

# Rainforests

## What is a Rainforest?

Rainforests are really big forests that get a lot of rain. They are found in all continents of the world apart from Antarctica (it's far too cold there). There are two types of rainforest: tropical (in the tropical, warm zone near the Equator) and temperate (in the temperate zone further away from the Equator). Most rainforests are tropical, with tall trees, warm climates (weather patterns), and lots of rain. It can rain one inch of rain per day in some rainforests! The largest of these is the Amazon Rainforest in South America.

## The Canopy

The rainforest trees are so close together, that the branches and leaves at the top of the trees touch each other and make what is called a 'canopy', which is a bit like a roof for the forest. The canopy can be about 30m above the ground. Animals that live in the canopy have to use loud calls to communicate because they cannot see each other in the thick leaves and some can jump from tree to tree.

## The Forest Floor

This is dark because the canopy blocks a lot of the light and it is humid (damp). The floor is where dead animals and plants decompose (rot) and recycle all the nutrients and materials. Also, the larger animals are found here including tapirs, elephants, tigers and jaguars.

## Why are they so important?

Rainforests do a few things that are super-important to our life on Earth. One is that they use photosynthesis to take in carbon dioxide and make oxygen which we need to breathe and survive. This is why they are called 'The Lungs of The Earth'.



### Fact File in Numbers

- 2% of the Earth's surface is covered in rainforest.
- 50% of the plants and animals of the world live in rainforests.
- 20% of our water is found in a rainforest in the Amazon Basin.
- 25% of natural medicines have been found in rainforests.
- 70% + of the plants that are used to treat cancer are found only in the tropical rainforests.

So, how can we manage without them?

They also help keep our weather system stable by absorbing carbon dioxide, creating rainfall and keeping temperature stable. They also affect the water cycle as they hold so much water which condenses into the atmosphere.

## Layers of the Rainforest

- 8 Tropical rainforests are made up of distinct layers.
- 19 The forest floor is very hot and humid and little grows  
31 there. This part of the rainforest gets less than 2% of the  
43 sun's light. It is covered in a thin layer of fallen leaves  
47 which rot away quickly.
- 57 Next are the shrub layer and the understory – a dark  
68 place, where lots of insects, frogs and snakes can be found  
77 amongst the few plants which don't need much sunlight.
- 87 Above this is the canopy, where most trees stop growing  
98 and where up to 90% of rainforest creatures can be found.
- 111 This sunny area, rich in fruit and seeds, can be as high as  
116 thirty metres off the ground.
- 125 Finally, the few giant trees that thrust themselves above  
134 the dense canopy layer are called the emergent layer.





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afternoon, she came to a bend in the jungle path, and found herself beside the river.

The size of the great mountain made her gasp. It was far away on the very edge of the world, but even so it reached halfway up the sky, with the bare sides rising in a perfect cone to the glowing crater at the top. From time to time the fire-spirits who lived there rumbled angrily underground and threw boiling rocks high into the air. A plume of eternal smoke drifted from the summit to join the clouds.

*How can I ever get there?* she wondered, and felt her heart quail. But she had chosen to make the journey, and she could hardly turn back when she'd barely begun. She shifted her bundle from one shoulder to the other and walked on.

The jungle was a noisy place. Monkeys gibbered in the trees, and parrots screeched,

and crocodiles snapped their jaws in the river. Every so often Lila had to step carefully over a snake sleeping in the sun, and once she heard the roar of a mighty tiger. There was no-one to be seen except some fishermen laboriously rowing their boat across from the other side of the river.

~~She stopped and watched as they brought their boat in towards the bank where she was standing. They weren't making very good progress. There were six or seven of them, and all their oars were getting in one another's way.~~

~~As she watched, one of the fishermen missed the water completely with his oar, which swung round and clumped another fisherman on the~~





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they set off along the lakeshore towards the mountains in the distance.

By this time, Lila had come to the end of the jungle. Climbing all the time, she moved on and on, as the trees thinned out and the path became a mere track and then vanished altogether. All the jungle sounds, the clicking and buzzing of the insects, the cries of the birds and monkeys, the drip of water off the leaves, the croaking of the little frogs, were behind her now. When she had heard them she had enjoyed their company, but now there was nothing except the sound of her foot on the path and the occasional rumble from the mountain, which was so deep that she felt it through her feet as much as she heard it through her ears.

When night fell she lay down on the stony

~~ground beside a rock and wrapped herself in her one blanket. The full moon shone right in her face and kept her awake, and she couldn't get comfortable because of the stones on the ground. Finally she sat up in annoyance.~~

~~But there was no-one to share her annoyance with. She'd never felt so lonely.~~

~~'I wonder . . .' she began to say, but shook her head. She hadn't come on this journey in order to wonder how things were at home. It was the way things were at home that had made her come on the journey, after all.~~

~~'Well, if I can't sleep, I might as well keep walking,' she said to herself.~~

~~She folded her blanket away, and re-tied her sarong and tightened her sandals, and set off again.~~

~~The ground became steeper and steeper.~~