

Early Childhood Activities



- **Looking at Leaves**
- **Stop and Smell the Flowers**
- **Sounds of the Rainforest**
- **Get in Touch with Nature**
- **Stop and Smell the Flowers**
- **Growing a Rainforest in our Classroom**

Early Childhood Activity 1

Looking at Leaves

Overview

In this section, the children will explore different shapes as they learn about the rainforest. They compare shapes that can be found within the rainforest with the shapes they can form with their body and fingers, the shapes within the classroom, and in their own backyard!

Materials

- "Let's Walk with Chayo"
- outlines of leaf shapes
- music from Colombia
- shape necklaces
- dried leaves

Looking at leaves

1. Read "Let's Walk with Chayo" by the Rainforest Alliance (www.rainforest-alliance.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/curricula/EC-Lets-walk-with-chayo.pdf).
Ask: "What animals would you see if you went walking in the rainforest?"
2. Show students the picture on page 4 of "Let's Walk with Chayo."
Ask: "What do you notice about the leaves in this picture?"
3. Turn to page 9.
Ask: "What do you notice about this leaf shape?"

Literacy Connection

- "Let's Walk with Chayo"

Dance with the leaves

1. Hold up outlines of leaf shapes from "Let's Walk with Chayo."
Ask: "How could you use your body to make this shape? Can you make this shape with your whole body? With your fingers? While you are sitting? While you are standing" [repeat this process with the other leaf shapes]
2. Have the children scatter the leaves around the play area and stand among them. Tell the children they will be listening and moving to music from Chayo's country, Colombia. When the music starts, encourage the children to use the rhythm of the music as their movement guide or invite the children to move around the area like an animal (e.g., crawl like a spectacled bear, fly like a toucanet, or walk like an ant). When the music stops, each child



should find a leaf shape to stand on and create the shape with his or her body. Repeat the process.

Compare local leaf shapes to rainforest leaf silhouettes

1. Ask: "What is the same about these leaves? What is different?"
Explain that because there are so many trees in the rainforest, many are competing for sunlight to grow. Shorter rainforest trees, growing in the layer called the understory, have big leaves so they can try to capture as much sun as possible. See sample leaf shapes page.

Go for a shape walk

1. Ask: "What shapes would you see if you went walking in the rainforest with Chayo?"
2. Show students the images of rainforest leaves and see if they can point out circles, triangles, ovals and squares.
Ask: "What would we see if we went for a walk in our neighborhood?"
3. Before the walk, make "shape necklaces" by cutting out shapes from construction paper. Print the

Early Childhood Activity 1

Looking at Leaves

name of the shape on each cutout and punch a hole in each. Hold up each shape in turn, and ask the children to identify it.

Ask: "Do you see anything in our classroom that is this shape?"

4. Give each child one of each shape and show them how to string the shapes on yarn or pipe cleaners to make necklaces or bracelets. You could also consider starting with just one shape and adding more shapes over time.
5. Take a short walk outside to look for shapes. When you see an object that looks like one of the children's shapes, hold up the appropriate cutout and say, "I spy something shaped like a ____." Encourage the children to look for that particular shape in nature. Repeat with the other shapes. Encourage the children to look for shapes on their own and say, "I spy something shaped like a ____." With very young children, add colors to the description (e.g., "I spy something that is yellow and shaped like a ____").

6. When you return to the classroom, hold up each cutout shape in turn.

Ask: "What did you see outside shaped like a ____? What shapes did you see the most? Which shapes are your favorites?"

Create dried leaf art

1. During your nature walk, have children collect dried leaves, twigs and seeds. Return to the classroom and make designs of rainforest animals using natural materials.

Literacy Connection

- Ehlert, Lois. *Leaf Man*. Harcourt, Inc. New York: 2005. (ages 4–8)

Early Childhood Activity 2

Stop and Smell the Flowers

Overview

In this section, the children will learn to experience the world through smell, like many animals do. They will learn about the importance of scent to creatures such as birds and bees, and how even they connect certain smells with certain places.

