

## **LESSON 1: THE LAYERS OF THE RAINFOREST**

### **Lesson plan overview**

In this lesson, students will explore the four distinct layers of the rainforest—emergent, canopy, understory, and forest floor—and learn how each provides a unique habitat for different animals and plants. Through an engaging video, students will discover which animals thrive in each layer and why. A matching worksheet reinforces understanding of animal adaptations and habitat needs, while math and art extensions deepen cross-curricular learning. This lesson encourages students to analyze data, construct arguments, and visualize how survival varies in different rainforest environments.

### **Educational materials**

- **Video:** ‘Rainforest Layers’
- **Worksheet:** Layers of life
- **Quiz:** Multiple choice on characteristics of layers and animal placement
- **Math tie-in:** Animals in the rainforest layers
- **Art tie-in:** Create a four-layer flap poster
- **Classroom discussion questions:**
  - Why do some animals live high in the trees while others stay on the forest floor?
  - What might happen if one layer was damaged?

# WORKSHEET: Layers of Life



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Draw the four layers of the rainforest, starting with the forest floor.  
Label each layer and draw at least one animal that lives in each!**

**Emergent layer**

**Canopy**

**Understory**

**Forest floor**



# QUIZ: Rainforest Layers



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Match the layer to the description

Write the correct letter to match the rainforest layer to its description.

A. Forest floor

B. Understory

C. Canopy

D. Emergent layer

\_\_\_\_\_ This layer is dark and damp with animals like jaguars and anacondas.

\_\_\_\_\_ This is the highest layer with tall trees and lots of sun, where eagles soar.

\_\_\_\_\_ This is the middle layer with leafy branches where monkeys and birds thrive.

\_\_\_\_\_ This layer is shady and full of shrubs and vines. Frogs and insects live here.



## FILL IN THE BLANKS

Use the words from the word bank to complete the sentences:

**Word bank:** sunlight, hiding, climb, floor, tall



1. The forest \_\_\_\_\_ gets very little sunlight.

2. The canopy is a busy place full of animals that like to \_\_\_\_\_.

3. The emergent layer has the \_\_\_\_\_ trees in the rainforest.

4. The understory is perfect for animals who are good at \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Only 2% of \_\_\_\_\_ reaches the forest floor.

# MATH TIE-IN



## Animals in the Rainforest Layers

**Below is the number of animals spotted in each rainforest layer during a nature walk. Use this data to answer the questions below and draw a bar chart on graph paper on the next page.**

Forest floor: 4 animals  
Understory: 6 animals  
Canopy: 10 animals  
Emergent layer: 3 animals



1. Which layer had the most animals?
2. Which layer had the fewest animals?
3. How many more animals were seen in the canopy than on the forest floor?
4. Add up all the animals. How many were seen in total?

## MATH TIE-IN



## Animals in the Rainforest Layers

This image shows a full page of blank graph paper. The background is a very light gray color. Overlaid on this background is a precise grid of thin, medium-gray horizontal and vertical lines. These lines intersect to form a series of small, identical squares across the entire surface of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

## FOREST FLOOR

## UNDERSTORY

## CANOPY

## EMERGENT LAYER

# MATH TIE-IN

## Animals in the Rainforest



### Bonus questions

**Challenge yourself with these questions!**

1. If each animal spotted in the canopy eats 2 fruits per day, how many fruits do they eat altogether in one week? (Hint: Canopy had 10 animals)

2. Write a fraction that shows what part of the total animals were seen in the understory. (Hint: Use the total number of animals from earlier.)

