

Year 5 Spring
Physical features of South America
What are the Key Physical characteristics of South America?

Key vocabulary

The Amazon river - The Amazon is the mightiest river in South America (around 4,000 miles long). It carries more water than any other river. The Amazon begins in the Andes Mountains in Peru.

Tropical temperature - The tropics are warm all year, averaging 25 to 28 degrees.

Vegetation - plants in general, or plants that are found in a particular area

What is a rainforest?

A **rainforest** is a tropical area of tall, mostly evergreen trees and a high amount of rainfall.

Why are rainforests important?

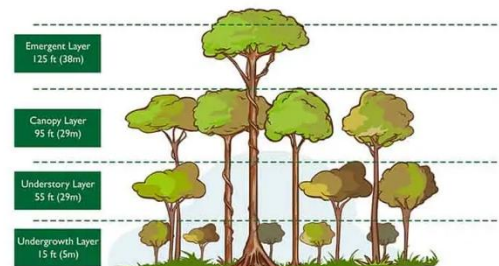
Rainforests are often called the lungs of the planet for their role in absorbing carbon dioxide (which is a greenhouse gas) from our atmosphere and releasing oxygen that we depend on for survival in return.

Rainforests plays a role in stabilising our climate by producing nourishing rainfall all around the planet.

What are the features of this biome?

- The **Amazon Rainforest** is in the **tropical rainforest biome**.
- It has hot and moist, high annual rainfall and high average temperatures
- The **Amazon Rainforest** runs through it which is 4,000 miles long

Layers of the Rainforest



What can you find in a rainforest?

Structure

- **Emergent** - the top layer of a rainforest is called the emergent layer This layer receives bright sunlight and plenty of rain and it is also very windy.
- **Canopy layer** - they canopy layer receives plenty of sunlight and rain with a refreshing breeze. The canopy is full of fruit and nuts all year, therefore lots of animals live in this layer.
- **Understory layer** - the understory is the warm, damp, and sheltered layer below the leafy tree canopy. Rain drips through the canopy, but only speckled sunlight gets through.
- **Forest floor** -the forest floor is the lowest layer where it is dark, damp and hot. Large, leafed shrubs grow in the patches of the sunlight. Dead leaves that have fallen from the plants above cover the ground.

Plants

The warm and very wet climate provides perfect conditions for plant growth. In the Amazon you will find: orchids, giant water lily, kapok and Brazil nut trees and heliconia.

Animals

The Amazon is one of Earth's habitats for 427 mammals, 1,300 birds, 370 types of reptiles. The Amazon River is a large source of habitat to animals in South America; it homes around 3,000 freshwater fish.

