To: Dad
From: Amelia
Subject: Hi from camp
I haven't had any great adventures at camp yet, but I'm having fun. The first day we went rock climbing and I got pretty far. Next time I'll do even better. I can't believe you went to camp here when you were a boy. It's strange to think of you as a kid walking around and seeing the same stuff I'm seeing. Did you carve your initials anywhere?

Amelia

To: Dad
From: Amelia
Subject: Crafts
They do still have leatherwork class here. If it's not too hard, I'll try to make you a wallet.

Amelia

To: Dad
From: Amelia
Subject: Getting wet
I'm doing a lot of things here I've NEVER done before – rock climbing, mountain biking, leatherwork, and today WATER SKIING!!! It looked kind of scary at first and I wasn’t sure I wanted to try it. But my counselor Crystal (who’s big on astrology) said I should be a natural in the water because I’m a
Pisces and that's the sign of the fish. If Pisces are supposed to be great at any water sport, then astrology is about as accurate as most fortune cookies. Water skiing is a LOT harder than it looks. It took me three tries before I could keep my balance at all. So I’m not exactly a natural, but I did it. That counts for something.

Amelia

To: Amelia
From: Dad
Subject: Little brother

Your little brother George sends his love. At least I think that’s what he’s saying. His actual words are “Gagoosha!” He wishes he could water ski with you, too, but I told him he has to learn to walk better first. And it might be a good idea to know how to swim.

Love, Dad

To: Dad
From: Amelia
Subject: Leatherwork

I've finished your wallet! It looks pretty good, if I say so myself. Now I think I'll make a belt for Mom. Or should I make something for George like a leather doll? If I can figure something out, I will.

Amelia

To: Amelia
From: Dad
Subject: Thanks!!

That’s good news about the wallet you made me. I can’t wait to see it – and use it! George sends his love and says if you make him anything, he’d like a teddy bear. Think you can make one out of leather? Maybe a lanyard bear?

Love, Dad
To: Mom  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Don’t worry!  
Hi, Mom! I made it to Camp Runamucka. I bet you were expecting a postcard. This camp may be in the mountains, but it’s still wired. There’s a computer class where we can learn to make our own Web sites and can send email. The counselors said we can write to anyone, but the FIRST email has to be to our parents. So here you go: I’m fine, and Cleo, well, she’s Cleo. Anyway, she can tell you herself, if she’s recovered from the bus ride. You know how carsick she gets!  
Luv,  
Amelia  

To: Amelia  
From: Mom  
Subject: Mail  
I got your email, but I’d still like a postcard. There’s something much more satisfying about holding a piece of mail in your hand than reading a computer screen. Is there anything you need me to send you? Cleo’s already asked for Cheetos, Fritos, and Oreos – she only likes food that ends in “O” it seems. Don’t they feed you there or it just too healthy for Cleo to take? Love, Mom  

To: Amelia  
From: Mom  
Subject: Have you forgotten?  
I still haven’t gotten that postcard! Are you sending me one?  
Love, Mom  

To: Mom  
From: Amelia  
Subject: No, I didn’t forget!  
Okay, here it is already. Does a digital postcard count?

Amelia
To: Amelia  
From: Mom  
Thanks for the postcard. I love it! Now here’s one for you.  
Love, Mom

![Postcard Image]

To: Mom  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Camp food  
I figured you’d want some more interesting details about camp life, so I’m sending you some camp recipes. You’d be amazed what you can cook on a campfire, besides marshmallows and hot dogs. Maybe we can cook this way at home, too.

![Recipe Drawing]

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Mom  
Subject: Food  
Thanks for the recipes. Now if our oven ever breaks, I’ll know what to do.  
Love, Mom
To: Amelia
From: Mom
Subject: Nags
I’ve had half a summer without nagging you, so I thought I’d send you some reminders:
1. Are you using sun block?
2. Are you brushing your teeth?
3. Are you keeping your underwear washed?
4. Are you eating well?
That’s it until next time!
Love, Mom

To: Mom
From: Amelia
Subject: Nags
1. Yes, but I ran out of moon block.
2. Yes, and I even use toothpaste.
3. That’s classified information (only the tush knows!)
4. I’m definitely eating the minimum daily requirement of marshmallows.
Love,

Amelia
To: Mako  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Happy summer!  
How are things in Japan? I’m emailing you from an American summer camp. We hike and swim and do outdoorsy stuff, but most of all we sing – on the bus, on the trail, around the campfire, even in the showers! I’ve learned a lot of new songs and then there are the oldies-but-goodies that I’ve known FOREVER. I’m sending you the words to one of the moldiest, oldest camp songs ever.

