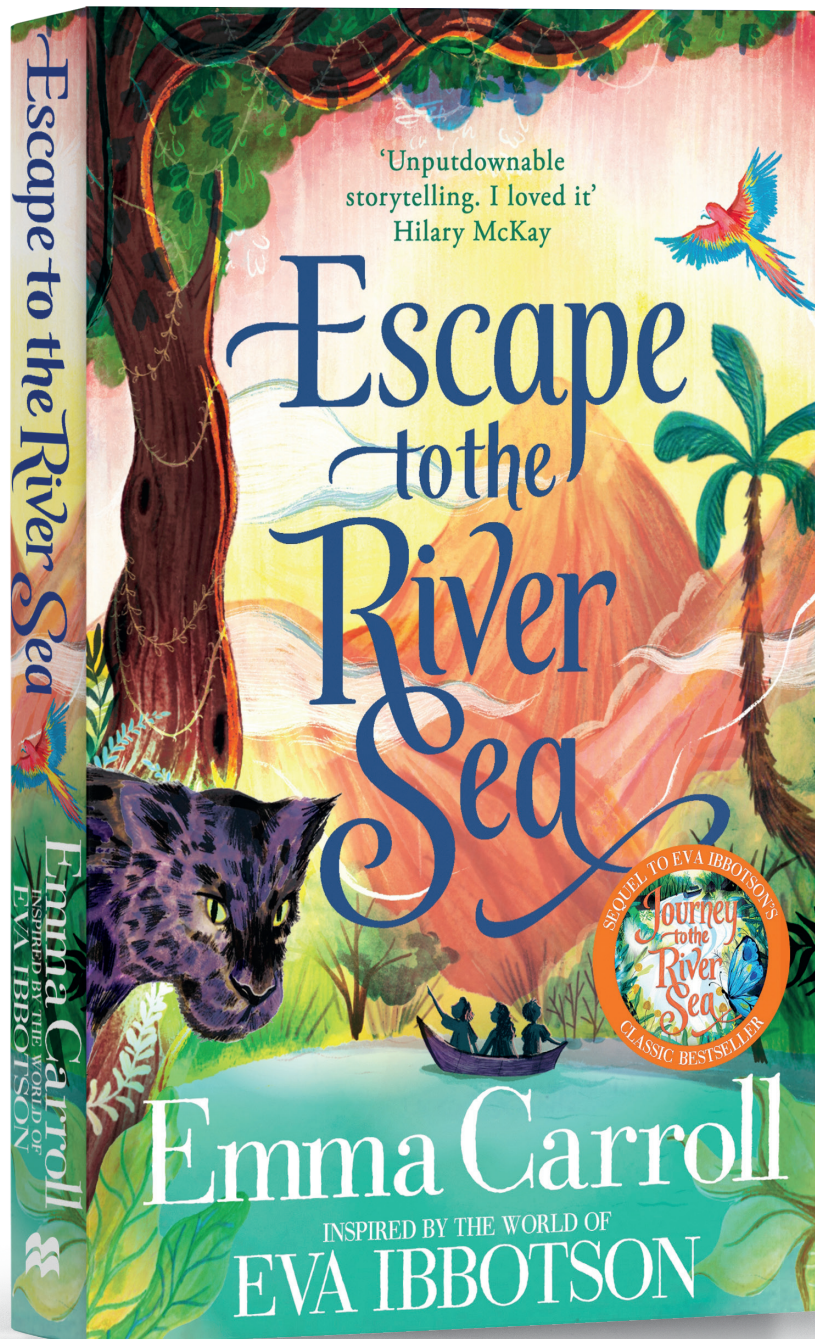


Escape to the River Sea

Emma Carroll

Cover illustrations by
Katie Hickey




MACMILLAN
Children's Books

Illustrations © Katie Hickey 2022

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NOTES & ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

Read for Themes: ✓ World War II ✓ Amazon Rainforest ✓ Travel ✓ Family ✓ Cryptozoology
Subject Checklist: ✓ Reading ✓ Writing ✓ PSHE ✓ History ✓ Geography ✓ Art ✓ Drama

