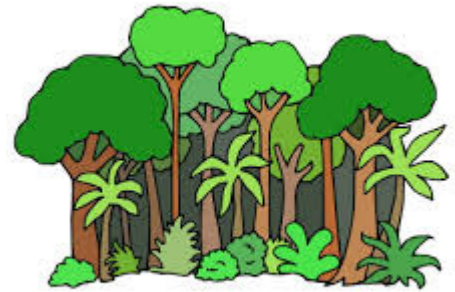


Rainforests

God is Creator

God is Provider



What is a Rainforest?

On the outside, a rain forest has a wall of about 6 metres (20 feet) thick that is made of a tangle of vines that love light. This wall seals off the interior creating the illusion that the whole jungle is this thick. But if you find an animal path or stream to follow, you can slip through and enter this mysterious world.

Once you're inside, you can look up and see a tree canopy that's as high as a 17 story building! And it's pretty dark too, a perpetual twilight. Only 1% of the sunlight ever actually touches the floor of the forest. And moonlight, even a full moon, doesn't get through at all. You'd better have a flashlight with you if you plan on reading any comics.

Plants of the rainforest

Here are some of plants in a rainforest:

1. Trees

They grow tall as they push their way up to get the light.

Rain forests have different layers that support different animals and insects. Some plants and animals live in specific layers, while others live and feed wherever they can. The tallest trees in the canopy layer grow up to 60 metres (200 feet) high. The tall trees that poke through are called the "**emergents**". They make an umbrella that can cover an entire acre.

The soil on the rain forest floor is rich in nutrients, but only 100 cm (4 inches) deep with red clay beneath it. This causes the trees to have very shallow roots. That's why many tall trees have buttresses or extra trunks supporting the first one around the bottom. These **buttresses** help stabilize and hold the tree up, like a permanent set of crutches.

2. Stranglers

These are plants that grow on a tree as a parasite plant. The strangler fig is an example. Strangler figs grow from seeds. The birds eat the figs and the seeds are in their droppings. The strangler fig sends out roots, which will hold on to any tree near by. The roots grow up the tree and the tree dies. The strangler fig tree now keeps growing around the dead tree.

3. Vines

Vines grow around and around other trees. They use little hooks called tendrils to hold on to trees.

4. Tree ferns

Tree ferns grow out from trunks of trees to catch light and water. They have broad leaves, which grow into the shape of baskets. They can catch water in the baskets.

5. Lichens, mosses and fungi

These grow on other plants. They grow on trees to get sunlight.

Layers of a rain forest

EMERGENT LAYER

The tallest trees are the emergents, towering as high as 60 metres (200 feet) above the forest floor with trunks that measure up to 5 metres (16 feet) around. Most of these trees are broad-leaved, hardwood evergreens. Sunlight is plentiful up here. Animals such as eagles, monkeys, bats and butterflies are found here.

CANOPY LAYER

This is the primary layer of the forest and forms a roof over the two remaining layers. Most canopy trees have smooth, oval leaves that come to a point. It's a maze of leaves and branches. Many animals live in this area since food is abundant. Examples of animals that live here are snakes, parrots and tree frogs.

UNDERSTORY LAYER

Little sunshine reaches this area so the plants have to grow larger leaves to reach the sunlight. The plants in this area seldom grow to 4 metres (12 feet). Many animals live here. In some countries we would find jaguars and leopards living here. There are also many insects living here.

FOREST FLOOR

It's very dark down here. Almost no plants grow in this area, as a result. Since hardly any sun reaches the forest floor things begin to decay quickly. A leaf that might take one year to decompose in a regular climate will disappear in about 6 weeks. Ground living animals such as anteaters live here.

Which animals live in a rain forest?

A rainforest is a home for many animals such as frogs, toads, snakes, lizards, bats, birds, insects, spiders, monkeys and other mammals.



Who lives in a rainforest?