*On top of spaghetti, all covered with cheese,*  
*I lost my poor meatball when somebody sneezed.*  
*It rolled off the table and onto the floor,*  
*And then my poor meatball rolled out of the door.*  
(Repeat about a trillion times)

Amelia

To: Mako  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Hello  
I am sorry, but I could not understand that song you sent. Who is on top of the spaghetti? What is covered with cheese? And how is a sneeze strong enough to lose a meatball? Can you please explain this?

To: Mako  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Silly song  
The song isn’t supposed to make sense. I mean, it does, in its own way – the sneeze blows the meatball off the big mountainous pile of spaghetti and it rolls away. It’s supposed to be making fun of another song, “On Top of Old Smokey.” I don’t know the words to the real song, but it starts: “On top of Old Smokey, all covered with snow, I lost my poor sweetheart, from courting too slow.” I’m not sure what that means either. Maybe the singer’s girlfriend got tired of waiting for him and left. Anyway, the songs are sung to the same tune. Get it?

Amelia
To: Mako  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Mount Spaghetti  
Maybe this picture will help you understand the song.

![Mount Spaghetti](image)

Amelia

To: Mako  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Yum!  
I guess part of the summer camp experience is the food you eat. The food in the dining hall is pretty good, but the food at the cookouts is the best! Why does eating outside at night around a campfire make everything taste so much better? Open the attachment to see some of my favorites (and not-so-favorites)!

![Campfire Food](image)

To: Amelia  
From: Mako  
Subject: Hello from Tokyo  
It’s hard for me to imagine those camp foods. I like American doughnuts and hot dogs, but I think there should be more rice at meals. One of my favorite dishes is sea urchins. But when I was in America, there were no sea urchins at any restaurant or grocery store. Why not? Do Americans not like to eat them? They’re delicious!
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Camp  
Well, so far, so good. The bus ride to camp wasn’t great. Sitting next to Cleo, the Carsick Queen, how could it be? But once we got to camp, things got a lot better. It’s different this year, since I’ve been here before and know what to expect (kinda). Too bad this time Carly’s not here, but at least I’m not in the same cabin as Cleo.

Luv,

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: More Camp  
My day camp starts next week. Mom signed me up for Shakespeare camp. Remember that play we saw in the park, the one where the fairy turned the man’s head into a donkey’s head? That company of actors has a camp here where they teach kids about Shakespeare and his plays. At the end, all the kids put on a play. It sounds like it could be fun. I love acting and wearing costumes. It’s always fun to pretend you’re someone else. I just hope I don’t have to be the donkey-head man. I’d rather be a fairy.

To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Worries  
I was worried about the wrong thing before I came here. It’s not strangers or making new friends I need to worry about. It’s someone I know TOO well. The worst thing about this camp isn’t the bug bites, the lumpy oatmeal, or the moldy bathrooms – it’s CLEO!!!!!!!!!

Last time we went to camp together I hardly saw her. Not now!! The first day at dinner she talked so loudly (with her mouth full, of course) that you could hear her from OUTSIDE the dining hall. Luckily I sit with my cabin so she’s not next to me, but she’s so embarrassing that I don’t want anyone to know she’s my sister. During dessert Olivia said to me, “Can you believe that girl over there? She has the manners of a baboon!” Naturally, she meant Cleo. What was I supposed to say? “Yeah, that’s my delightful sister”? I just nodded my head and didn’t say a word. It’s a good thing we don’t look alike. I sure don’t have a jelly roll nose!

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Sisters  
Whenever you write to me about Cleo I remember why I’m so glad I’m an only child!!
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subjects: Cabin Club

The girls in my cabin are starting to feel like a group. It's kind of like being a member of a special club – the Redwood Cabin Club. It's hard to describe, because I've never been part of a group like this before. Maybe that's a good thing about Carly not being here. It's forcing me to make new friends.

Our cabin has a lot of spirit and Crystal and Jolene make everyone feel special. I wish I had a sister like one of them instead of Cleo. Last night after diner we played a game to help us get to know each other better. It was kind of like charades, only people acted out a word they thought described them. I picked the word “notebook” because I couldn’t decide if I’m more of a writer or an artist. To me, notebook means both.

