

## Lesson Plan

### Layers of Life in the Rainforest

**Book:** *The Amazon Rainforest*

**Series:** Natural Wonders of the World

**Level:** Navigator

#### Objective

To help students learn more about the characteristics of a rainforest habitat, the layers that make up the rainforest, and the plants and animals that can be found in each layer.

#### Supplies

- *The Amazon Rainforest*
- Paper
- Colored pencils, pens, or markers

#### Before the Activity

Read through Chapter 3 (“Plants and Animals”) of *The Amazon Rainforest*, or assign it to students to read on their own.

#### Activity

The Amazon region of South America contains the world’s largest tropical rainforest. The Amazon rainforest is full of life from the treetops to the forest floor. Millions of different kinds of plants and animals live there. In fact, the Amazon rainforest contains approximately 30 percent of Earth’s plant and animal species. Many of these plants and animals can be found nowhere else on Earth.

Like all rainforests, it is an area of tall trees and plenty of rain. Temperatures stay warm and humid throughout the rainforest. However, the rainforest has four layers. Each layer provides a unique habitat and is home to different plants and animals.

Give each student a sheet of paper and have them fold it in half like an accordion to create four different sections. Students should fill in these sections with information about the four layers of the rainforest, starting with the highest layer at the top of the page and moving down to the lowest layer at the bottom.

For each layer, students should include the following information:

- The name of the layer
- One sentence describing what conditions in that layer are like
- Two sentences describing the type of plants that live in that layer and listing a few examples
- Two sentences describing the type of animals that live in that layer and listing a few examples.

After students have found and written these four pieces of information for each layer, they should use colored pencils, pens, or markers to draw a few of the plants or animals that can be found in each layer. Students can look at the “Layers of the Rainforest” infographic on page 21 to get ideas.

### **Evaluation**

Using the attached answer key, give students four points for describing each layer, for a total of up to 16 points.

### **Standards**

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards’ reading informational texts standards, grade 5 (RI 5.2; RI 5.3) and the National Science Education Standards’ Content Standard C, grades 5–8.

## Layers of Life in the Rainforest ANSWER KEY

### Top Layer

- Name: Emergent layer
- Conditions: In this top layer, treetops are exposed to wind, rain, and hot sun (p. 21).
- Plants: Trees such as the Brazil nut and kapok grow there. Their leaves are small and waxy to keep in moisture (p. 17).
- Animals: Treetops in the emergent layer are not strong, so most creatures that live there fly or glide. Bats, birds, and butterflies live in this layer (p. 17).

### Second Layer

- Name: Canopy
- Conditions: In the canopy, located just below the emergent layer, leaves and tree branches make a roof that keeps out most of the sun, wind, and rain (p. 21).
- Plants: Plants in this layer, such as fig trees and epiphytes, produce flowers and fruit all year long. Leaves are smooth, shiny, and pointed so that water can roll off (pp. 18–19).
- Animals: Monkeys, parrots, and sloths live in the canopy. But there are more insects (such as beetles, bees, and ants) than any other animals in this layer (p. 19).

### Third Layer

- Name: Understory
- Conditions: The understory layer is dim and humid, with not much light or wind (p. 21).
- Plants: Short trees, orchids, and shrubs grow in the understory. Plants in this layer tend to have large, dark green leaves and big, pale flowers (p. 20).
- Animals: Salamanders, tree frogs, and tree snakes live in this layer. Many birds and insects live in the understory as well (p. 20).

### Bottom Layer

- Name: Forest floor
- Conditions: This layer is very dark, humid, and still (p. 21).
- Plants: The forest floor contains the roots of many plants. Fungi also grow in this layer (p. 20).
- Animals: Giant armadillos dig for termites, ants, and millipedes on the forest floor. Jaguars, capybaras, scorpions, iguanas, and poison dart frogs live on the forest floor, too (p. 20).