, and even spider monkeys!

By the time midday hit, we were back on the boat,  
Eating lunch when a sound came out of the Junior's throat!

"May I have your attention please", he would say,  
"Information from the bridge!" What was next for that day?

He said we would hunt for some ferocious fish,  
The red belly piranha would be our main dish!

So we headed into the flooded forest once more,  
To see how many fish we could score!

24 fish later we headed back to the ship,  
what a great start to a wonderful trip!

But to our surprise, day one wasn't done,  
We all ate and got ready for our first night run!

Junior set out for a sloth to find,  
When one was spotted, a Cantegalo climbed!

He brought down the sloth for everyone to see,  
The beautiful creature clung to him like a tree!

Once we set the sloth free to swim and to float,  
We heard Shivam wildly say, "There's a caiman in the boat."

Our captain had quickly grabbed it from the river,  
We all held the small reptile and tried not to quiver.

Finally after that, day one was completed.  
We all were tired, and to bed we retreated.

## Day 2

Day two started out in the typical way,  
Opera and coffee as the boat sat and swayed.  
We headed out in the flooded trees to hear the bird's sounds,  
And along the way, you'll never guess what we found!  
A giant water lily, was blocking our path,  
We picked it up and tried to avoid its thorny wrath.  
After the first adventure, and some delicious food,  
We stopped in our first village, and Nirguna was like, "This is pretty  
awesome dude."

Right away, we climbed an acai tree,  
And then John picked up one of the village piggies.  
All of the piglet's brothers and sisters chased him down,  
They were squealing and oinking til their brother was safe on the  
ground.

After we explored the village and had our fill,  
We climbed into the canoes for a really big thrill.  
We traveled through an enchanted canal surrounded by tree limbs,  
And on the other side was a beautiful lake where we could swim.  
We all floated around in this enchanted place,  
It was so surreal and filled with grace.  
The nighttime was filled with dominoes and fun,  
And then it was time for bed; Day two is done!





Mama pig squealed at John to bring her baby back.



Taylor and Cameron held the giant, thorny water lily.



We traveled through the narrow canal on our way to the enchanted lake.



Shivam, Jodi, Eric, and Kevin swam in the black water of the Enchanted Lake.





Nirguna kicked the ball away to prevent our opponents from scoring.



Caroline splashed and played with the children of the village to cool off.



We watched from our canoes as the sunset over the mirror-like water of the beautiful river.



Kevin curled up in a hammock in preparation to sleep underneath the starlit Amazon sky.



### Day 3

Day three arrived, and we traveled upstream,  
This trip is so awesome; This must be a dream!  
We stopped in another village to gain some more culture,  
We played them in soccer, they picked us apart like vultures.  
After the crushing defeat, we all went for a dip,  
The river refreshed us, then we continued the trip.  
We went for a hike and then sat and stared at the skies,  
We watched the sunset and the big moon rise!  
After the beautiful sites and sounds of day three,  
We had a barbecue under the forest canopy.  
There was one extra surprise left for that night,  
We got to sleep out in hammocks underneath the starlight.

### Day 4

We awoke on day four to a much different sound,  
Junior was yelling about a snake he had found!  
We exploded out of our hammocks to see the slithering creature,  
Unfortunately for us, it had a camouflage feature.  
After that very unique wake up call,  
We traveled up a stream to a small waterfall.  
Most of the day was spent splashing and swimming,  
And we returned to the boat as the rain was beginning.  
We saw our first downpour; the rain was refreshing,  
We all shared some laughs; our group sure was meshing!  
We were growing so close, in such a short time,  
If we were all lines in a poem, then surely we'd rhyme.  
The day pushed on and it was back to canoes,  
This time we found a snake in our view.  
A garden boa clung to a small tree branch,  
It was exciting to hold him, and we all had a chance.  
Finally after all the events of day four,  
We went back to the boat and tried not to snore (too loudly).





We approached our first waterfall of the trip.



Shivam, Nirguna, and Kevin played on the rocks of the waterfall.



Juliette held the garden boa. She knew how to tame the wild creature.



Junior smiled as he played with the snake.





Eric posed for a picture in the hull of a ship.



Eric, Christa, Jenna, Junior, and Taylor laughed as they swam with the pink dolphins.



The wide-eyed night monkeys cuddled together as they peeked out of their hole to see us.



Tyler somehow cracked a smile as the pink-toed tarantula crawled on his head.