Materials

- paper flowers
- essential oils
- music from Colombia
- film containers
- cotton balls
- nylons

Stop to smell the flowers

1. Scent paper flowers with a tree-based essential oil, such as cinnamon, eucalyptus, allspice, hibiscus, chocolate and/or vanilla.
2. Tape the flowers to the floor.
3. Encourage children to fly around the room and buzz like bees or flap their wings like bats or birds while the music is playing.
4. Stop the music several times, and have the children find a flower, bend down, and smell it. Explain how smell attracts pollinators to flowers to help spread their seeds.

Literacy Connection

- Appelt, Kathy. *Bat Jamboree*. HarperCollins, New York: 1998.
- Barner, Bob. *Bugs! Bugs! Bugs!* Chronicle Books, San Francisco: 1999.
- Lunde, Darrin. *Hello, Bumblebee Bat*. Charlesbridge Publishing, New York: 2007.
- Sturges, Philomen and Shari Halpern. *I Love Bugs!* HarperCollins Publishers, China: 2005.

Rainforest smells (chart students' reactions!)

1. Put small amounts of fragrant rainforest products into film containers. Add a cotton ball to containers with liquids. Put small squares of clean nylons over the tops of the containers. Drill one hole in each lid, and then secure the lids over the nylons. Vary the number of smells according to the age of your group. Number each container.



2. Make a chart on which children can record their reactions to each numbered smell by drawing smiley faces, sad faces or confused faces.
3. Show them how to smell unfamiliar or strong smells by waving their hand over the smell instead of inhaling them.
Ask: "Which smells do you recognize? Where were you when you smelled them? What do you think about when you smell this one?"

Early Childhood Activity 3

Sounds of the Rainforest

Overview

In this section, the children will learn to use their sense of hearing in order to explore the outside world. They will learn the importance of sound in identifying different objects, both natural and man-made. Then they will get to create their own rainforest concert!

Materials

- *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers
- American Sign Language cards
- *Meet the Howlers!* by April Pulley Sayre
- materials for rainforest instruments

Take a listening walk

1. Read *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers. As you read the story, encourage the children to make the noises in the book.
2. Before heading outside for your own listening walk, teach the children American Sign Language for a few outdoor sounds (e.g., bird, car, leaves, people, squirrel, water, wind). Then take an outdoor walk and use the signs to tell one another what you hear. Record your walk. Take some time outdoors to listen and talk about the sounds—both natural and human.
Ask: "How would you describe this sound? Where do you think it is coming from? What do you think is making it? Can you imitate it?"
3. When you return to the classroom, set up a learning center with the recording and the labeled American Sign Language cards. Encourage the children to make new cards for the things heard on the walk. Visit www.lifeprint.com for an illustrated American Sign Language dictionary.
Ask: "What do you think you would hear if you took a listening walk in the rainforest?"
4. Read aloud the following Rainforest Alliance narrative "Sounds of the Rainforest." Ask the students to close their eyes and imagine they are walking through the rainforest.

Sounds of the Rainforest

As you step into the rainforest, you look up at the tall trees. The trees feel like giants standing next to you. You almost can't see the sky because there are so many leaves and branches over your head. "Woo-hoo-hoo! Au-oh-ah!" screeches a howler monkey as he swings from branch to branch. You hear the branches



brush against each other—"swoosh, swoosh." The swaying branches cause seeds to fall down onto the rainforest floor. Plop! Plop! You look down and see red-eyed tree frogs hop away ("ribbit, ribbit"), moving the fallen leaves on the ground, which make a rustling noise. You walk farther into the rainforest. With each step you make, you hear a "squish, squish!" You notice an army of leafcutter ants lining up and carrying leaves to their nests. You listen hard, but the ants do not make a peep. But you hear flying insects buzzing all around you. Bzzzz. A mosquito flies close to your ear. You swat it away just as two beautiful macaw birds squawk as they fly above searching for fruit to eat. Drip! Drip! Drip! Just then you hear raindrops begin to fall. The rain starts to pour down. Drip! Pitter! Patter! Drip! You hide under a giant palm leaf and listen to the birds sing and tweet as they play in the rain.

