

25. “The Tropical Rainforest Habitat”

by Core Knowledge Staff

Tropical places are warm and wet. A rainforest is a thick forest of plants that stay green year-round. There are tropical rainforests in many places around the world close to the equator. One rainforest is in South America, and is the largest tropical rainforest on Earth. It is the Amazon rainforest. The Amazon rainforest is so dense that you can easily get lost in it. It's hot and very humid. The temperature is always very warm, and it rains heavily all year long. There are between eighty and two hundred forty inches of rainfall here every year. That makes this one of the wettest places you can find on land.

The Amazon rainforest has broadleaf trees. The trees stay green all year long. The evergreen trees replace their leaves gradually throughout the year as the leaves age and fall. The trees always look green and never have bare branches. Because the climate is the same all year round, plants do not need to slow down for cold winter weather. Animals that live here always have a good supply of food all year, too.

The trees in the rainforest are incredibly tall. They grow as tall as thirteen-story buildings, and some grow much taller than that! The trees grow so thickly and so close together that from above, you can see only a canopy of thick green leaves. You can't see the forest floor at all. Because the sun's light can't get through this canopy of leaves, everything under them is really dark.

The plants in the Amazon rainforest have adapted to this climate in many ways. Because it's so dark in the rainforest underneath the canopy, most plants have large leaves so they can catch as much light as possible. Many of the plants have waxy leaves with ends that are tapered to help the water drip off them, like the water running off an umbrella.

Because the trees are so tall, they often have large roots that help hold them up. Also, their trunks are covered in smooth, thin bark. The trees don't need thick bark to protect them from cold weather. There are even some plants that grow high up on tree trunks and branches so that they can get to the sunlight that doesn't reach the forest floor!

Word Count: 381

NAME: _____

QUESTIONS

DATE: _____

Comprehension Questions

“The Tropical Rainforest Habitat”

Assess each student’s comprehension of the selection by asking him or her to respond orally to the following questions one on one with you:

1. **Literal** What is the largest tropical rainforest on Earth?
 - » the Amazon rainforest
2. **Inferential** Why do animals that live in the Amazon rainforest have a good supply of food all year?
 - » The climate is the same all year round so plants don’t need to slow down their growth to adjust to cold weather. Because plants don’t need to slow down their growth, they stay green all year long and gradually replace old leaves. The trees are never bare and thus, animals have food all year long.
3. **Literal** Why can you see only a canopy of leaves from above the Amazon rainforest?
 - » The trees grow so thickly and close together that you can’t see the forest floor.
4. **Literal** How have plants adapted to the rainforest habitat?
 - » growing large leaves to catch light; growing waxy leaves to help water drip off them; growing tall to reach sunlight; large roots to hold up the trees; thin bark on trees because there is no need for protection from cold weather