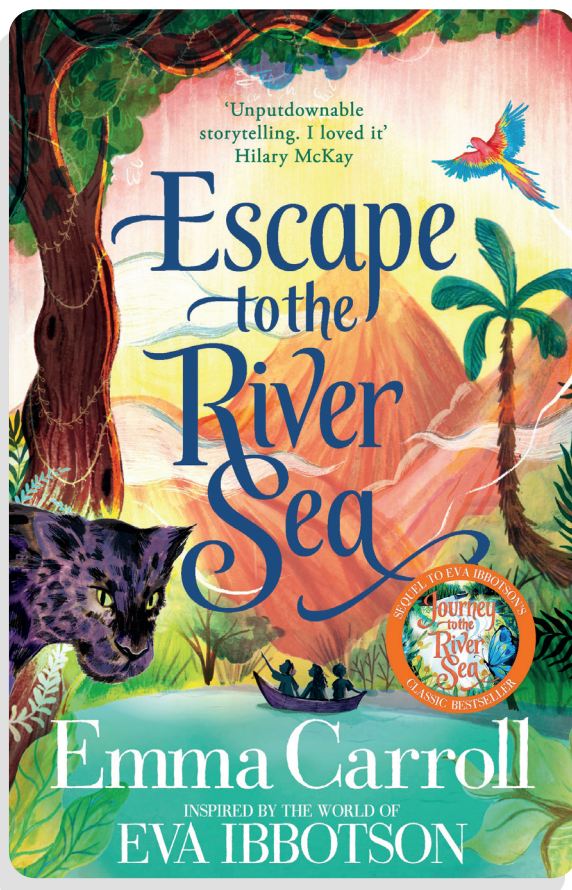
These activities have been created to prompt discussions around themes in *Escape to the River Sea* by Emma Carroll – encouraging students to develop their reading comprehension, inference, imagination and writing skills, all while embarking on an exciting adventure up the Amazon River ...

PADDLING THE RIVER

In 1946, Rosa Sweetman, a young Kindertransport girl, is longing for her family to claim her. The war in Europe is over and she is the only child left at Westwood, a rambling country estate in the north of England, where she'd taken refuge seven years earlier.

The arrival of a friend of the family, Yara Fielding, starts an adventure that will take Rosa deep into the lush beauty of the Amazon rainforest in search of jaguars, ancient giant sloths and somewhere to belong. What she finds is Yara's lively, welcoming family on the banks of the river and, together, they face a danger greater than she could ever have imagined.

*Featuring places and characters known and loved by fans of *Journey to the River Sea* (including, among others, Maia, Finn, Miss Minton and Clovis) this spectacular new chapter in the story tells of the next generation and the growing threats to the Amazon rainforest that continue to this day.*



Before reading, take a few moments to look over the cover of *Escape to the River Sea*, illustrated by Katie Hickey. Make some predictions:

- What does the title make you think about? What sort of story do you predict this will be? Have you heard of a book with a very similar title – *Journey to the River Sea* by Eva Ibbotson? How do you think the two books are related?
- What can you see on the cover? What do the different images suggest about the story's setting?
- What is the mood or atmosphere of the setting?



