

The Amazon Rainforest

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

The Amazon Rainforest, often called the lungs of the planet, spans approximately 5.5 million square kilometers across nine South American countries. This vast **ecosystem** contains an estimated 390 billion individual trees representing more than 16,000 species, making it the most biologically diverse terrestrial region on Earth. Scientists estimate that the Amazon harbors roughly ten percent of all known species, though many remain undocumented.

The rainforest plays a critical role in regulating the global climate. Its trees absorb enormous quantities of carbon dioxide and release oxygen through photosynthesis, helping to stabilize atmospheric conditions. Furthermore, the Amazon generates its own rainfall through a process called evapotranspiration, in which moisture released from leaves forms clouds that **sustain** the entire region's hydrological cycle.

Despite its ecological significance, the Amazon faces unprecedented threats. **Deforestation** driven by cattle ranching, soybean cultivation, and illegal logging has destroyed nearly twenty percent of the original forest cover. Mining operations contaminate rivers with mercury, while road construction fragments habitats and exposes previously **pristine** areas to exploitation. Climate change compounds these pressures, intensifying droughts and wildfires.

Indigenous communities have inhabited the Amazon for thousands of years, developing sophisticated knowledge of medicinal plants and sustainable agricultural practices. Their territories, when legally recognized, demonstrate significantly lower deforestation rates than surrounding lands. However, these communities frequently face violence and displacement from those seeking to exploit the forest's resources, and their traditional ways of life remain **endangered**.

Conservation efforts have produced mixed results. International agreements, protected reserves, and satellite monitoring systems have slowed deforestation in certain periods, yet political instability and economic pressures repeatedly undermine progress. Researchers warn that the Amazon may be approaching a tipping point, beyond which large portions could transition irreversibly into savanna. Protecting this irreplaceable biome requires coordinated global action, sustainable development policies, and genuine respect for indigenous sovereignty over ancestral lands.

A. Vocabulary

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|------------------------|--|
| 1. ecosystem ____ | a. in original, untouched condition; free from pollution or damage |
| 2. biodiversity ____ | b. use of resources for profit, often in an unfair or harmful way |
| 3. deforestation ____ | c. originating naturally in a particular place; native |
| 4. sustain ____ | d. critical threshold at which a small change causes a major, irreversible shift |
| 5. pristine ____ | e. community of living organisms interacting with their physical environment |
| 6. endangered ____ | f. variety of plant and animal life within a particular habitat |
| 7. indigenous ____ | g. clearing or removal of forests, usually for human activities |
| 8. canopy ____ | h. support, maintain, or keep something in existence over time |
| 9. exploitation ____ | i. at serious risk of extinction or disappearance |
| 10. tipping point ____ | j. uppermost layer of branches and leaves in a forest |

B. True or False

- | | |
|--|---|
| ___ 1. The Amazon Rainforest covers approximately 5.5 million square kilometers. | ___ 2. The Amazon contains fewer than 1,000 species of trees. |
|--|---|

- ___ 3. Evapotranspiration helps the Amazon generate its own rainfall.
- ___ 4. Roughly half of the original Amazon forest has been destroyed by deforestation.
- ___ 5. Indigenous territories generally show lower deforestation rates than surrounding lands.
- ___ 6. Mining operations in the Amazon contaminate rivers with mercury.
- ___ 7. Climate change has reduced the frequency of droughts in the Amazon region.
- ___ 8. Scientists believe the Amazon may be approaching an irreversible tipping point.
- ___ 9. The Amazon spans nine South American countries.
- ___ 10. All species in the Amazon Rainforest have been fully documented by scientists.

C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: ecosystem, deforestation, pristine, indigenous, exploitation, biodiversity, canopy, endangered

1. The Amazon is the world's most biologically diverse terrestrial _____.
2. Cattle ranching and illegal logging are major drivers of _____ in the region.
3. Many _____ communities have lived in the Amazon for thousands of years.
4. Road construction has exposed previously _____ areas of forest to outside pressures.
5. Commercial _____ of the rainforest's resources threatens both wildlife and local people.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. How does the Amazon Rainforest contribute to regulating the global climate?
2. Why are indigenous territories important for conservation efforts in the Amazon?
3. What is meant by a 'tipping point' in the context of the Amazon Rainforest?

E. Discussion Questions

1. What responsibilities, if any, do wealthy nations have in protecting the Amazon Rainforest, and how should this be balanced against the sovereignty of Amazon countries?
2. If you had to choose between economic development and environmental conservation in a developing region, how would you weigh the trade-offs, and why?

Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-e, 2-f, 3-g, 4-h, 5-a, 6-i, 7-c, 8-j, 9-b, 10-d

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-F, 3-T, 4-F, 5-T, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T, 9-T, 10-F

C. Fill Blanks: 1-ecosystem, 2-deforestation, 3-indigenous, 4-pristine, 5-exploitation

D. Comprehension:

1. Its trees absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen through photosynthesis, helping to stabilize atmospheric conditions.
2. Legally recognized indigenous territories show significantly lower deforestation rates than surrounding lands, making them effective at protecting the forest.
3. It refers to a critical threshold beyond which large portions of the rainforest could transition irreversibly into savanna.