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To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Acting

So far I really like Shakespeare camp. I’m learning diction (how to speak clearly and loudly), stage fighting (so no one really gets hurt), and all about Shakespeare's plays. The play we're doing is “The Tempest.” I’m not sure what part I want, but I definitely do NOT want to be Caliban. He's the monster. Not a scary monster, but a stupid one. Once we get our parts, we’ll also work on costumes and the stage sets. Pretty cool, huh?

I wish we were doing this together. Remember in first grade when our class put on “Snow White” and you were Dopey and I was Sneezy? We tripped over our costumes and everyone called us Clumsy and Klutzy. I know I'll do better this time. At least my costume will be shorter (or I'm taller!) so it won't get tangled in my toes.

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To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Yay!

Guess what! I got a terrific part in our play! I’m Ariel, the fairy that the wizard saved from a witch’s evil spell. I get to do all sorts of mischief. It's a lot of work because I have so many lines to memorize, but I LOVE it! The words are so magical. I’m going to make a neat costume that really looks fairy-like. I’m not sure how, but Nisha, the costume teacher, has lots of ideas and she’ll help me.
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Hooray!!!

Congratulations on getting such a good part in your play! I wish I could see you act in it. Your mom and dad have to take photos – or a video would be even better – so I can see you.

Yesterday we went on a looooooong mountain bike ride. There wasn’t a road, just a dirt trail. We even rode through shallow streams and over rocks! I thought for sure I’d crash or my legs would fall off, they were so tired, but I did it! I had problems keeping up with everyone, but Wendy and Jessica stuck by me so I wasn’t alone at the back of the pack.

Everyone was really tired afterwards, but we were all proud that we finished. It felt like we’d climbed Mt. Everest or something! As a special reward for doing so well, we got to make our own ice cream sundaes. Mine was a real creation!

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Costume

My costume is coming along great. I’m sewing all these beads and buttons on a big white T-shirt. Then I’ll glue on sequins and paint swirly designs with fabric paint. It’s hard to describe, so I’m sending you a drawing.
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Flying

Every night I’m really tired because the days here are so packed full of stuff. Yesterday we started with a nature walk, did some landscape painting (I loved it!), and went water skiing. The water skiing was the best. I swallowed a lot of water and kept falling down, but the few times I got it right, I felt like I was flying! Jessica and I drew comic strips to show what it’s like. Open the attachment to see mine.

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Thanks

Thanks for the comic strip. I loved it!

Amelia
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Trick or treat

Luckily there are lots of kids in this camp besides Cleo. But there’s one I could happily do without – this bratty girl from Oak Cabin named Anabel. She thinks she’s better than everyone else. She’s always insulting people and trying to make them feel bad. Today she told Latisha her glasses make her look like a peanut which of course they don’t. But now Latisha keeps looking in mirrors asking “Do I look like a nut to you?”

So Jessica, Wendy, and I decided to teach Anabel a lesson. The three of us sneaked into Oak Cabin and short-sheeted her bed!

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Bullies

I guess there has to be at least one mean kid in every group. I sure hope you don’t get in trouble, though. It’s not worth it.
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Pranks R Us

You should have seen Anabel! We could hear her yelling about her “dagnabbity bed” all the way across the moldy bathrooms. Tyresha laughed loudest of all, but Chantal was a close second. I drew you a picture, since I couldn’t take a photo (that would have looked too suspicious).

[Image of a drawing showing a girl trying to go to bed, pulling back the sheets, and waking up with a‘I want my cozy bed back!’]

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: LOL

:-) :-D I love your drawing! I’m going to try short-sheeting my parent’s bed next April Fool’s! It’s more funny than it is mean!

To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Lessons learned

Guess what? Anabel has been much nicer lately. It’s like she’s suddenly remembered her manners. I guess a little short-sheeting goes a long way!

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Stage fright

Cross your fingers for me – the play’s tomorrow!
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Bravo!  
So how’d the play go? I’m giving you a standing ovation because I’m sure you were the best actress!

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Phew!  
The play was GREAT! (If I say so myself.) No one forgot any lines – not even the girl who messed up so much in rehearsal. People laughed at all the funny parts and at the end, the applause went on and on. I think I want to be an actor now!

Afterward we had a cast party. Everyone was so excited by the performance and by how all our hard work came together at the end. We had a lot to celebrate. When you put on a play, you work so hard and have to together so much, by the end you feel like a family. I’m really going to miss everyone. We traded phone numbers and email addresses, but I wonder how many of us will really keep in touch.

To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Take a bow!  
Congratulations on your play! I knew you’d be great! Hope your parents remembered to film it for me.

