

## **AMAZON RAIN FOREST Reading Comprehension**

The Amazon is the world's largest tropical rain forest. It covers an area of nearly 2.8 million square miles, which is nearly the size of the continent of Australia. The Amazon rain forest gets its life from the majestic Amazon River, the world's second-largest river, which runs directly through the heart of the region. The rain forest itself is simply the drainage basin for the river and its many tributaries. The vast forest itself consists of four layers, each featuring its own ecosystems and specially adapted plants and animals.

The forest floor is the lowest region. Since only 2 percent of the sunlight filters through the top layers to the understory, very few plants grow here. The forest floor, however, is rich with rotting vegetation and the bodies of dead organisms, which are quickly broken down into nutrients integrated into the soil. Tree roots stay close to these available nutrients, and decomposers, such as millipedes and earthworms, use these nutrients for food.

The understory is the layer above the forest floor. Much like the forest floor, only about 2–5 percent of the sunlight reaches this shadowy realm. Many of the plants in the understory have large, broad leaves to collect as much sunlight as possible. The understory is so thick that there is very little air movement. As a result, plants rely on insects and animals to pollinate their flowers.

The layer above the understory is the canopy. This is where much of the action in the rain forest occurs. Many canopy leaves have specially adapted leaves which form "drip tips." Drip tips allow water to flow off the leaves, which prevents mosses, fungi, and lichens from occupying the leaves. Leaves in the canopy are very dense and filter about 80 percent of the sunlight. The canopy is where the wealth of the rain forest's fruits and flowers grow. Bromeliads, cuplike plants, provide drinking pools for animals and breeding locations for tree frogs.

The emergent layer is above the canopy and is the top layer of the rain forest. Trees in the emergent layer break through the canopy and may reach heights of 200 feet. Leaves in the emergent layer are small and covered with a special wax to hold water. Seeds are blown to other parts of the forest. Trees that rise to the emergent layer are massive. Many are braced by huge buttress roots. Trunks can be 16 feet in circumference. Many animals that survive in the emergent layer never touch the ground.

1.) The Amazon rain forest covers an area nearly the size of the continent of \_\_\_\_\_.

2.) Which of the following is not a layer of the rain forest?

- a.) understory                      b.) emergent                      c.) sub-canopy                      d.) canopy

3.) Which layer of the rain forest is right above the forest floor?

- a.) emergent layer                      b.) canopy                      c.) understory

4.) Most of the fruits and flowers of the rain forest grow in its...

- a.) emergent layer                      b.) canopy                      c.) forest floor                      d.) understory

5.) \_\_\_\_\_ provide drinking pools for animals and breeding locations for tree frogs.

6.) Many trees in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the rain forest are braced by huge buttress roots.

- a.) emergent layer                      b.) understory                      c.) canopy                      d.) forest floor

7.) Animals that live in the \_\_\_\_\_ may never touch the ground.

- a.) canopy                      b.) understory                      c.) forest floor                      d.) emergent layer

8.) Why do few plants grow in the understory?

- a.) There is not enough water.                      b.) There is not enough sunlight.                      c.) Their leaves are too large.                      d.) There are not enough nutrients.

9.) Why do plants in the understory have to rely on insects to pollinate them?

- a.) The sun is too bright in the understory.                      b.) The wind is too strong and seeds blow into the Amazon River.                      c.) There is very little wind in the understory.                      d.) There are very few butterflies in the rain forest.

10.) Which of the following is NOT true?

- a.) The canopy is higher than the emergent layer.  
b.) The understory is below the canopy.  
c.) The Amazon rain forest is located in South America.  
d.) Leaves in the canopy are very dense and filter a high percentage of sunlight.