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**Special School Photocopy Master Edition**

# **Wonders of the Rainforest Resource Book**



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**by Jane Bourke**

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# Learning About Rainforests



Have you ever wondered exactly what a rainforest is and how it works? For example, does it rain all the time, is it hot or is it cold? Can people live in these forests? Where on earth are rainforests found? What is a biome? No idea? Well read on!

How much do you really know about rainforests? Do you imagine that the forest floor of a rainforest is a mass of tangled vines and jungle? Well, you may be surprised to learn that most rainforests have hardly any vegetation growing on their forest floors at all. Plants find it hard to grow there because the other layers of the rainforest have blocked out most of the sunlight and sometimes the rain as well! Because of the darkness, most plants are not able to grow in such regions.

You may also be surprised to learn that rainforests play a very important role in the earth's **ecosystem** by recycling water and cleaning the air.

And, did you know that more than half of the entire animal species on the planet call the rainforest their home? Amazing really – especially when you realise that rainforests cover only a tiny fraction of the earth's land surface.



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## This book contains info on:

- rainforest locations
- rainforest features
- layers of a rainforest
- fruits of the forest
- people of the forest
- rainforest wildlife
- rainforest plants
- what is happening to the rainforests
- how you can help the rainforests



**Read on to learn all about rainforests, as well as some of the other ecoregions or biomes that are found on our wonderful planet.**



# What is a Biome?

A **biome** is a geographic area on the earth's surface that has a unique set of characteristics. Each biome has a certain type of **climate** and contains certain living things (e.g. plants and animals). There are many different biomes around the globe, each with its own unique life forms and different environments.

Scientists have studied the biomes of our earth and have discovered that there are hundreds of different **ecoregions** around the globe that are all special in their own way. In this book we have grouped these regions into seven basic kinds of biomes:

1. Tundra
2. Taiga
3. Grasslands
4. Temperate Forest
5. Rainforest
6. Deserts
7. Aquatic

Biomes that occur on land are called **terrestrial** biomes.

**Aquatic** biomes include wetlands, freshwater regions such as ponds, lakes and rivers and marine regions such as coral reefs, estuaries and oceans.

## CLIMATE



The climate refers to the weather patterns, the temperature, the amount of light and moisture in the air.

There are many different types of climates around the world.

## Check out:

► [www.enchantedlearning.com/biomes](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/biomes)

How many of these biomes have you heard of?

- Desert
- Tundra
- Coniferous forest (taiga)
- Deciduous forest
- Wetlands
- Tropical rainforest
- Temperate rainforest
- Mountains
- Caves
- Scrub forest
- Freshwater marsh
- Marine
- Grasslands
- Prairie
- Savanna
- Swamp
- Arctic



