



A Helping Hand for the Rain Forest

Overview

Saving the rainforest is something that many children and adults are passionate about. Rainforests are full of rare life and plants. Every day miles of rainforests are cut down and removed forever. This project will allow students to learn more about rainforests, deforestation, and what students can do to make a difference. Students will create boxes that can be used in homes for recycling shopping bags.

Suggested Age Group(s) Elementary and middle school; Grades 3-8

Content Standards and Curriculum Alignment

This lesson on rainforests aligns with science content for animals and habitats, plants, biodiversity, biomes, and ecosystems.

Project Instructions

Objectives

- Participants will learn about the negative effects of deforestation of rainforests.
- Participants will use prior knowledge and new information to discuss what items from everyday life come from the rainforest.
- Participants will learn ways to conserve and help the rainforest in their daily lives.

Materials Needed

- *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynn Cherry (optional)
- Chart paper, chalk board, or dry erase board
- Shoe boxes, cereal boxes, or other medium sized boxes
- Butcher paper (or something similar)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Scissors
- Glue



Vocabulary

Review the following vocabulary words for students to help with comprehension.

- Kapok tree - also known as a ceiba tree, a large tropical tree with large pods of silky floss used for making mattresses and life preservers
- Generations - one family after another; a measure of time
- Ancestors - families that came before us
- Pollination - how plants reproduce
- Oxygen - the gas we breathe to stay alive
- Canopy - a kind of roof formed by treetops
- Amazon River - a river in South America, the largest in the world
- Understory- the plants growing on the ground, under the canopy
- Deforestation - clearing all of the trees from a forested area
- Camouflage - being disguised to match your surroundings
- Conservation - preventing loss, injury or other change.
- Deforestation - the removal of trees.
- Recycle - use again.

Lesson

Consider holding this lesson outdoors where there are trees. Ask the participants if anyone has ever heard of a 'rainforest'. Solicit responses and engage in an opening discussion about rainforests and their importance. Be sure to cover the following:

- Rainforests are dense, warm, wet forests. Many are found in areas of the world close to the equator.
- Rainforests are the wettest areas of land on earth and are named after the high amount of rainfall these forests receive each year.
- Rainforests have more plants and animals than any other land area.
- Rainforests are a diverse place that provides many resources and products for human use.



Pretest students' Rainforest IQ with Rainforest Reality Check found below. These six questions will help engage students' curiosity. Individually or in small groups, ask participants to read the following questions and circle the correct answer. You may wish to have students do research online and/or at the library beforehand.

Rainforest Reality Check

1. Which of these spices is not commonly derived from plants in the rainforest?

Cinnamon Garlic Cocoa Black pepper

2. Which of these sweets comes from a type of tree in the rainforest?

Cotton candy Chewing gum Toffee

3. Which of these fruits is not grown in the rainforest?

Dates Avocado Lemons Mango

4. Which of these common household items are made from rainforest trees and plants?

Paper Tissues Aspirin All of the these

5. Which of these places contain rainforests?

Alaska Canada South America All of the these

6. How many species (types) of trees are found in a typical rainforest?

150 325 750 1,000

7. Which of these animals live in the rainforest?

Toucan Iguana Giant Tree frog All of the these



Answers:

1. Garlic is the only one of these spices not commonly grown in a rainforest.
2. Chewing gum is actually derived from chicle, a product that comes from the sap of the Sapodilla tree in Central America.
3. Dates are grown mainly in deserts, not rainforests.
4. All of these; each of these common household items can be derived from rainforests.
5. All of these; Alaska, Canada, the American Northwest, and South America all contain rainforests.
6. 750 - A typical four-square-mile area of rainforest contains 750 species of trees.
7. All of the these - all of these animals can be found in the rainforests around the worlds

When students have finished, ask if anyone was surprised by the answers. Next, ask them what they know about deforestation. Inform students that due to deforestation, an area of rainforest the size of a football field is destroyed every second (source: The Nature Conservancy). Deforestation displaces animals, hurts natural wildlife, and reduces the amount of clean air produced by the forests. There are things we can do in our everyday lives to reduce the need for deforestation. One way is to always recycle and reuse so, that we don't have to cut down new trees. For additional information about rainforests, visit: <http://www.nature.org/rainforests/explore/facts.html>

Optional: Read the book *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynn Cherry and hold a discussion about what it says.

Project

Students will create reminder boxes for recycling and reusing plastic and paper shopping bags. These boxes will be placed in homes to remind families to reuse shopping bags instead of getting new ones. Families also can place their plastic and paper bags in the box and pull them out again for the next time they go shopping. Participants can either take their boxes home with them or donate them to others within the community (such as a school or nursing home).

1. Have participants cut deposit holes in the tops of their boxes. Make sure the holes are large enough so bags can be deposited and taken out when needed.



2. Next, students cut the appropriate amount of butcher paper to wrap around their boxes. Tape/glue the butcher paper to the boxes.
3. As a class, come up with sayings, words, and reminder phrases that can be written on the boxes.
4. Using colored pencils, markers, and crayons, have students decorate their boxes. Participants may also want to draw pictures or symbols on their boxes (such as a recycle symbol).

Reflection

When the project has finished, gather everyone back together to share their finished boxes. Next, ask students how these boxes will serve as reminders for people to reuse their shopping bags and why this is a good thing for the environment and the rainforest. If participants are taking their boxes home with them, ask where they might place their boxes so that they will be seen and used.

Additional Resources

- The Nature Conservancy: Facts about Rainforests
<http://www.nature.org/rainforests/explore/facts.html>

Sample Checklist

Before students arrive, it is important to establish:

- Where students will work,
- Where everyone will sit for discussion (maybe put chairs in a circle or sit on a classroom rug),
- Where students will put their backpacks, coats, or other items they do not want to get in the way,
- If portions of the lesson can be held outside.

Notes

- If you have volunteers and youth leaders, ask them to help with setup.
- It is important to establish how the project will run. Will students go directly to materials, or will they go to a place to sit and receive instructions?



- o Ask volunteers and youth leaders to help younger students with their projects.