It’s the last day of the first session of camp. I’m staying for both sessions, but a bunch of kids are leaving. I know how you feel about the kids in your play becoming like family. That’s how I feel about Wendy and Jessica, though I like all the girls in my cabin. Today I had to say good bye to three of them.

Amelia

To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: New campers  
Three new girls joined our cabin – Surya, Eliana, and Chantal. I think it’s hard for them because everyone else in the cabin already knows each other. We have our jokes and stuff like that. Crystal and Jolene tried to make the new kids feel welcome, and us old-timers put on a little skit to introduce them to the basic things you need to know. We called it “Redwood Cabin 101.” Surya laughed a lot and seemed comfortable right away. I can’t tell about Eliana yet because she’s so shy, but Chantal is the homesick type (hopefully not as bad as Kayla, the miserably homesick girl at camp last year).

We’re all getting excited because the counselors told us we get to do this thing called Runamukkamiles at the end of this session. They won’t tell us what it is yet, but they promise it’ll be exciting.

Amelia
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Bests and worsts  
I decided to keep a list of everything I love and don’t love about camp. These things are easier to draw than write, so you’ll have to open the attachment.

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To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Likes vs. dislikes  
I love your list! Now I feel like I've been at camp myself.

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To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Homesickness  
It seems like whenever I go to camp there’s always one really miserable girl who can’t get over homesickness. Last year it was Kayla. This year it’s Chantal. She’s worse each day. Jessica’s fed up with her. She thinks Chantal’s just trying to get attention, but I think she really feels bad. But I understand why Jessica is annoyed. One camper like that makes the whole cabin a lot less pleasant – they take up everyone’s energy and attention. We’re more busy trying to cheer up Chantal than enjoying camp ourselves.

Amelia
To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Hiya  

Sorry about the homesick girl. But look at the bright side – Cleo’s not bugging you anymore! Hey, I’m starting to use the wheel in ceramics class. My pots look kind of lop-sided, but they’re getting better.

To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Arts & Crafts  

Your ceramics class sounds fun and I’m impressed with your pots! We have lots of arts and crafts here, including clay, but there’s no pottery wheel and that sounds like the best part. At least I’ve learned one useful thing – how to tie different knots.

Amelia  

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Sam  

Ceramics class is O.K. My pots still aren’t perfect but they’re getting better. One boy, Sam, is amazing. He makes pots like a pro! And he’s really cute! He tries to help me, but when he’s that close to me, I get nervous and make even more mistakes.
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Sam

I want to hear more about Sam. What’s he like? Does he like you? Do you hang out together after class? Last year at camp there was a cute boy I liked, but this year there isn’t anyone who catches my eye.

Amelia

To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Runamukkamiles

We finally found out what Runamukkamiles is! It’s kind of a triathlon, only instead of running, biking, and swimming, there’s a whole bunch of different things we have to do. Part of it is a ropes course! The whole camp is divided into teams and the team that finishes first has their names inscribed on the wall of honor in the dining hall. It’s a big deal to win. The hard part is you really have to work together as a team or you can’t finish the course.

Amelia

To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: RED ALERT! DISASTER! CATASTROPHE!

Remember I told you the camp is divided into teams for the Ranamukkamiles? I just found out that our cabin is teamed up with Aspen Cabin – CLEO’S CABIN!!! That means Cleo’s on my team! What could be worse? Now we won’t win and it won’t be fun. It’ll be awful!!!! Instead of a grand finale to camp, it’ll be a major disaster!

And you’re not telling me anything about Sam! C’mon, I’ve told you about my crushes.

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Sam

I’m not sure if Sam likes me. I think he does since he always talks to me and we eat lunch together. That must mean something, right? But how do I know if he likes me or like likes me? You know what I mean.
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Sisters

You won’t believe this, but Crystal’s sister is the counselor for Aspen Cabin. So now there are two sets of sisters on our Runamukkamiles team – Cleo and me, and Crystal and Luanne. Luanne is not like Crystal at all. They kind of look the same, but their personalities are so different, you’d never think they’re sisters. Luanne has dyed green hair, a pierced eyebrow, and a great sense of humor – she’s always telling funny stories or laughing at someone else’s jokes. Crystal is more calm and quiet, though she’s really nice, too.

Sounds like Sam does like you. If you’re hanging out at lunch together, that means something. Lucky!!

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: Cleo

O.K., maybe you won’t win with Cleo on your team, but you can still have fun. At least you have to try. You can’t let your cabin down!

I’m still not sure about Sam. Today he ate lunch with a group of boys. He still smiled at me and said hi, but who knows what that means.

