**Cast adrift: survival and resilience**

Teenager Aldi Novel Adilang was rescued by a passing coal ship on 31 August after surviving 49 days adrift at sea on a wooden fishing hut known as a rompong. Aldi lives and works on the rompong, which was anchored 77 miles off the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. His job is to light lamps on the rompong to attract fish, for which he receives about £100 a week. His tether snapped one night as he slept and he drifted out to sea.

His limited supplies ran out within a week, so he survived by catching fish and drinking seawater through his clothes to filter out some of the salt. His rescue came just of the coast of Guam, some 1,700 miles from his original mooring.

This discussion activity considers his amazing survival story, coping skills and resilience during an emergency.

## Discussion: Survival at sea

1. Show learners the image [here](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-45623130) of the boy on the rompong. Ask them for their first impressions. What do they notice about it? How do they think the boy on the boat might be feeling?

2. Ask learners to consider how long they think someone could survive for at sea on the rompong. See if anyone can get close to the answer, before sharing that he survived for 49 days.

Organise the learners into small groups. Ask each group to make a table with two columns. In the left-hand column, write a list of the things they would need to do to survive. In the right-hand column, they should write *how* they could do this. You could use the ideas below as a prompt. Ask the groups to share their ideas.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What do I need to do to survive?** | **How will I do this?** |
| *e.g. Find fresh water* | *e.g. Make a container to collect rainwater*  |
| *Find food* |  |
| *Find shelter from the sun*  |  |
| *Find warmth at night* |  |
| *Stay mentally strong and positive*  |  |

Discuss what Aldi did and whether there were any similarities/differences. (He survived by catching fish, cooking it by burning the rompong’s wooden fences, and drinking seawater through his clothes to filter out some of the salt.)

## Coping skills

3. Tell learners that Aldi sang to himself, read and thought about things important to him to keep his hopes up – wishing he would be able to see his parents again. Ask them to consider:

* How do you think Aldi felt?
* What thoughts might go through your mind in this situation?
* What could you do to keep your spirits up?

4. Tell learners that Aldi is now safely home with his parents. But this is not the first time this had happened to him – he had been set adrift twice before in his rompong, although for much shorter periods of time. Ask them to consider:

* What would you do now if you were in Aldi’s situation? Would you go back to your job on the rompong? If not, why not?
* If you did continue with the job, what changes could you make to ensure this didn’t happen again?

Discuss ideas as a class. You could structure this discussion by considering:

* **things you could do** (e.g. ensure someone always knew where you were, get a more secure tether)
* **things you could take** (e.g. emergency supplies, a compass, a form of communication etc.). You could refer to the British Red Cross [emergency kit](https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/prepare-an-emergency-kit) for more ideas.

*This resource was written by Ruth Pope and published in October 2018.*