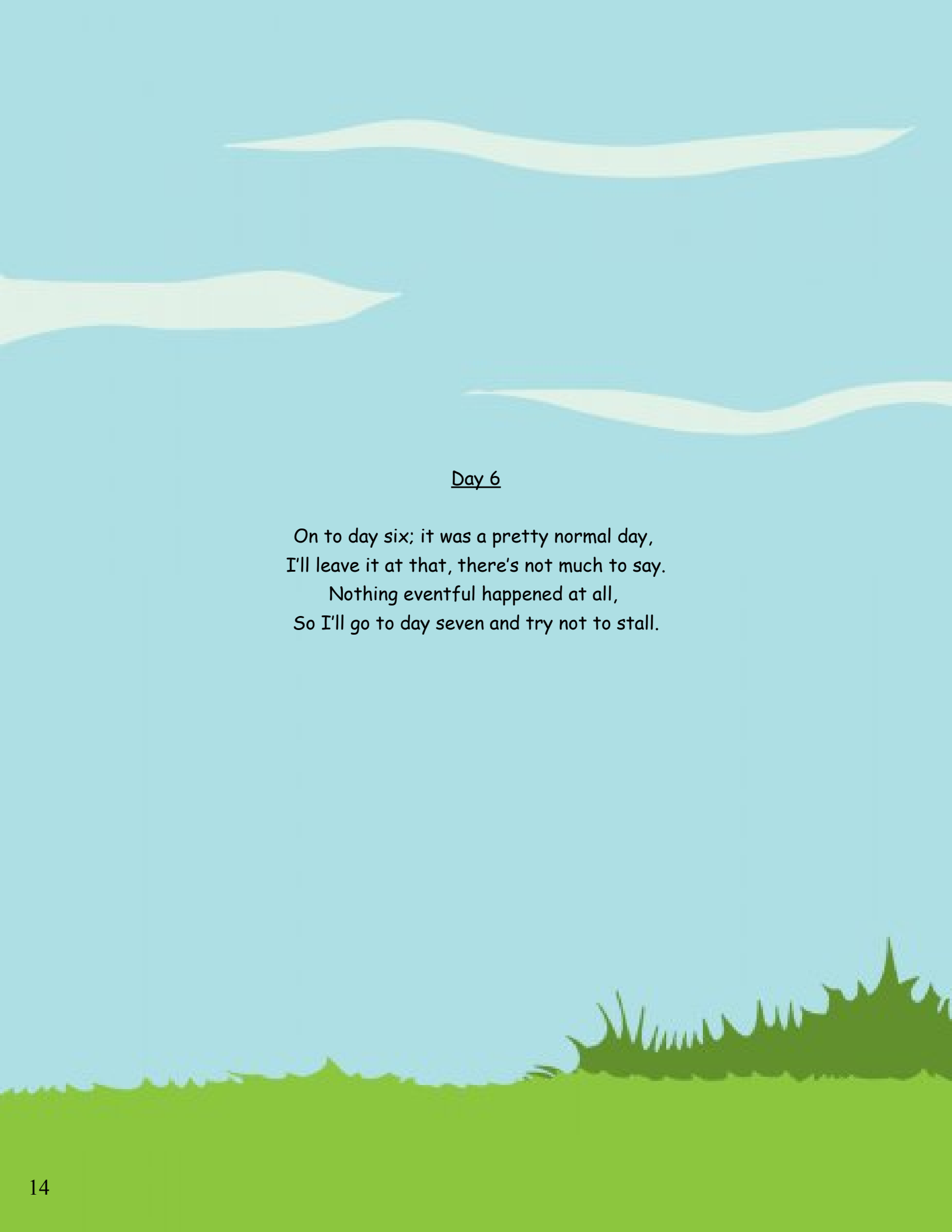
## Day 5

Day five began with a trip to the shipyard,  
We saw where our boat was built to be sturdy and hard.

After we explored, it was time for a swim,  
Though this time was special: it was with pink dolphins.  
We all took our turns with the friendly water mammals,  
They truly were some of the most beautiful animals.

Later that day, we went to Junior's hotel,  
We saw night monkeys and tarantulas as well!  
The big fuzzy creatures crawled on our faces and arms,  
Despite looking scary, they would do us no harm.

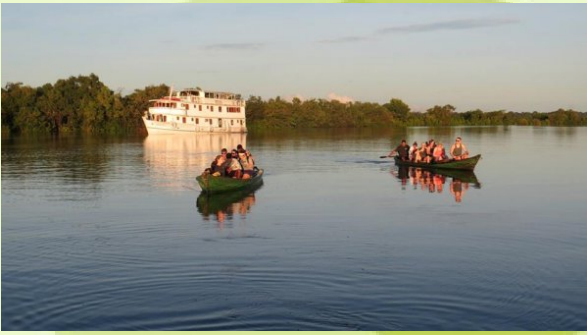
After we ended our arachnid exploring,  
We boarded the ship to do some more snoring.