In parts of South America, Africa and Papua New Guinea many types of indigenous people live in rain forests. These people live by hunting animals and gathering plants for food. They use local materials to make their blow guns, spears, and arrows. The forest also provides building and roofing materials, wild cotton for clothing, and plant medicine. In fact, just about every need can be met by the rain forest.

Some very interesting people live in the rain forest of Papua New Guinea. They are called the **Huli Wigmen** tribe. The men of this tribe wear large wigs of matted human hair, that they grow themselves. They must stay in a special, enclosed "school" in the forest for up to three years while their hair grows. This school is a group of huts in the rain forest surrounded by tall wooden fences. Every day the men sprinkle special water on their hair and use twigs and rope to shape the wig. Once it has grown bushy enough, they shave their heads using twine and rope. Then they use natural dyes found in the rain forest to colour their wigs red or black. They decorate them with flowers, leaves, shells, bones, feathers, and fur that they also collect from the rain forest.

Many of them have two wigs, one for wearing everyday and one for ceremonies. When they dress up, they paint their faces with juice from berries and rub pig fat over their bodies. Then they put big bushy leaves in woven belts to make a skirt and dance in a big circle. They'll usually invite other tribes from the area to join them. The wigmen can be very fierce, so these dances are a good way to build friendships with other tribes.

Our vanishing rainforests

The world's rainforests are currently disappearing at a rate of 6000 acres every hour (this is about 4000 football fields per hour). When these forests are cut down, the plants and animals that live in the forests are destroyed, and some species are at risk of being made extinct. Further, as forest trees are cut down on a large scale, the balance of the earth's eco-system is disrupted. We need the rain forests to produce oxygen and clean the atmosphere to help us breathe. We also know that the earth's climate can be affected, as well as the water cycle. Rainforests also provide us with many valuable medicinal plants, and may be a source of a cure from some deadly diseases.

Forests can be managed effectively without endangering rare species of plants and animals and without risking global environmental damage. Companies that harvest timber should not be allowed to "clear cut" large areas of forest and should be required to plant new trees after they cut old trees down. Governments should create large parks and reserves where hunting and logging are not allowed. As a world community, we must be careful not to destroy the resources that people will need in the future.

Many animals are illegally taken from rainforests and sold in other countries. Parrots and iguanas, for example, are often imported illegally. We should not buy these animals, since that encourages other people to bring in more animals.

Many products, such as rubber, coffee and rain forest timber come from rainforests. Rainforests are cut down to harvest the timber and also to make room for farms to grow coffee and spices. Each of us needs to be thoughtful about the way we consume these products, and support companies and programs that make a commitment to safe environmental practices. Recycle and re-use whenever possible, and help keep the earth green and healthy.



Rainforest activities

1. Rainforests have many layers. List the layers and describe what they consist of.

a.

b.

c.

d.

2. Endangered Plants and Animals

Because people are _____ rainforests, many rainforest plants and _____ are _____ . These plants and animals can only live in _____ . If their _____ disappears, they will become _____ . People who _____ or _____

Endangered plants and animals push them to extinction faster.

3. Write the definition of these words:

habitat _____

extinction _____

trade _____

hunt _____

4. Write the meaning of these words and then put them in alphabetical order:

Adaptation camouflage decomposing insectivore
Interdependence primate predators prehensile

5. Choose three countries that have rainforests. Find the countries on a map or globe. Make a list of rainforest animals that live in each country.

6. Find out where these rainforest animals live:

Viper; jaguar; monkey; fruit bat; armadillo; boa constrictor; iguana

7. Draw one of the animals that come from the rainforest. Complete in colour and name.

8. What does God say?

a) What do these Bible passages tell us about forests?

1 Chron 16:33

b) On which day did God create forests?

Gen 1

c) What does it mean to be God's caretakers?

Gen 1:26

d) What is happening to forests today and why is this a problem?

e) How would God want us to care for the forests?

f) What valuable products has God provided for us through forests?