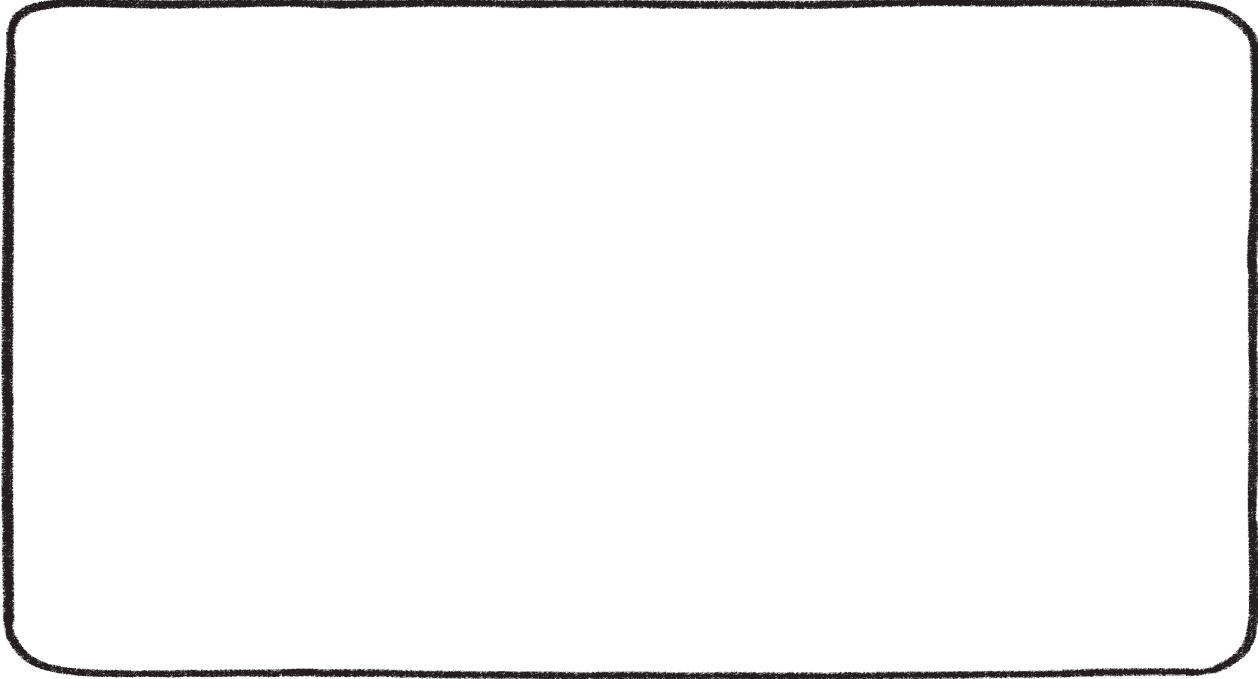
There are three children in the boat on the river. What are they doing there? Where are they going? Consider the thoughts and feelings of the children. In three speech bubble templates, write what you think the interior monologues of each character might be. This means, write down what you think the characters might be thinking and feeling here. Are they excited or frightened? What can they see? What are they looking for?



JUNGLE CHALLENGE

READING, GEOGRAPHY, ART

As you read page 58–59 when Rosa sees the jungle for the first time, underline any key words or phrases that stand out to you. Then, **draw** the scene as she sees it.



Less than a mile out of port, the jungle began. It was the bird calls Rosa noticed first: strange warbling sounds, whistles, a cry like a fox. The only birds visible were the vultures, who circled high above the treetops, or else sat hunched like old fishermen at the water's edge. The trees themselves were the tallest she'd ever seen, and weren't the luscious palms she'd imagined, but thin and spindly, only sprouting leaves above the forest canopy.

Everything below it was a dense tangle of green.

It took a bit of getting used to, all this jungle. So did the heat. The air was thick, and when the sun came out from the clouds, Rosa could almost feel her skin steaming. In one of Lady Prue's horrid pinafores, she really would have cooked alive.— Page 58–59

VOCAB CHECK:

Define 'port', 'warbling', 'vultures', 'luscious', 'spindly', 'canopy' and 'dense'.

QUESTION:

How does the author use Rosa's senses to help readers imagine the setting?

DID YOU KNOW:

Rosa and Yara went on a long journey from Liverpool to Lisbon then across the Atlantic Ocean to Belém in Brazil and up the Amazon River to Manaus. Find these places in an atlas and trace their journey with your finger. Read on to page 60 to find out why the Amazon is called "The River Sea".

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Escape to the River Sea is set in real places along the Amazon River. Create a modern-day travel brochure, encouraging people to visit the area. Be sure to include descriptions of the setting and wildlife as well as the culture (people, food, things to see and do)
- As the boat approaches Manaus, they come to “The Wedding of the Waters.” Find out what this is and why it happens. Why does Rosa compare this natural phenomenon to a chocolate cake? (Page 63)

CRYPTOZOOLOGY!

READING, SCIENCE, FOLKLORE, WRITING

Yara is searching for the legendary Giant Sloth – but she’s not the only one. Her rival, Klaus Wiesman, is on the trail of this amazing beast too. Yara will have to work fast if she is going to be the one to go down in history known for the discovery of the Mapinguary. Read page 53-54 when Rosa learns more about this incredible monster.

