



## *Go and Come Back* by Joan Ablove

**Subjects:** Anthropologists—Fiction; Amazon River Valley—Fiction; Peru—Fiction

**Awards:** Best Books for Young Adults, Horn Book Fanfare

**Book List:** Latin America

**Props:** Large colorful beads, baby



*(Wear large colorful beads)* I am Alicia. I am not a child, but I am not an old married woman with children either. I live in the Peruvian jungle village of Poincushmana. My people, the Isabos, have lived the same as our ancestors have for centuries. Missionaries and other traders or gringos have visited us. But they have never stayed long. Until one day when two old ladies from New York arrived in a boat. They were strange. One was tall, skinny, and had long yellow hair. The other one looked better; fat and short, but her skin was a funny shade of pink. Hair is supposed to be black and straight and have bangs but hers was not. They didn't have any beads, or nose rings, or lip plugs. Their lips and noses weren't pierced. They didn't flatten their foreheads. They didn't even try to make themselves beautiful.

The old ladies knew some Spanish and so did some of us in the village and that's how we learned that they were in their twenties and anthropologists. They asked us if they could stay for one year. The old ladies, nawa's, told us that they wanted to learn about agriculture and babies. They would each write one book and they would bring us medicines. But that was all they would do for us. I did not think they should stay. But some of the villagers hoped the nawa's would bring sugarcane liquor and they thought they would be fun to watch because they were so stupid. Everyone said they couldn't cause any harm, so our village men built them a house and said they could stay. I did not care. I said, raibirai, whatever. I am busy on my own. I have a little nawa baby.

*(Pick up baby)* Her stupid drunken father was going to kill her. So I saved her. My mother and other woman of the village are helping to feed her. She is small and scrawny and everyone says she will not live long. But I would not let her die from her father. If she dies, it will not be because I didn't try to help her. Imagine, a father killing a girl child. Girls are the ones who stay home and make sure your old age is happy and easy. Boys go off and never take care of you. You might kill a baby boy, if he was deformed or you didn't want another child. But no Isabo had ever killed a girl child. *(Put baby down)* But every day I hear and see how stupid these old lady nawa's are. They seem to know nothing. They can't keep themselves clean. They do not wash each day, and when they do, they do not get their hair wet. They have more lice in their hair than anyone I have ever seen. Plus, they do not share. We have seen their bottle of liquor and box of beads. But they do not offer them. They know nothing. They think spoons are better than fingers. Someone needs to teach them. I think it must be me. Alicia will help the old anthropologists learn about her world: a world rich with love and warmth and sharing; a world that has no word for good bye. When you leave you say catanhue which means go and come back. *(Take off beads)* This book is based on the experiences of the author, Joan Ablove, during the early 1970s when she lived in the Amazon jungle for two years. *(Hold up book)* *Go and Come Back* by Joan Ablove.