5. Ask children to complete the following sentence: "I went walking in the rainforest and I heard..." Have the children choose the number and type of animals. Encourage them to act out each sentence. Write number sentences on the board to represent the statements.

Early Childhood Activity 3

Sounds of the Rainforest

A rainforest concert

1. Read *Meet the Howlers!* by April Pulley Sayre.
Ask: "What sound do howler monkeys make? Where do howler monkeys live? How do howler monkeys move from tree to tree? What do howler monkeys eat?" (check out our howler monkey species profile, which includes sounds of howler monkeys at night: www.rainforest-alliance.org/species/howler-monkey)
2. Create an "All About" book featuring howler monkeys.
3. Using the Rainforest Alliance species profiles, coloring book and sounds from the Rainforest Alliance Treehouse, create "All About" books about various rainforest animals.
4. Have students create masks representing rainforest animals.
5. Tell the children they are going to create their own forest music by using their bodies and voices to make different sounds. You can conduct the forest symphony by asking the children to start and stop, by encouraging them to get louder or softer, or by pointing to certain children to "play" solos.
Ask: "What is your favorite forest sound? Why? How did the different sounds of the forest make you feel?"
6. Help the children create rainforest instruments.
— rattle stick
— Materials:
 - 1" x 2" piece of wood approx. 7" long
 - eight bottle caps
 - four nails
 - hammer— Directions:
 - Make sure the wood is sanded smooth
 - Punch holes in the bottle caps using a hammer and a large nail
 - Loosely nail two sets of two caps on each side, leaving room for the caps to slide (a total of four nails and eight caps)
 - Shake the rattling stick back and forth— rainstick (find directions for a simple-to-make rainstick at www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/music/rainstick/ using a paper towel tube, aluminum foil, dried beans/lentils and construction paper)
7. As a class, write a poem about rainforest animals or the symphony. Ask children to write individual poems.

Literacy Connection

- Pulley Sayre, April. *Meet the Howlers!* Charlesbridge Publishing, New York: 2010.
- Pratt, Kristin Joy. *A Walk in the Rainforest.* Dawn Publications, Nevada City: 1992.
- Scholastic. *First Discovery: The Rain Forest.* Scholastic Reference, New York: 2008.

Early Childhood Activity 4

A Rainforest Taste Test

Overview

In this section, the children will explore different tastes while sampling food we eat every day that originates in rainforests. They will chart their reactions to each fruit and make their own rainforest snack.

Materials

- rainforest fruit

Rainforest taste test

- Arrange small amounts of rainforest fruits for children to taste. Make a chart where children can record their reactions to each rainforest fruit.

Sample chart:

<u>I tried a...</u>	<u>It tasted...</u>	<u>I liked it (Y/N)</u>
Pineapple	Sweet and a little sour	Yes

Ask: "What is your favorite rainforest fruit? Why? What is the class' favorite rainforest fruit? What is the class' least favorite rainforest fruit?"



Snack on a tropical treat

Rainforest Trail Mix

Ingredients:

- 1 cup macadamia nuts
- 1 cup cashews
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup dried bananas
- 3/4 cup coconut
- 1 cup dried pineapple

Directions:

- Pour items together in a large bowl. Stir until evenly mixed.
- Serve in small paper cups or plastic bags.
- Makes about 10–12 servings.

Early Childhood Activity 5

Get in Touch with Nature

Overview

In this section, the children will be introduced to different textures and use the sense of touch to explore the parts of rainforest trees.

Materials

- shoeboxes
- rainforest tree items
- large sheets of paper
- crayons

The mystery box

1. Make mystery boxes by cutting two circles in the long side of each shoebox so that a child could put both hands inside.
2. Set up several mystery boxes and place one rainforest tree item inside each box (banana, cinnamon stick, orange, Brazil nuts, wood, etc.)
3. Encourage the children to touch the mystery objects with their hands. If you have a group of children, have the children sit in a circle and pass the mystery box so that each child has a turn at reaching into the box.
Ask: "How does the object feel? What words would you use to describe it? What do you think it is?"
4. Invite the children to remove the lids and to look at the objects. Were any of their guesses correct?