CHARACTERISTICS REPORTED BY INDEPENDENT EYEWITNESSES

Reddish brown matted fur

Rounded head

Powerful forearms

Huge claws

Over seven feet tall

Makes roaring sound

Hole/scent gland in stomach?

Note: spelling can be ‘Mapinguary’ or ‘Mapinguari’

Tucked in the back of the book was a list of numbers that might’ve been coordinates or measurements – the paper was so smeared with dirt it was hard to tell. And then a map of a huge area north-west of Manaus, showing hundreds of tiny rivers like veins.

‘Wow!’ Rosa whispered, flicking back through the pages. ‘Wow!’

It was clear, from Mr Taverner’s notes, that he was convinced the Giant Sloth and this creature called the Mapinguary were the same thing, and still existed.

He'd spoken to actual eyewitnesses, who'd given him descriptions:

'We saw it late at night. It came right up to the campfire, making a terrible, screaming sound. It wasn't afraid of us or of the fire.'

And another one:

'The creature charged at me through the trees. I saw it coming for me — huge, like a giant ape — but terror made me sick and I fainted away.'

On the next page were map coordinates for a group of mountain caves, located deep in the rainforest: an area where most of the Giant Sloth 'sightings' had taken place.

In amongst the scrawled writing were heavily underlined words, like clear footprints! and reliable witness! Mr Taverner's excitement leapt off every page.

The idea of the Giant Sloth thrilled Rosa: it scared her too. What Yara was trying to do was going to be dangerous: the creature sounded terrifying. Yet if Yara could prove the existence of an extinct animal she'd be world famous. Her name would be on book covers. She'd have achieved something her own grandfather, and his rival Klaus Wiesman, hadn't. It was an incredible idea. Rosa felt proud and awed, and suddenly optimistic. If something as long-lost as the Giant Sloth could be found, then there was hope for finding her mother and Liesel.



DID YOU KNOW:

Cryptozoologists are people who study unknown, legendary, or extinct animals whose present existence is disputed or unproven. These animals, known as cryptids, include creatures from folklore or whom people have claimed to have seen but their evidence is unreliable: the Loch Ness Monster, Big Foot, Yeti, Sasquatch and the Giant Sloth. In *Escape to the River Sea*, some people think stories of the Giant Sloth are told to children to stop them from going into the jungle alone.

Have you ever been told a story to keep you safe?

CRYPTID FACT FILE:

Imagine you are a cryptozoologist.

Create a fact file about a cryptid (an animal studied by cryptozoologists).
Include its appearance, habitat, possible sightings and other interesting facts.

Name:

Habitat

Description:

Picture:

Sightings:

Other interesting facts:

MEMORIES OF WAR

READING, HISTORY, ART, DRAMA, WRITING



Rosa first came to England as a Kindertransport child. Her parents wanted to keep her safe from the war that was raging across Europe. Nazis were doing terrible things to innocent people. When Rosa, Vita, Enzo and Orinti are trapped in the cave, they discover the truth about Professor Wiesmen and Rosa's memories of the war come flooding back. Read pages 205-210.

From:

She glared at the suitcase. 'I'm going to have a look inside.'

'Do it,' Vita urged. 'See if it tells us anything.'

To:

'We should move on,' Orinti warned, holding up the lantern to show them the spluttering flame. 'The light won't last.'

The uniform went back into the suitcase, but Rosa kept the papers.

'Evidence,' she said, stuffing them in the waistband of her trousers, 'that we found our monster.'



