NON FICTION 2A: Passage 1

**Images bring life of lost Amazon tribe**

**into sharp relief**

Dom Phillips

The life of an isolated tribe in the Amazon jungle has been

documented by a crew fl ying overhead in a helicopter.

The pictures show in vivid detail gardens for maize, sweet

potato, pumpkins, bananas and peanuts. Cotton is also

grown: the men in the photos have cotton waistbands and

some have headdresses.

The Brazilian Indian affairs department has evidence of 29

un-contacted tribes (peoples who have no contact with the

outside world) in the Amazon but believes that there could be

up to 70. One theory is that tribes like this moved nearer to

the head of the Amazon river 100 years ago to escape a

rubber production boom that enslaved many Indians.

The tribe of 3,000 to 4,000 near Brazil’s border with Peru are hunter-gatherers. The men, their bodies

decorated with red dye, are armed with bows and arrows.

“They’re not people who live by the river. They don’t have intimacy with water. They’re people from

deep in the forest and they have agriculture,” said José Meirelles, who was in the helicopter when the

images were taken last June. “The helicopter was more than a kilometre away. It’s not permitted to fly

above. It’s aggressive and we try to do the minimum amount of damage,” he said.

Survival International, the group dedicated to tribal peoples, released the images yesterday for its Uncontacted

Tribes campaign. The tribe was first spotted in 2008 but had never been seen in such clarity.

“The detail is really clear. In the photos you can see they are remarkably healthy. You can see their

gardens, their baskets full of manioc, a tropical plant from which they get flour,” said Fiona Watson,

research director and Brazil campaigner of Survival International. “A lot of the un-contacted people are

basically survivors who have managed to escape being colonised. They know they will only survive if

they remain isolated from the outside world.

“It is almost certain that they will have their own language. We believe they may be part of the larger

Indian group.”

The images show a machete and a metal cooking pot that the tribe may have got from other Indians

who, in turn, have had contact with loggers or raided logging camps.

Contact with the outside world is invariably disastrous for an isolated tribe. Illnesses such as the

common cold can kill up to 50 per cent of its population.

Since 1987 the Brazilian Government has had a policy of no contact with such tribes. But the tribe’s

isolation is increasingly threatened.

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**Amazon Rainforest Tribe Facts**

An estimated 400-500 indigenous Amazonian Indian tribes (Amerindians) exist today in the Amazon Rainforest. There are about fifty of these tribes who do not have any contact with the outside world. These groups have their own society where kids do not go to a formal school but instead, when they are old enough, are taught what they need to know from their elders. Another interesting fact is that some of the greatest threats to these tribes come from people from the outside world. The reason why is explained in the Amazon Rainforest tribe information below.

**Amazon Rainforest Tribe General Facts**

* With 20,000 total members, the Yanomani tribe is the largest tribe in the Amazon Rainforest. They live in Northern Brazil and near the border of Southern Venezuela. In contrast, the Kanoe and Akuntsu tribes have no more than 30 members.
* The tribes live off the land and grow different types of fruits and vegetables such as bananas, passion fruit, papayas, corn, manioc and beans and the popular "super fruit", the acai berry.
* Both legal and illegal activities have threatened the Amazon Rainforest tribes. Some of the reasons for declining populations are due to deforestation in the Amazon, war, disease, oil development and drug trafficking. In response, Brazil has set up a type of reservation to protect the Amazonian tribes.
* The many tribes of the Amazon are very diverse in culture, language and heritage. There are approximately 180 different languages spoken by these indigenous people.
* Communal houses are common and the structures are made out of bamboo covered in banana or palm leaves and straw.
* The tribes that have made contact with the outside world wear minimal clothing. What they do wear is made from natural resources found in the rainforest. However, both the men and women in the tribes that have no contact with outsiders live completely naked.
* Spiritual ceremonies and rituals are commonplace. In a ritual to become a man in an Amazon tribe called Satere Mawe; young boys must wear gloves filled with bullet ants.
* Many Amazonian tribes believe in animism, a belief that animal spirits inhabit all animate and inanimate things.
* Some of the indigenous tribes of the Amazon are still hunters and gatherers who have extensive knowledge of almost every aspect of the rainforest in which they live. Many of the tribes also practice a slash and burn type of agriculture. When the resources are depleted, they move on to new land.
* Because many of these tribes do not have proper medical care, the life span of the Amazonian tribe people is considerably shorter than those living in the countries surrounding them. Many die of malaria, malnutrition and parasites.

**Tribal Role Facts**

* Men and women have distinct roles within their village. Women generally have the responsibility of cooking, household chores, crop growing and taking care of the children.
* Men do the hunting, which accounts for a relatively small amount of their total food intake. They hunt game such as deer, monkey and tapir with blow guns and poison tipped darts.
* Men, women and children all take part in fishing.

**Answer on Passage 1 only**

**A1**

1. How many uncontacted tribes are there in the Amazon?
2. Why have they remained uncontacted?
3. How do they arm themselves?

**A2**

The narrator is trying to us of a previously unknown Amazonian tribe. How does he try to do this?

You should comment on:

* what he says to influence readers;
* his use of language and tone;
* the way he presents his information.

**A3**

1. What is suggested by the quote “It’s aggressive and we try to do the minimum amount of damage”?
2. Why does the narrator say “They don’t have intimacy with water”?
3. What does this suggest about the tribe?

**A4**

What do you think and feel about the impressions of the tribe?

You should comment on:

* + - what is said;
    - how it is said.

**You should now read and refer to both Passage 1 and Passage 2**

**A5**

Both texts explore the features similar to indigenous tribes. What are these similarities?

**A6**

Both of these texts are about Amazonian Tribes.

Compare the following:

The writers experiences of the tribes

How they get their information across to the reader