To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Hooray!

You won’t believe what happened! Runamukkamiles was amazing! I’ve done a lot of things I never thought I could do at this camp, but Runamukkamiles was like having a month of camp shoved into one day. It was the hardest thing I’ve ever done, but I finished it. We all did.

Some things were individual, like the log crossing. Other things you did with the whole team and if you didn’t work together, the result was disaster, like the giant teeter totter and the egg-swing. The most amazing part wasn’t that I climbed the pole or scaled the wall, it’s that Cleo turned out to be a big help on the team! Who’d have thunk it? Wendy is terrified of heights and she refused to cross the rope bridge. Cleo held her hand and went across with her! In the spider web, I got stuck because I’m so short that if I held onto the branch in the center, my feet couldn’t reach the outer branches. Cleo put her hands together into a stirrup for me to put my feet in – that way I could do it! It was a great feeling, all of us working together and getting through some really tough problems. Cleo may be a terrible singer and a not-so-great sister, but she’s an amazing team player. When the going gets tough, she gets tougher!

When we finished, Crystal and Luanne put their arms around Cleo and me and led everyone in a cheer for sister power. I was actually proud of Cleo, proud to be her sister!
Oh, before I forget, can you snap a photo of Sam on your cell phone and send it to me?

---

Amelia

To: Amelia
From: Nadia
Subject: Congrats!

Sounds like you did some really hard stuff. Did you practice first? I’m glad – and surprised – to hear how good Cleo was. Hope it lasts!

Clay class is over!!! I don’t know if I’ll ever see Sam again! He doesn’t go to my school and I was too stupidly shy to ask for his phone number. But he didn’t ask for mine either, so maybe he doesn’t like me anyway. How come I can be smart about some things but I feel so dumb about boys?
To: Nadia
From: Amelia
Subject: Boys
That's too bad about Sam. I’m no expert on boys so I don’t think I would have done things any better than you.

I learned a lot at camp, but nothing about that kind of thing.

Amelia

To: Nadia
From: Amelia
Subject: Endings
Two more days and camp is over. Tomorrow is my last horseback ride, and the final day there’s a big closing ceremony. Everyone’s feeling very sentimental, saving feathers, pebbles, dried flowers, anything as souvenirs. A lot of girls are making and exchanging friendship bracelets. We’re making scrapbooks to give Crystal and Jolene so they’ll remember Redwood Cabin and all of us. Each kid has to do two pages, either write or draw something, paste in photos, or a combination of all three.

I’m going to miss the fresh mountain air, the bright stars at night, the sounds of frogs, crickets, and owls. I’ll even miss the smell of campfire smoke. But one good thing is I’ll finally get to see Carly again. She’s supposed to be home the day after I get back and I haven’t heard a word from her all summer!

Amelia

To: Amelia
From: Nadia
Subject: Boys
I can’t stop thinking about Sam. I think I really blew it.
To: Nadia  
From: Amelia  
Subject: Last day  

Today was fun, but sad, too. Girls were crying all over the place, hugging each other and promising to write. Even some of the counselors looked really sad.

Our last campfire was huge. We sang all our favorite songs and made s’mores. Then we all held hands in a big circle and everyone was perfectly quiet. The quiet lasted a long time. You could just hear the sounds of the night – the crackling fire, the crickets chirping, the frogs croaking. It was an amazing feeling, like we were all part of something much bigger than ourselves. Then all the counselors started humming and the humming turned into singing – they were singing a good-bye song.

When they finished, it was time to announce the awards. They weren’t awards for typical stuff, like the best swimmer or fastest biker. They were for things like “sharpest eyes for bird watching” and “best sense of direction.” Cleo got one for “best animal tracker.” I didn’t know she was good at that! She has a good nose for finding food, especially pizza and chocolate, but tracking animals? Wendy got one for “best biking buddy.” And I got one for “best stargazer” because I learned so many constellations from Jolene!

It was a sad ending, but a happy one, too. Everyone was excited about the awards they won, but no one wanted to go to bed, and no one wanted the last campfire of the summer to be over. Wendy, Jessica, and I traded addresses, but it won’t be the same. We’ll just have to all come back NEXT summer!

Maybe you could come too. There were lots of cute boys at camp, just none interesting enough for me to care about this year. But there’s always next year with a bunch of new boys to get to know.

Amelia

To: Amelia  
From: Nadia  
Subject: End of summer  

I walked by my school yesterday and the teachers are already there getting their classrooms ready. It really must be the end of summer. And I’ve got the bug bites to prove it!