### Day 6

On to day six; it was a pretty normal day,  
I'll leave it at that, there's not much to say.

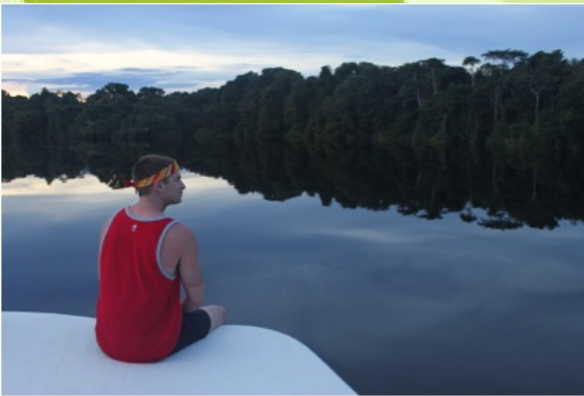
Nothing eventful happened at all,  
So I'll go to day seven and try not to stall.



We traveled away from Iracema in our canoes for a morning adventure.



Stephanie and Austin paddle boarded around the Rio Negro on a calm afternoon.



John gazed out at the surreal sights of the river and rain forest.



The canoes traveled upstream to explore.





We all lounged and laughed on the top deck.



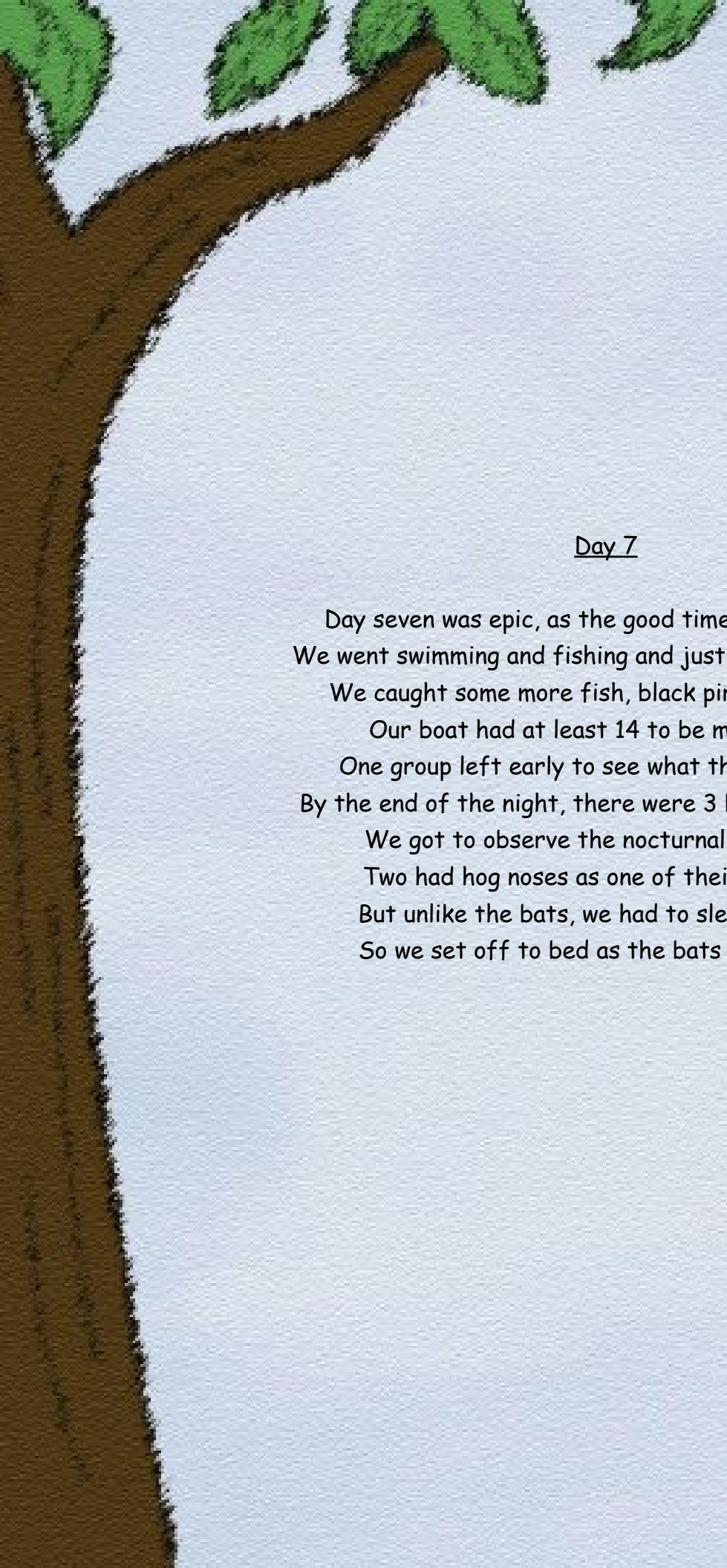
Irailton showed us the black piranha he caught while fishing.



