



THE RAINFOREST

“At first, I thought I was fighting to save rubber trees, then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon rainforest. Now I realize I am fighting for humanity.”

Chico Mendes, Brazilian Environmentalist

1. The Rainforest Discussion

1. What do you think of when you hear the word "rainforest"? Where can you find rainforests or jungles around the world?
2. What kind of climate, temperature or weather do you associate with the rainforest?
3. What kind of plants and animals could you find in the rainforest?
4. Have you ever visited a rainforest? If so, how was it? If not, would you like to? What kind of activities did/could you do there?
5. If you were planning a trip to the rainforest, what would you need to take? What clothes or other items would you pack?
6. Would you feel scared in the rainforest? What dangers might you encounter there?
7. Could you survive living in the rainforest for a year? What would you need to survive? What would you do for shelter, food and water?
8. Which people live in the rainforest or in jungles? Do you think they are happier and less stressed than people who live in cities? What problems are these indigenous people facing?

2. The Rainforest Vocabulary

- **rainforest vs jungle** (nouns) – *while both are characterised by thick vegetation, trees in a rainforest block out sunlight from reaching the ground, whereas a jungle allows sunlight to reach the floor.*
- **cloud forest** (noun) – *moist tropical or subtropical forests in mountainous regions characterised by low-level cloud.*
- **logging** (noun) – *the business of cutting down trees to sell the wood (timber).*
- **deforestation** (noun) – *the clearing of trees from large areas, usually as a result of logging or to create space for agricultural purposes.*
- **carbon capture** (noun) – *the process of trapping carbon dioxide to prevent it from being released into the atmosphere.*
- **the law of the jungle** (phrase) – *the principle that the fittest or strongest survive; survival or success by any means possible.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun):

1. Environmentalists have warned that criminal gangs are increasingly turning to illegal mining and **logging** as a way to boost their profits.
2. Landslides that occurred after heavy rain have been blamed on **deforestation** as previously, the roots of the trees strengthened the top layer of soil.
3. Make sure you pack a waterproof coat. Once we've climbed to the top of the mountain, we'll reach the **cloud forest** where there's a good chance of rain.
4. Rather than spending decades and billions of dollars on developing new technology, we should plant more trees as a natural **carbon capture** system if we are not prepared to reduce our carbon emissions.
5. The Amazon **Rainforest** absorbs as much oxygen as it produces, making its net oxygen contribution to the world zero.
6. When there is no law and order in society, the result is **the law of the jungle**.

The Rainforest vocabulary comprehension questions

1. If you got lost in the jungle, what would you do?
2. Have you ever visited a cloud forest? Where can you find them?
3. What is the link between illegal logging and corruption?
4. How can we reverse the effects of deforestation?
5. Is it better to rely on rainforests for carbon capture, or is it better to invest in carbon capture technology?
6. When could the law of the jungle be applied to humans?

3. Video: Saving the Rainforest

You are going to watch a video by BBC Newsnight called "Is the Amazon rainforest beyond saving?"

Watch the video here: <https://youenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-rainforest/>

While you watch the video, answer the following questions:

Multiple choice

1. Which organ is the Amazon Rainforest compared to?
a) *brain* b) *heart* c) **lungs**
2. What will happen when the Amazon Rainforest reaches its 'tipping point'?
a) it will emit more carbon b) *it will absorb more carbon* c) *it will become carbon neutral*
3. What is the area of the Amazon Rainforest?
a) *5.5 million square miles* b) *5.5 million square acres* c) **5.5 million square kilometres**
4. How many tons of CO₂ did the Amazon Rainforest absorb today?
a) 1 billion b) *2 billion* c) *5.5 billion*

Sentence completion

5. One of the main reasons the Amazon Rainforest is absorbing less CO₂ than in the past is **deforestation**.
6. The majority of **fires** in the rainforest are caused by human activities.
7. Much of the logging, mining and agriculture of the rainforest is **illegal**.
8. There is a fear that the rainforest will become caught in a **vicious cycle** where less rain due to fewer trees results in more fires which in turn leads to even more tree loss.

Short answer

9. What are Professor Nobre's calculations based on? **Climate models**
10. For how many years has Professor Gatti been measuring greenhouse gases in the Amazon? **10 years**
11. Heavily deforested areas of the rainforest have lost the capacity to absorb what? **CO₂**
12. What is the Brazilian president's priority for the Amazon? **Development (over conservation)**

4. The Rainforest Conversation Questions

1. Why are rainforests so important for the planet? What benefits do they give to humans?
2. How can trees help combat climate change?
3. What are some of the reasons behind deforestation?
4. Which governments and industries are most responsible for damaging our rainforests?
5. Why were there many fires in the Amazon Rainforest in 2019?
6. Which organisations are helping to protect the rainforest? What threats do these environmentalists face around the world?
7. What should governments do to protect the rainforest?
8. Is there anything you could do to help protect rainforests?

5. The Rainforest Writing Task

Write about your opinion of the rainforest. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- What activities you could do if you visited the rainforest.
- Why rainforests are so important.
- The human activities that are causing damage to rainforests.

Alternative exam practice question:

Logging is causing irreversible damage to rainforests and should therefore be banned. To what extent do you agree with this?