

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

Vocabulary Readers

ANIMALS OF THE AMAZON

by Catherine Reardon



Number of Words: 683

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Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN: 0-618-64954-9

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Strategy Focus

As you read, **monitor** your understanding of rain-forest animals. Reread to **clarify** anything you don't understand.



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

BOSTON

Key Vocabulary

canopy top branches of rain-forest trees

captive held against one's will; imprisoned

dilemma a problem; a difficult decision

extinction having died out

genes tiny parts of cells

habitat a creature's natural environment

humid damp and sticky

observation watching

predators animals that hunt

reintroduction returning animals to their natural environment

Word Teaser


These sound like something you would wear. But you can't buy new ones at the store. What are they?

The Amazon rain forest is the biggest rain forest in the world. It covers almost half of Brazil, in South America. The Amazon River runs through the forest.

Like many other rain forests, the Amazon stays warm all year. It also get lots of rain. That makes the air very **humid**, or moist.

This warm and wet **habitat** is a good home for many animals. Some of them couldn't live in any other place. There are so many animals in the Amazon that scientists haven't identified them all.

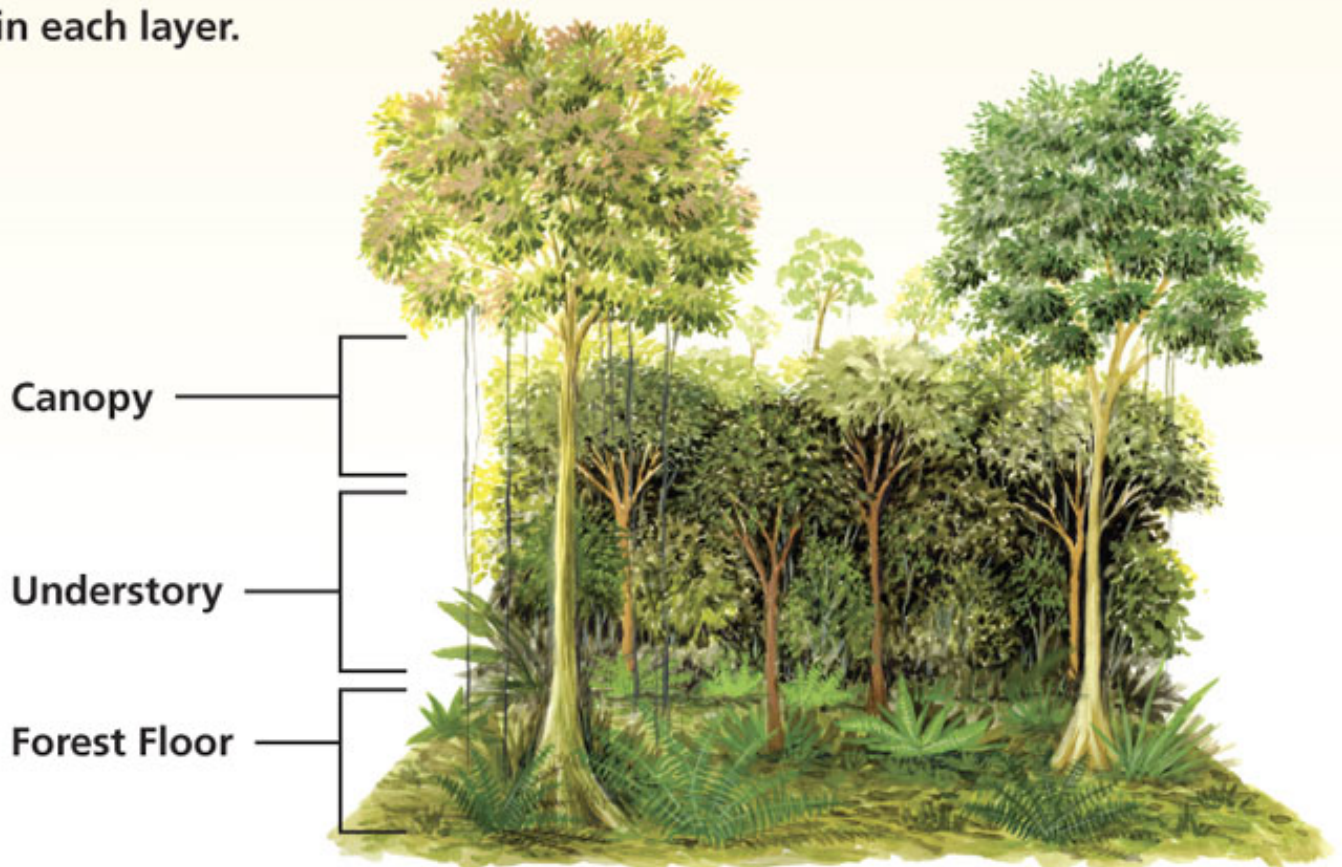




The Amazon's trees are tall and close together. The tops of the trees form a thick, leafy **canopy**. Many rain-forest animals live in the treetops. The canopy provides both shelter and food for animals.

Each animal in the rain forest looks and acts in a special way. Like animals everywhere, the parent animals pass their traits to their babies through their **genes**. Genes affect how animals look or behave. Genes cause animals to have long tails, or big beaks, or sharp claws, for example.

The rain forest has different layers. Different animals live in each layer.



Many types of monkeys live in the canopy. They use their long arms to swing through the trees. They use their tails to hang from branches.

The howler monkey is the largest monkey in the Amazon. It is also the loudest. You can hear it howl from more than a mile away.



Toucans also live in the canopy. These tropical birds are easy to see because of their large, colorful beaks. The toucan uses its beak to eat fruit.

Toucans can't fly well. They prefer to hop from one tree to another. That's why they like to live in the canopy, where the branches are close together.