Make bark rubbings

1. Tape large sheets of paper to tree trunks with masking tape.
2. Have the children rub a crayon sideways back and forth across the paper. The pattern of the bark should begin to show on the paper.
3. Label the rubbings with the real or made-up names of the trees. Talk about the patterns that appear.
Ask: "How are the patterns different? How are the patterns the same?"
4. Use the rubbings in collages or frame them as artwork.



Early Childhood Activity 6

Growing a Rainforest in Our Classroom

Overview

After exploring the rainforest through all five senses, students will create a rainforest mural depicting the wonders of this unique habitat. Encourage them to include information on what they would see, smell, taste, touch and hear in the rainforest.

Materials

- large butcher paper
- crayons
- finger paint
- additional art materials

Make me a tree

1. Lay a large piece of butcher paper (about 6 feet long) on a flat surface.
2. Ask a child to lie down in the middle of the paper with his or her legs together and arms spread out. Trace around the child. Do the same for the other children.
3. Invite the children to turn the outlines of themselves into trees by making their feet "grow" into roots and by adding limbs, twigs, leaves and seeds.
4. Create a mural of your class' forest and point out the different levels of the rainforest represented by the different heights of the trees.
5. Make smaller rainforest plants for the understory using a finger-painting tree activity.
6. Sing a rainforest song together, such as "Layers in the Forest," to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know it":

Layers in the Forest

There are layers in the forest, yes indeed
Yes indeed! [kids love to shout this part]
There are layers in the forest, yes indeed
Yes indeed!
Emergent, canopy and the understory
There are layers in the forest
Yes indeed!
The emergent's home to birds and butterflies
Butterflies!
The emergent's home to birds and butterflies
Butterflies!
The trees are so high that they almost touch the sky
The emergent's home to birds and butterflies



Butterflies!

The canopy is like a big umbrella
Big umbrella!
The canopy is like a big umbrella
Big umbrella!
Monkeys, sloths, orangutan
Eat all the fruit they can
The canopy is like a big umbrella
Big umbrella!
The understory's home to many snakes
Many snakes!
The understory's home to many snakes
Many snakes!
They eat cats and rats and bats
And they like the gnats for snacks
The understory's home to many snakes
Many snakes!
The forest floor is dim and dark and wet
Dark and wet
The forest floor is dim and dark and wet
Dark and wet
The ants go marching by as they watch the birds up
high,
The forest floor is dim and dark and wet
Dark and wet!

Early Childhood Activity 6

Growing a Rainforest in Our Classroom

Add animals to your tree mural

1. Create rainforest snakes using old ties!

— Materials:

- an old tie
- craft stuffing or recycled clothing
- hot glue gun
- red felt
- googly eyes

— Directions:

- Collect old ties.
- Have the kids stuff the tie with craft stuffing or recycled clothes. Stuff from both ends and use a pencil or stick to help reach the middle.
- Glue the small end closed.
- Cut out tongues from the red felt.
- Glue the tongues under the point on the big end of the tie.
- Stuff some craft stuffing to fill up the snake's head and glue the wide end closed.
- Glue on large googly eyes on the top of the snake's head (the top of the big area).

If you want the snake to be bendable, take wire (possibly from a hanger) and fold over the ends with needle-nose pliers so no sharp points can be felt. Then place it into the tie before stuffing with the craft stuffing.

2. Encourage children to color and cut out animals from the Rainforest Alliance coloring pages.
3. To place the animals into your forest mural, ask your students:
 - How does this animal move?
 - What kind of food does this animal eat?
 - Where do you think this animal would find its food?
 - In which layer do you think this animal lives?
4. Add animals to the right rainforest level on the class mural.
5. Encourage children to draw rainforest products found in the mystery boxes and add them to the mural.
6. Play "I Spy" with the mural.



Activity

Leaf Images



Activity

Leaf Images



Activity

Leaf Images



Activity

Leaf Images



Activity

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Activity

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Activity

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