

GEOGRAPHY · GRADES 4–5

Rainforests

Earth's lungs

Four layers of the rainforest

- 1

Emergent layer (top)
Tallest trees, sticking out above everything. Birds and insects.
Example: Up to 60 m tall.
- 2

Canopy
Dense roof of branches and leaves. Most rainforest life lives here.
Example: Monkeys, parrots, tree frogs.
- 3

Understory
Shorter trees and shrubs. Damp and dim — only 5% of sunlight reaches here.
Example: Snakes, jaguars, leopards.
- 4

Forest floor
Almost dark. Decomposers break down fallen material fast.
Example: Fungi, ants, beetles, anteaters.

Major rainforests

Rainforest	Where	Size	Threat
Amazon	South America	5.5 million km ²	Deforestation, fires
Congo	Central Africa	1.8 million km ²	Logging, mining
Daintree	NE Australia	1,200 km ²	Climate, tourism

Rainforest	Where	Size	Threat
Sundaland	SE Asia (Borneo, Sumatra)	1.5 million km ²	Palm-oil plantations
Atlantic Forest	Brazilian coast	Highly fragmented	Centuries of clearing

Apply

1. Why are rainforests sometimes called 'Earth's lungs'?
2. Half of all known species live in rainforests. Why might rainforests be especially diverse?
3. Name two threats to rainforests. What's one thing humans can do?