Sloths spend most of their time hanging upside down from trees. Their curved claws help them hold on to branches.

Sloths move slowly. Being slow helps sloths hide from **predators**, or animals that want to hunt and eat them. A sloth's enemies have a hard time seeing or hearing it.



The harpy eagle makes its nest in the tallest trees. This huge bird can fly 50 miles an hour. It darts in and out of branches to catch animals. It's very strong, too. It can carry a monkey away in its claws.



Smaller trees grow below the forest canopy. Jaguars sit in the low tree branches, watching for animals on the ground. When they see a creature that would make a good meal, jaguars will leap on it. Jaguars use their strong jaws to kill and eat their meal.




Iguanas climb in the lower trees. These huge lizards can be over six feet long. Although they may look like monsters, they really aren't scary. They mainly eat plants.



Many of the Amazon's largest animals live on the dark floor of the rain forest. The anaconda is one of these. It is one of the world's biggest snakes. It can grow to more than 30 feet long!

The anaconda likes to hide in swamps and rivers. There, it waits for animals to cross its path. The anaconda grabs its prey and squeezes it to death. It can eat animals as large as a deer.






Today, many rain-forest animals face **extinction**. Soon they might not exist anymore. Others have already died out. Why?

Hundreds of years ago, the Amazon was much bigger than it is today. Then people began cutting and burning down the rain forest. They wanted to make room for farms and ranches. Every year, more of the forest is destroyed. A shrinking rain forest means less food and shelter for animals. When that happens, some animals die.

People who live in the Amazon rain forest face a **dilemma**, or problem. They want to keep building and thriving. But they don't want to harm the rain forest and its animals.





Scientists are trying to help. They study rain-forest animals in their natural environment. They also raise baby animals in zoos. There, scientists can make careful **observations** of animal behavior. After watching the animals closely, they release the **captive** animals back into the forest. This **reintroduction** to their natural environment can help increase the numbers of many kinds of rain-forest animals.

But scientists can't solve the problem alone. People need to take care of the environment, too, so these amazing animals can stay alive.

Responding

Putting Words to Work

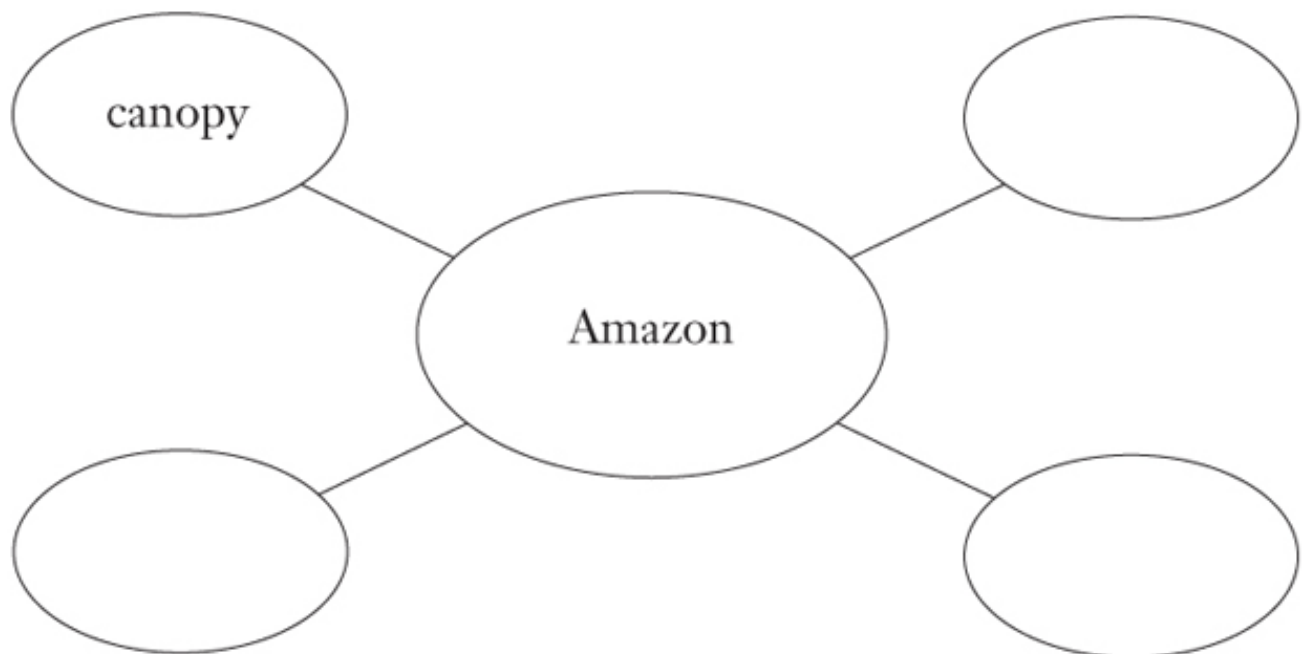
1. Why do you think it's dark beneath the rain forest's **canopy**?
2. Describe the **habitat** where you live.
3. What is the main idea on page 13? What supporting details does the author include? Use at least two of the following words in your answer: **captive, observations, reintroduction**
4. Name two animals in the book that are **predators**. How do you know they are predators?
5. **PARTNER ACTIVITY:** Think of a word you learned in the text. Explain its meaning to your partner and give an example.

Answer to Word Teaser

genes

Word Builder

Canopy is one word that helps describe features of the Amazon rain forest. Copy this word web. Add other words that describe the rain forest.



Write About It

Write a paragraph describing a rain forest. Use at least two words from your word web.

Key Vocabulary

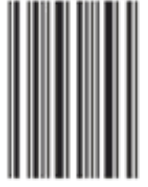
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