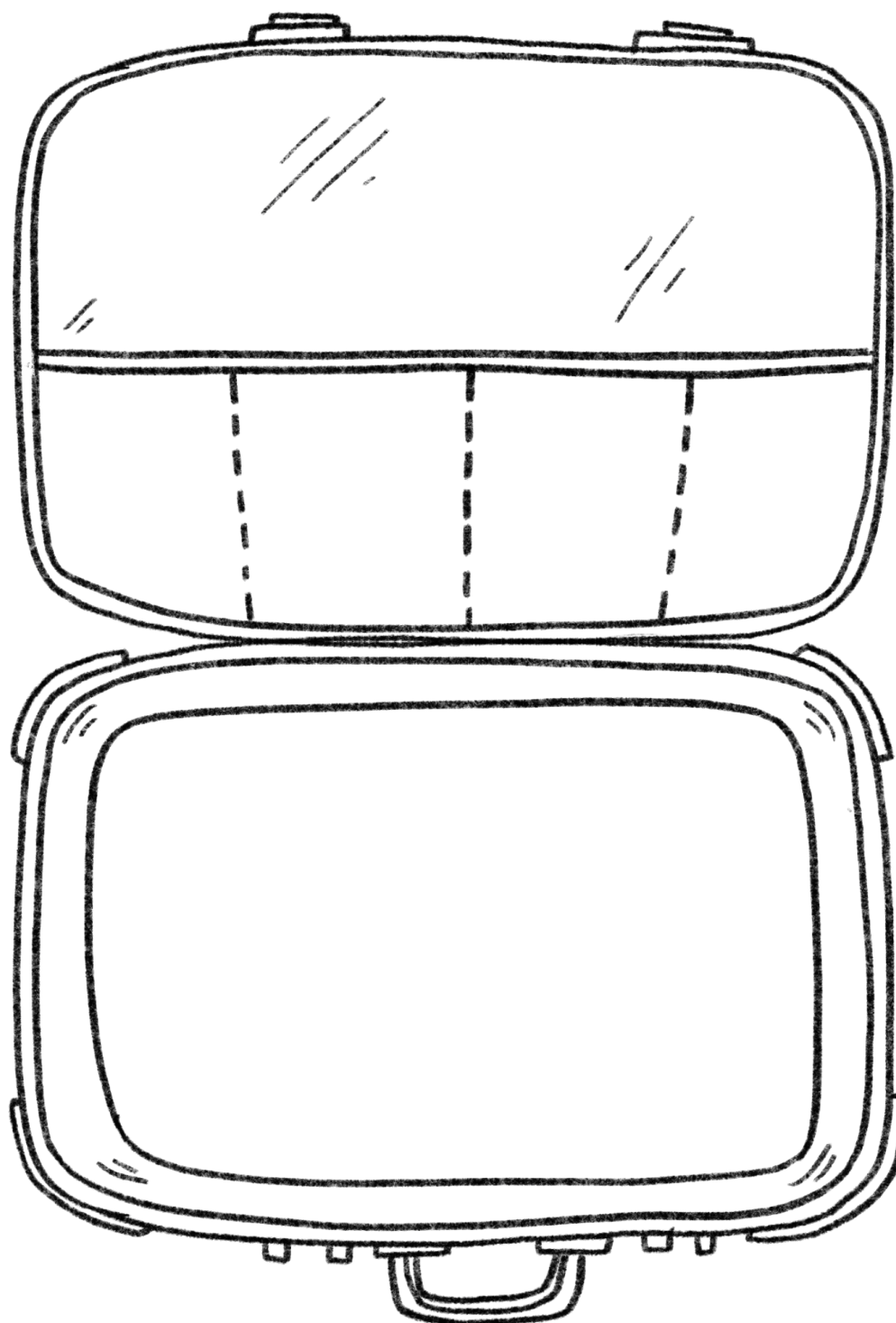
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Why did Rosa suspect the passport wasn't genuine? Why would someone have a fake passport?
- What are two possible reasons why Professor Wiesman is in Brazil?
- Why do Professor Weisman's boots trigger Rosa's memories?
- If Yara knows that the real Professor Wiesman is dead, why did she tell everyone she was looking for the Giant Sloth? What could her involvement be with these people?
- Rosa calls Professor Wiesman a "monster." Do you agree?



ACTIVITY IDEA:

The children discover a suitcase that provides them with clues about Professor Wiesman's true identity. Fill a suitcase with a selection of items and have a friend try to guess who the suitcase might belong to. If you don't have a suitcase, you could draw the items in the outline of a suitcase below.



RESEARCH CHALLENGE:

Rosa lived in Vienna, Austria with her English mother and Jewish Austrian father. Find out about Kristallnacht in Vienna in November 1938. Write a newspaper report about what happened.

[illegible]