

GEOGRAPHY · Y3–Y6

Rainforests

Knowledge Organiser — Y3–Y6

Layers of the rainforest

From top to bottom

- EMERGENT LAYER (30–45m+): tallest trees poking above the canopy — eagles, harpy eagles, butterflies
- CANOPY (20–30m): dense roof of overlapping treetops — monkeys, parrots, toucans, sloths; most photosynthesis happens here
- UNDERSTOREY (5–20m): shade-tolerant plants, younger trees, ferns, mosses — jaguars, tree frogs, snakes
- FOREST FLOOR (0–5m): dark, humid, almost no sunlight reaches here — decomposers, ants, fungi, gorillas, large mammals
- 70–80% of rainforest animals live in the CANOPY
- The Amazon: 7 million km² — covers 40% of South America

Key vocabulary

1

Biodiversity

The variety of living things in an area. Tropical rainforests contain 50% of the world's species on just 6% of land surface.

2

Deforestation

The large-scale removal of forest. Causes: farming, logging, mining, roads, ranching.

Example: 17% of the Amazon has been lost since 1970



3

Indigenous people

People whose ancestors have lived in a region for thousands of years before settlers arrived.

Example: Over 400 indigenous groups in the Amazon

4

Carbon sink

A system that absorbs more carbon dioxide than it releases. The Amazon absorbs 2 billion tonnes of CO₂ per year.

5

Nutrient cycle

Rainforest soil is thin and poor — nutrients come from rapid decomposition, not stored in the soil.

