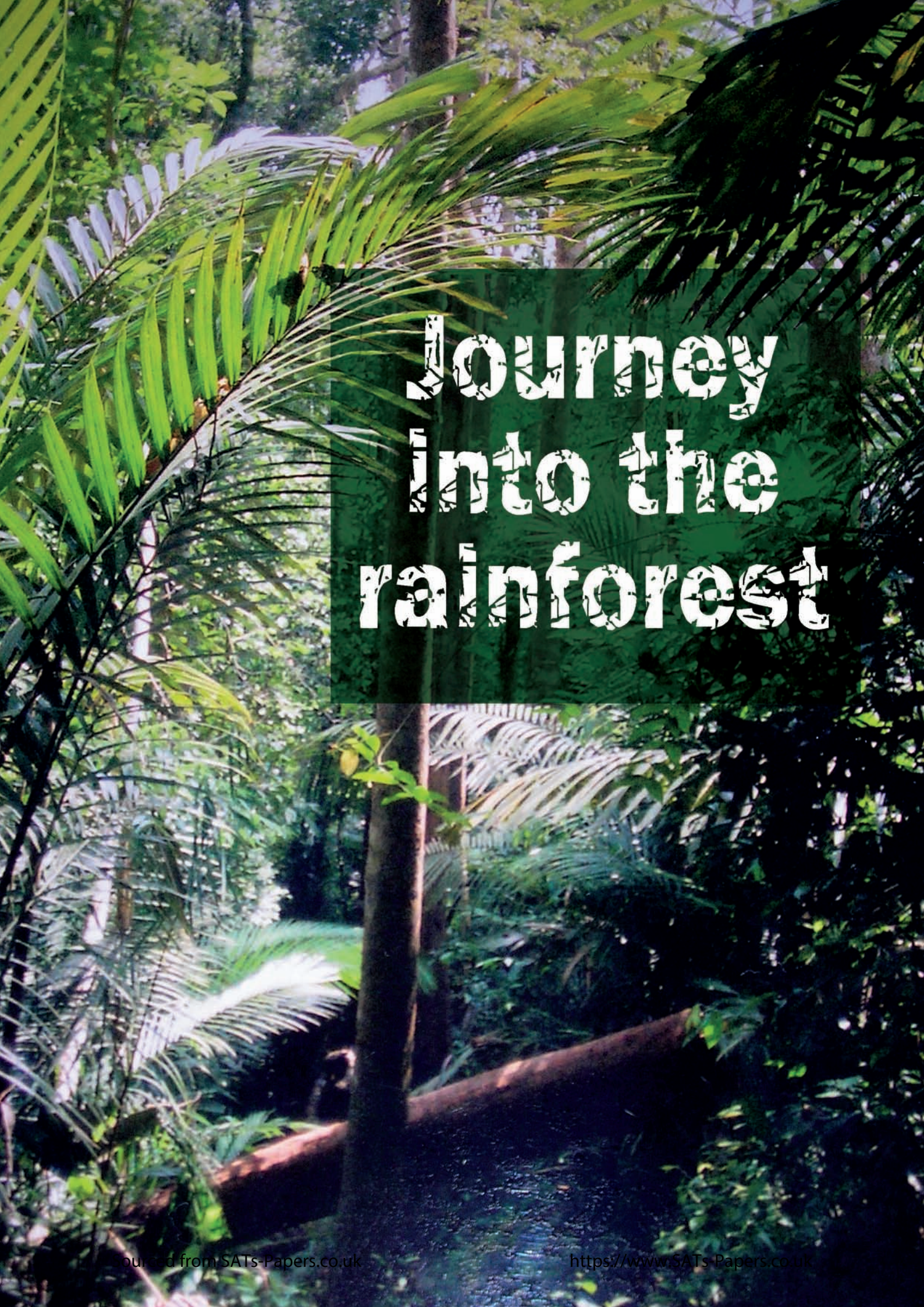




Journey into the rainforest

In this part of the reading booklet, you are going to read a story about a boy called Miguel who lives in the Philippines, a country in south-east Asia.