Junior showed us the wings and body of a hog-nosed bat.



Junior held a small owl that got caught in the bat net.



### Day 7

Day seven was epic, as the good times kept moving,  
We went swimming and fishing and just kept on grooving.  
We caught some more fish, black piranhas in fact,  
Our boat had at least 14 to be more exact.  
One group left early to see what they could get,  
By the end of the night, there were 3 bats in their net.  
We got to observe the nocturnal creatures,  
Two had hog noses as one of their features.  
But unlike the bats, we had to sleep at night,  
So we set off to bed as the bats took flight.

### Day 8

Day eight arrived: to the canoes one last time,  
It was coming to an end, this felt like a crime.  
But enough with the sad thoughts, let's see what's in store,  
We went out in the early morning and heard a faint roar.  
The howler monkeys were out, making quite the racket,  
We weaved through dense foliage to see if we could track it.  
But to no avail, it kept on retreating,  
And all we could hear was its howl of greeting.  
So back to the boat, it was time to set sail,  
Back to Manaus, the end of our trail.  
But along the way back, we all got to swim,  
We played chicken on paddle boats, and watched Cantegalo win!  
When night fell, to the top deck we traveled,  
We had a barbecue and danced as our worries unraveled.  
Even though it would be our last night on the ship,  
We were happy with all we had done on the trip.  
So for one last night, we tried to get some shut eye,  
Before the next day filled with many goodbyes.





We watched the sunrise.



Cantegalo and Junior defeated John and Nirguna in the chicken paddle board championship!



Junior was terrified when Austin tried to captain the boat.



The crew posed for a picture together during the evening of barbecuing and dancing.





The group took their last photos aboard Iracema.



Junior and Miguel shared an embrace and picture before departing from the boat.



Junior reunited with his adorable daughter Cintia in Manaus.



We snapped another group photo outside of the opera house in Manaus.



## Day 9

Day 9 came, it was all too quick,  
We went to the market and bought flags and hammocks.  
We traveled to the opera house, a great site to see,  
And then we ate at the steakhouse; it was very yummy!  
We then boarded the boat for one last cruise on the river,  
The wedding of the water, then we were to be delivered.  
We took pictures and salvaged our last moments aboard,  
The thought that "it's almost over" cut like a sword.  
But we had one last leg of the life-changing trip,  
We headed to Junior's house once we got off the ship.  
We ate our last meal, and shared some more laughs,  
We thanked Junior for everything; we were truly blessed.  
Unfortunately after that, we got on the bus,  
Back to the airport, that was it for us.

In Closing...

My Final Remarks to the Class: Muito Obrigado

Even though it was sad to leave, make sure to remember,  
Keep the learning and fire alive like an ember.  
The journey's not about the pictures we take,  
the animals we hold, or the food on our plates!  
It's about all the memories and friendships we share,  
The relationships we build and how we show that we care!  
We could not have asked for 10 better days,  
We've affected our lives in so many ways.  
Because there was no group that could make this trip better,  
And I guess that is why I am writing this letter.  
It's a story, a poem, and memory the same,  
And something to look onto with pride and not shame.  
Muito obrigado, is really the only thing to say,  
Thank you for everything we learned from those days.  
Thank you to Jodi and Debbie for helping us learn,  
Thank you to all of you, and now it's our turn.  
Let's keep these memories and stories alive for our kids,  
It's important to teach them all the things that we did.  
But more importantly, never forget.  
There's nothing about this trip that we should regret.  
The friends, the good times, the endless adventures,  
These are the things we'll talk about when we have dentures.  
Live your life to the fullest and enjoy all you've got,  
You only get one chance, so take your best shot.

The End







## **Exploring the Amazon: A Children's Story**

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I am a University Honors Student at the University of Cincinnati. This book is a story of the adventures of the 2014 Exploring the Amazon honors seminar participants. I made this book as a means for myself and the other students to share the tales of exploration, friendship, and fun with our future children.

### **Acknowledgment**

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