$$\frac{\square}{\square}$$

3. Imagine you visited again and saw 2 more animals in each layer. How many animals would you have seen in total?



4. Which two layers together had more animals than the canopy? Show your math.

# ART TIE-IN



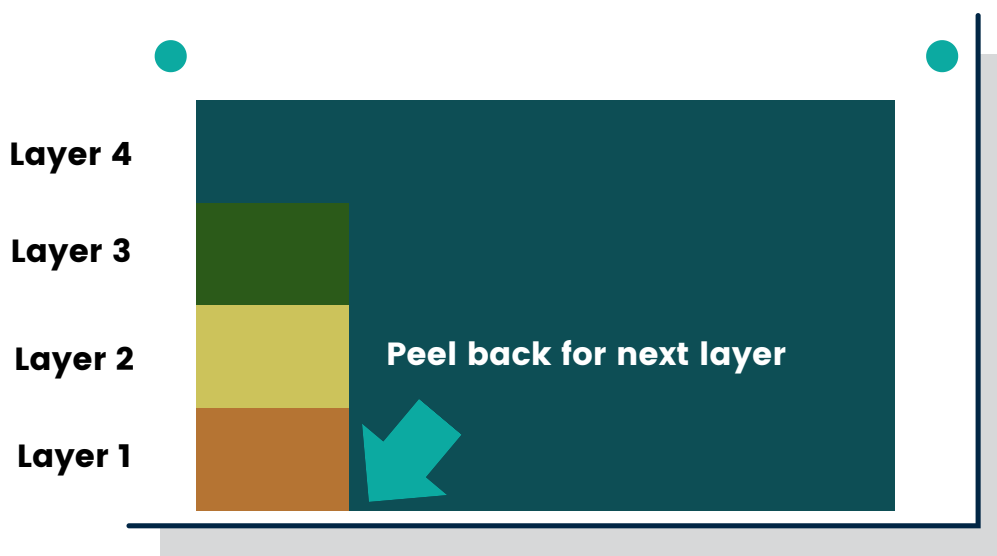
## Rainforest Layers Flap Poster

**Create a 4-layer rainforest poster using construction paper and collage materials! Get creative!**

### **Instructions:**

1. Use different colors of paper to represent the forest floor, understory, canopy, and emergent layer.
2. Glue them onto a large poster vertically from bottom to top.
3. Cut and tape each layer so it becomes a flap students can lift.
4. Under each flap, draw or paste pictures of animals that live in that layer.
5. Label each layer and include 1–2 facts.

Tip: You can also print and cut out animal pictures or use leaves and tissue paper for texture!



# Rainforest Layers



## EMERGENT LAYER

- Kapok tree
- White-tailed hawk
- Brazil nut tree
- Orchids
- Scarlet macaw
- Harpy eagle

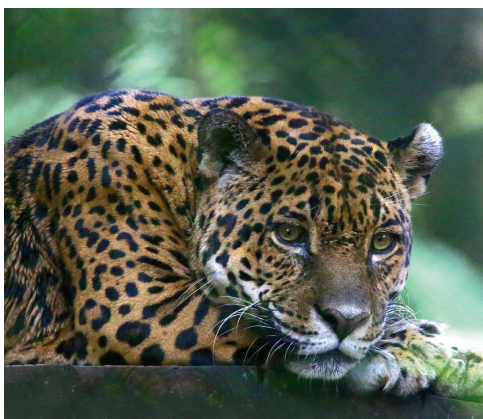
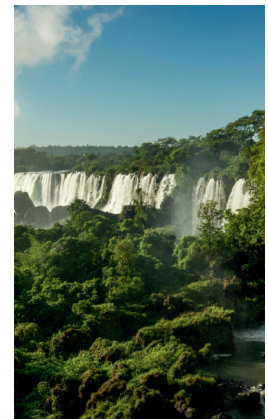


## CANOPY

- Lianas climbing up trees
- Monkeys (black howler monkey, spider monkey)
- Lemur
- Orangutan
- Brown-throated three-toed sloth
- Ferns, moss & lichen
- Bats
- Insects
- Flying frog
- Birds (scarlet macaw, keel-billed toucan, red-lobed parrot, great horned owl, cock-of-the-rock)
- Draco lizard
- Orchids
- Bromeliads
- Emerald tree boa
- Green iguana
- Margay
- Coati
- Mundi
- Fig trees
- Tamandua
- Kinkajou

## UNDERSTORY

- Palms
- Lianas and other vines
- Snakes (emerald tree boa)
- Red-eyed tree frog
- Butterflies (blue morpho butterfly, Heliconius butterfly)
- Philodendrons
- Dracaenas
- Orchids
- Poinsettias
- Honduran white bat
- Bromeliads
- Heliconia
- Coffee trees
- Banana trees
- Cocoa trees



## FOREST FLOOR

- Insects (termites, nematodes, mites, ants)
- Frogs (poison dart frogs)
- Snakes
- Rodents (agouti paca, rats)
- Wild pigs (collared peccary)
- Wild cats (jaguar, ocelot, leopard)
- Deer & antelope (white-tailed deer)
- Nine-banded armadillo
- Ocellated turkey
- Blue morpho butterfly
- Great curassow
- Amazonian tapir
- Anteater
- Lizards
- Fungi