



## **Jungle Jitters**

Lisa Dalrymple

Reading level: 3.9

978-1-4598-1349-6 PB

### **Book Summary**

Even though he's secretly terrified of deep water, and all the scary things that swim below, Tate wants to shake his boring reputation, and he agrees to travel with his class up the Amazon River to help build a village school. He has his fingers and toes crossed that he won't see any giant snakes or hungry piranhas.

But there are even scarier things than anacondas lurking in the jungles of South America, and Tate soon learns of the legend of El Tunchi, a vengeful spirit that terrorizes those who harm the rainforest. When creepy things start happening and Tate keeps hearing El Tunchi's haunting whistle, he's sure the group must have angered someone. Or something. He and his friends need to figure out a way to make amends and get out of the jungle alive.

### **Author Biography**

**Lisa Dalrymple** is the author of the picture books *A Moose Goes A-Mumming* and *Skink on the Brink*, winner of the 2014 Crystal Kite Award. She has always been passionate about writing and traveling. While in Peru, Lisa hiked the Andes, swam in the Amazon River and even went piranha fishing. She lives in Fergus, Ontario, with her husband and their three children.

**Connecting to the Text*****Character and Novel Study***

To engage students with the characters and themes in *Jungle Fitters*, use the following as large group discussion topics, individual novel study or paragraph-writing exercises:

1. Ethan has been called “Tate” since the third grade. It stuck because he’s boring, like a potato. In chapter 1, he says, “I was determined to take on anything the Amazon could throw at me. No one would ever call me boring again.” Reflect on this. Was he successful?
  - ♦ Find examples of Tate being “not super adventurous” (boring, playing it safe), and where he takes on a challenge (small or large).
  - ♦ How does Tate grow as a person because of his experience on the school trip? What experiences contributed to this? Consider the pre-trip work too (fundraising, etc.).
2. Tate and Dre have been buddies a long time. Tate seems to be nicer to Dre than Dre is to him. If you could choose, which of the two would you want for a buddy, and why?
3. Imagine Tate and Dre are back at school. Someone calls Ethan “Tate,” and Dre steps in. Dre says, “Actually, he doesn’t go by Tate anymore, and here’s why...” What would Dre say, and how would Tate respond?

***The Writer’s Craft***

1. Writers use literary devices to make our reading experience fun and engaging. One example is alliteration, where the first letter or sound of a word is repeated in sentences or phrases. Ask students to find examples of alliteration in the novel. They may discover:  
*Jaguar Jungle, Headless Horace, creatures croaked, night noises, bratty birds.*
2. Metaphors and similes connect ideas, giving us images that expand our understanding of scenes and characters. Review the examples below, and invite students to find more. What images are being created, and how do they help us understand the scene?
  - ch. 6 Oscar’s arms and neck were a moving carpet of bugs... Talk about your skin crawling!
  - ch. 7 [The hoatzins] were angry, but they didn’t look like dinosaurs—more like punk pheasants with scraggly mohawks, blue faces and piercing red eyes.
  - ch. 12 Swimming in the Amazon? Plunging into a watery realm of nightmares and monsters? Um, no, thank you!
3. Another literary device is personification, where human characteristics are given to non-human things. Discuss the examples below. Can you see how personification suggests that the non-human things have intention? Ask students to find other examples in the novel.
  - ch. 7 Vines grasped at the sides of our boat. Grasses and shrubs leaned in toward us.
  - ch. 8 I heard the roar of rain approaching through the jungle. It rushed in over the trees and raced toward our building.

**Theme - Bullying**

Dre often makes fun of and embarrasses Tate in front of friends and online. Dre is “always trying to make [Tate] look like a loser” (ch. 12). Ask students to consider this in the context of bullying.

According to [erasebullying.ca](http://erasebullying.ca), bullying is a pattern of unwelcome or aggressive behavior, often with the goal of making others uncomfortable, scared or hurt.

- There are four kinds of bullying: physical, verbal, social and emotional, and cyber-bullying. Do you think Dre has bullied Tate? Which form(s) of bullying were used?
- Dre says he’s joking. Is it ever okay to post photos and videos of someone online without getting their permission? What rules exist in your school about this?
- What could Tate do to get Dre to stop posting embarrassing videos of him online?

**Connecting to the Curriculum**

**Language Arts**

Many Amazon animals are mentioned in *Jungle Fitters*, including some that really frighten Tate! Ask students to identify one that interests them (tree frog, monkey, toucan, tarantula, anaconda, sloth, etc.), and do some research. Create word art images that note some of the animal’s characteristics. What’s interesting about the animal you chose?

To create an image like below, type “free word art generator” into any search engine.



**Art**

As an art project, ask students to convey the magnificent colors and textures of the Amazon jungle and its plants and animals. What style or medium suits the image? Invite students to choose a scene to illustrate. Ideas to get students started:

- ch. 4 On the grass below the walkway, there was a flash of yellow and blue as a toucan lifted its bill.
- ch. 5 [In the ceiba tree], hundreds of [bat] wings folded and refolded.
- ch. 6 Two canoes bobbed in a field of aquatic weeds. They were so thick that I couldn’t tell where the land ended and the water began.
- ch. 11 Girls in the jungle stay away from the water at night. The river’s full of pink dolphins. They’re beautiful, but some people say one of them is an evil trickster.

**Geography**

- Tate, Dre and Noelle joined their teacher on a trip to a Yagua village along the Amazon river basin in Peru. They went there to help set up a library in the village. Invite students to learn more about this region by exploring the topics below.
  - The Amazon River is one of the longest in the world. Draw a map of South America, including its nations and sovereign states. Mark the path of the Amazon from the Atlantic Ocean to Iquitos City and beyond.
  - How does the Amazon compare with other rivers, like the Nile or Mississippi? (length, volume of water and size of its basin)
  - What are two interesting things about Iquitos City, where Tate got into the boat to travel to the Yagua village?
  - If you were along for the adventure, what would be your top three things to see and do, and why? What things did Tate experience that you'd like to (or not)?
- Challenge students to research three Yagua words. For example, the Yagua word for parrot is *koochíy*, the word for snake is *koodíy*, and their traditional dance is called *atunas*.

**Connecting to the Wider World—Topics for Discussion**

- The Amazon basin covers nearly three million square miles. It contains the largest tropical rainforest in the world, and its animal and plant species are highly diverse. Ask students to research and define the following terms, making connections to the novel.
 

Biodiversity     *Name five plants and animals that Tate and his friends discovered.*

Deforestation     *What does the spirit of El Tunchi warn those who visit the jungle of?*

Bio-piracy     *Think of plant and animal species that could be stolen from the rainforest.*
- Throughout history, indigenous peoples have experienced colonization and exploitation of their natural resources. This leads to loss of culture (language, religion/faith, dress, customs, etc.). Explore this theme in the context of *Jungle Fitters*. What are pros and cons of bringing a school and tourist industry to the Yagua village?
  - Imagine you are a Yagua elder. How might you feel about this?
  - Mrs. Gallagher's husband designed the school. How might he feel about it?

**Web Resources**

[www.worldwildlife.org/places/amazon](http://www.worldwildlife.org/places/amazon)  
[www.go2peru.com/peru\\_guide/iquitos/photo\\_yagua\\_tribe.htm](http://www.go2peru.com/peru_guide/iquitos/photo_yagua_tribe.htm)  
[www.pbs.org/journeyintoamazonia/teacher.html](http://www.pbs.org/journeyintoamazonia/teacher.html)  
[www.erasebullying.ca](http://www.erasebullying.ca)