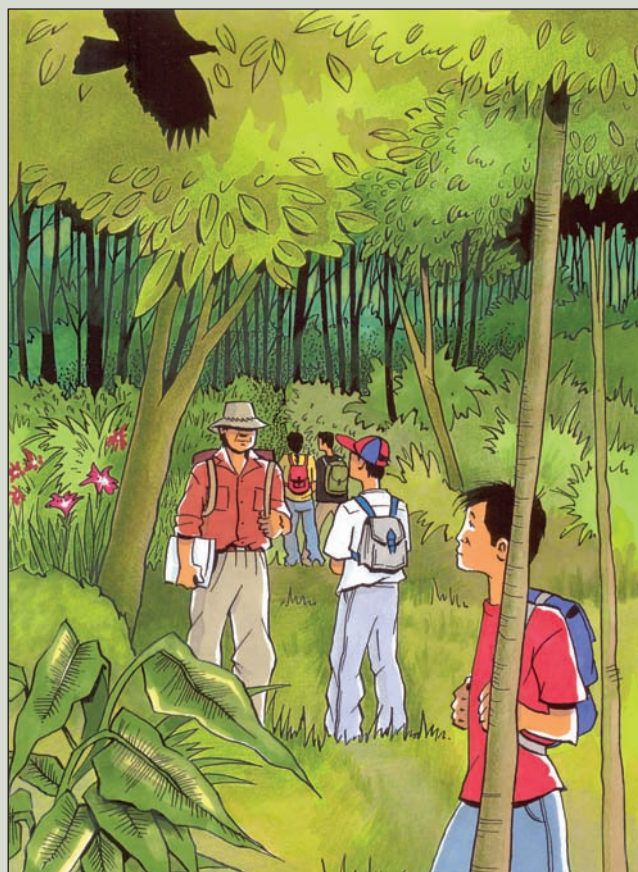
The Eagle's Shadow

Once, when I was twelve years old, our teacher, Mr Santos, took four of us for a two-day trek into the forest. I was the youngest of the group.

As we walked into the forest there was an eagle gliding above the tree tops. His shadow moved across the trees and across us as well.

When the shadow passed over me, I felt as though the bird himself had touched me. I crouched down, even though he was so high, and then I looked round quickly to see if the others had noticed.

We walked on and I knew that I was the only one who was not happy. The forest was full of strange clickings, rustlings and the sudden screeches of forest animals. The towering trees and tangled undergrowth made me feel small and scared. And then, as the shadow of that massive eagle passed over me a second time and then a third, it began to seem like the forest itself was warning me, threatening me.



Mr Santos pointed out all kinds of things, but I hardly looked; I was watching the patches of sky above, hoping the eagle would not return.

The sky remained empty and I followed as Mr Santos led us to a twisted tree. The fruit on its branches was just beginning to ripen. Mr Santos said we should stay out of sight, keep quiet and watch what came to feed.

A hornbill came first, tearing at the tree with its great beak. Then we heard a chittering sound, and Mr Santos whispered that it meant monkeys were near. I looked up, hoping to see them.

And it was there! The eagle! High on a branch at the edge of the clearing, quite still, its shape outlined against the sky.

I gave a shout that sent the hornbills clattering away into the distance. Mr Santos asked what was the matter. I pointed to the eagle and tried to explain that it was watching me.

Mr Santos said it was true that the eagle was watching. But it wasn't watching me, it was hunting. As he spoke, the eagle spread his wings and flapped slowly out of sight.

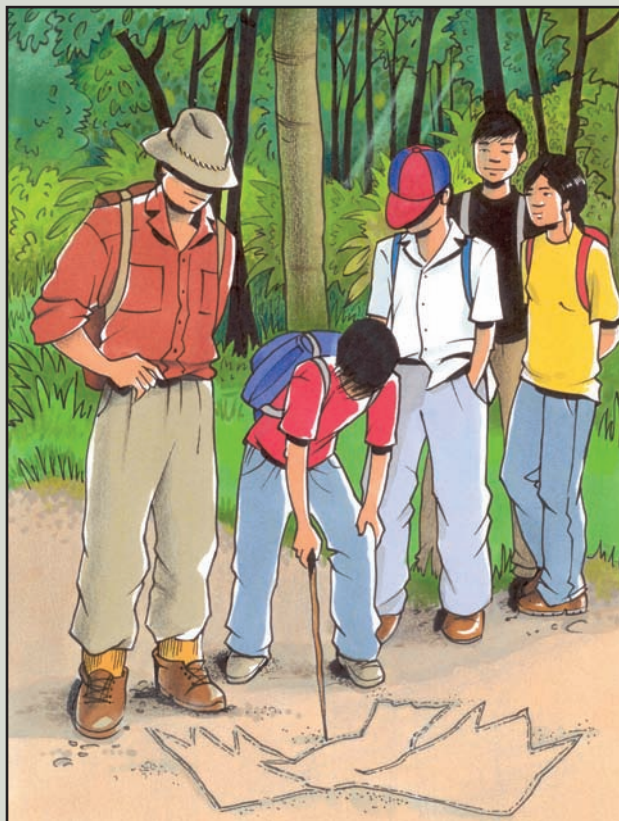
"There, it's gone!" said Mr Santos.



I tried to speak so the others couldn't hear. I tried to convince Mr Santos that it would come back. I told him I knew it was out to get me.

Mr Santos was kind. He told me I was afraid of the jungle because it was unknown territory. There was no danger to us from the eagle. He told me about the two kinds of fear. He said that there is fear of danger which is useful because it makes you protect yourself. But he explained there is also fear of being afraid, which is not useful. He told me that I was suffering fear of being afraid, and showed me what to do about it.

He cleared a patch of the dusty ground with his foot. Then he picked up a long stick and told me to draw the eagle.



Everyone was watching me. I took the stick and just stared at the patch of earth – and then I knew how to do it. I drew it the way I'd first seen it. I drew an enormous outline, with the powerful wings at full stretch and the head to one side so the great beak showed.

"Well done, Miguel," said Mr Santos.

Then he told me to look carefully at the picture. He said that what I had drawn was not the eagle itself but my fear of the eagle. He told me to cross it out.