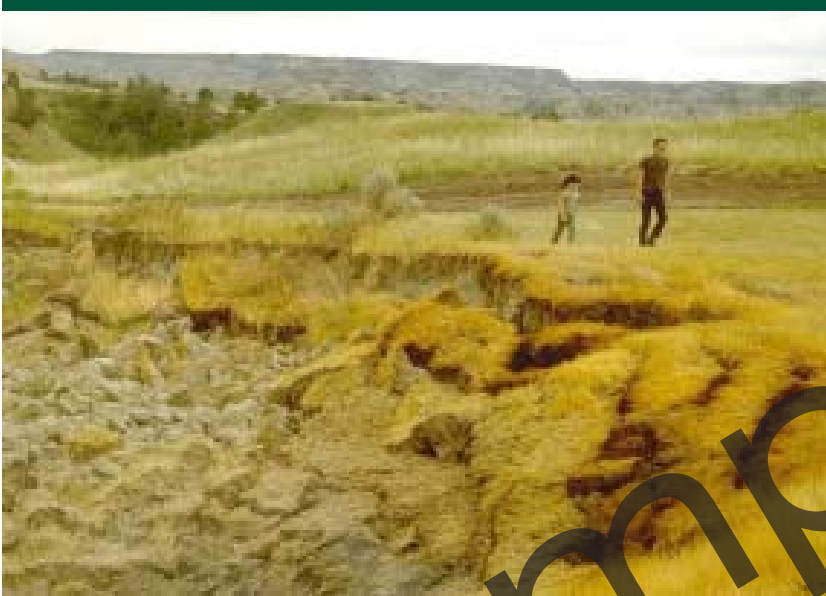




# The Earth's Ecoregions

## GRASSLANDS

- Tropical grasslands (savanna)
- Temperate grasslands



- ▶ **Temperature**  
Warm to hot and often with a cold season
- ▶ **Water**  
Wet season, dry season
- ▶ **Soil Type**  
Fertile
- ▶ **Plants**  
Grasses and some bushes, no trees
- ▶ **Animals**  
Wide variety of mammals, birds, reptiles, insects and spiders.

## DESERT

- Hot and dry ● Semi-arid
- Coastal ● Cold



- ▶ **Temperature**  
Very hot or very cold
- ▶ **Water**  
Almost none
- ▶ **Soil Type**  
Dry and poor quality
- ▶ **Plants**  
Hardly any vegetation. Some small shrubs and succulent plants (e.g. cactus) are able to survive the harsh climate.
- ▶ **Animals**  
Burrowing animals such as kangaroo rats. Also mammals (coyotes, dingoes, rabbits, mice and foxes) and some species of reptiles, insects and birds.

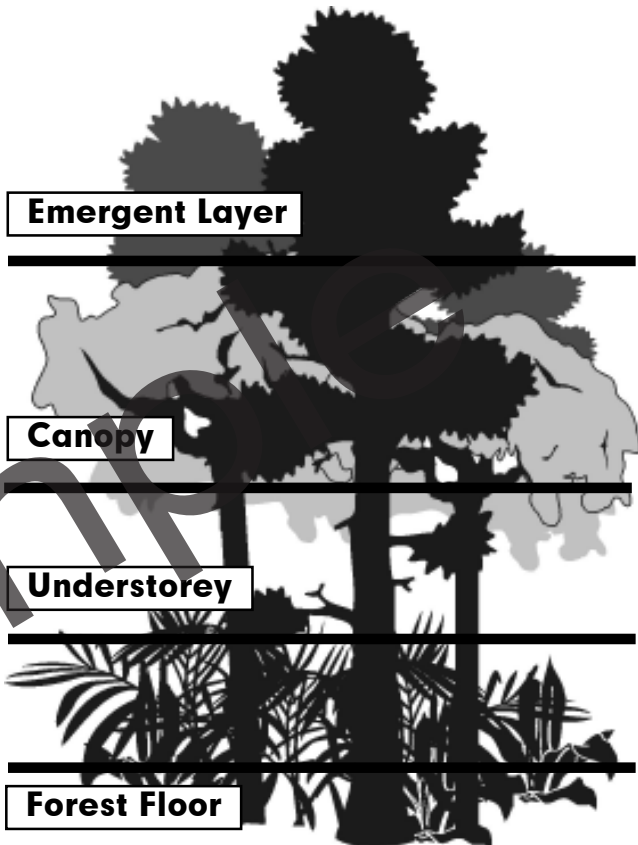


# Layers of the Rainforests?

A RAINFOREST HAS DIFFERENT LAYERS OF PLANT GROWTH THAT ARE SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS STRATAS. THEY INCLUDE:

## The Emergent Layer

Taller than all the other plants in the forests are giant trees called **emergent** trees, which grow to heights of 35 to 75 metres. They have small leaves, umbrella-shaped crowns and tall slender trunks. The trees of a tropical rainforest stay green all year round.



## The Canopy

The next layer, the **canopy**, is like a thick green carpet. This layer is made up of flat-topped trees that grow to 20 to 30 metres in height. The leaves of these trees block out a lot of the sunlight making some areas of the rainforest quite dark.