A little part of me didn't want to spoil it. But at the same time I hated it and didn't want it to stay there. So I took the stick in both hands, stabbed one end of it into the earth near the head, and crossed the whole thing out in one move. It seemed important to do it all at once. The line went through the head, then through one wing, in a curve across the body and out through the tail in a long 's' shape. I stood back and threw down the stick.

"Excellent," said Mr Santos. "The eagle is still free, but your fear is destroyed. You're all right now, aren't you?"

What could I say when he had taken so much trouble? I said, "Yes," but it wasn't true.

That night the eagle and my fear were in my dreams.

The next day, when we left the camp and walked back through the forest, my fear hung over me like a cloud.

A twig got into my shoe and I knelt down to undo the laces. The others walked on. They didn't know they were leaving me behind and I was too embarrassed to call them back. I thought I'd already made enough fuss.

And then something dropped out of the sky like a falling stone. Suddenly, something warm and heavy thudded into my shoulder and knocked me over. Feathers brushed against my skin, and as I rolled on my back all I could see were great wings.

I lay still, hardly breathing, and I saw the eagle surging upwards again; and I understood why it had swooped – it was carrying a king cobra. I could see the long body and hooded head of the snake hanging from its claws. I heard running footsteps and I was aware that Mr Santos was beside me; but I couldn't look away from the eagle, rising into the sky.



The thing was – the really extraordinary thing was – the snake looped from the eagle's claws in a sweeping 's' shape, exactly matching the line I had made through my drawing.

Mr Santos pulled me to my feet. He looked really worried. He told me it was good that the eagle wasn't as afraid of me as I was of him, because cobras are deadly.

But the thing I had really feared – the eagle swooping out of the sky onto me – had happened. He had been so close, I had smelt him, felt his warmth, sensed his weight; and yet I was all right. He had dropped down onto me and rolled me clear of the snake. My fear had become real, the worst had happened; and I was all right – I wasn't afraid any more.



The Eagle

He clasps the crag* with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure♦ world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

* crag = rock

♦ azure = bright blue

RAINFORESTS

Rainforests are very warm, wet forests. Approximately 30 million species of plants and animals live in tropical rainforests. This is more than in the rest of the world put together.

There are rainforests across the world but in total they cover only 6% of the earth's surface. The map below shows the location of the world's tropical rainforests.



Central America

The rainforest here is famous for its large number of tropical birds such as parrots.

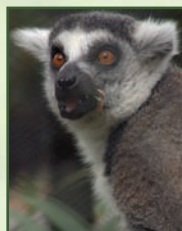


= Rainforest



The Amazon

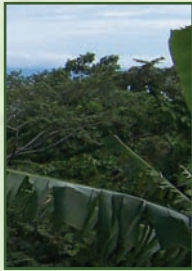
This is the world's largest rainforest and is home to the greatest variety of plants and animals.



Africa

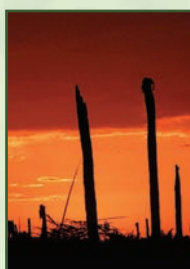
The island of **Madagascar** is part of Africa. It is home to many unique plants and animals not found anywhere else in the world. For example, it is the only place you can find lemurs (animals similar to monkeys).





Southern Asia

An important part of the rainforest here are mangroves. These are trees that grow in coastal areas and they help protect the land from the sea. The **Philippines** has lost over 70% of its mangroves since 1918.



Australia

Rainforests are being destroyed all over the world. 75% of **Australia's** tropical rainforest has been destroyed since the late 1700s.



Animals of the rainforest

In the story *The Eagle's Shadow* you read about several animals that live in the rainforest in the Philippines. Here is some more information about these animals.

Philippine eagle



Appearance

It is one of the world's largest eagles with a wingspan of 2 metres (the size of a very tall man).

Its long brown feathers look like a lion's mane.

Hornbill



It is a large bird with a long, colourful beak and yellowish 'helmet' on top of its head.

Long-tailed macaque monkey



It is born with black fur which changes colour as it grows up.

It has short arms and legs and a long tail.

King cobra



As the longest poisonous snake, it can grow up to 5.7 metres long.

Its deadly fangs are 1cm long.

Habitat

They nest in pairs at the top of very tall trees.

Diet

They are known as 'monkey-eating eagles'.

They also feed on snakes, lizards and even large birds such as hornbills.

Other facts

They are in danger of extinction.

They nest in large old trees with hollow trunks.

They are omnivores – they feed on fruit, insects and small birds.

Their beaks look heavy but are actually very light – they feel like a hard sponge.

They prefer to live in areas near the sea and sleep in the branches of trees.

They feed on plants, leaves, insects and small animals.

They live in groups of 20-60 monkeys.

They mostly live in thick highland forests.

They prefer areas with lakes and streams.

Other snakes are their main source of food. After a large meal, they can survive for months without eating again.

In spite of their reputation they are shy animals and avoid people whenever possible.

Acknowledgements:

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Photograph on front cover by Ali Sewell

‘The Eagle’s Shadow’ illustrated by Doreen Lang

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