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The Amazon Rainforest

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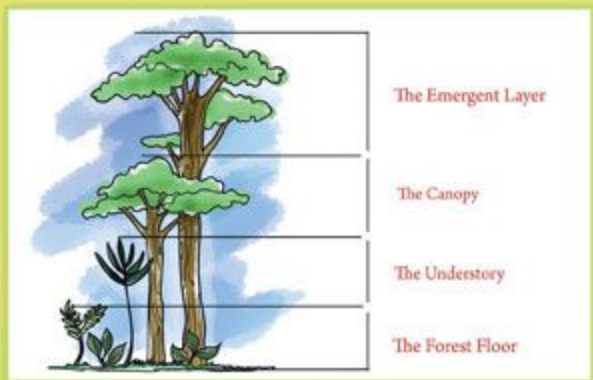
An aerial photograph of the Amazon Rainforest, showing a dense green canopy of trees. A wide, winding river with a light blue-green hue flows through the forest, creating a meandering path. The river's banks are covered in thick vegetation. In the top left corner, there is a vertical green bar.

The Amazon **Rainforest**

The Amazon Rainforest is in South America. It is over 2 million square miles and covers roughly 80% of the Amazon Basin, including parts of Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. The Amazon River, the second longest river in the world, flows through the forest. The river begins high in the Andes Mountains and flows all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. The Amazon Rainforest has a hot, humid climate due to its geographical location and the fact that the equator goes through it.



The Amazon Rainforest layers



The emergent layer is the highest level of the forest, and is made up of the tops of the tallest trees. These trees are much taller than the average trees in the forest. Some tower almost 200 feet above the forest floor. Many birds and insects live in this layer.

The next layer down is the canopy layer, which includes most of the treetops in the forest. These trees are shorter than the ones in the emergent layer, but there are more of them. The canopy is like a maze of tree branches, vines, and other plants. It receives less sunshine than the emergent layer, but more than the bottom two layers. Many creatures live here, like insects, monkeys, birds, and reptiles.

The next layer down is the understory. This layer is below the tops of the trees but still above the ground. There is less sun in this layer, so there is also less vegetation. Many animals call this layer home,

however. Frogs, insects, and some small mammals live here. Large predators like jaguars spend a lot of time in this layer looking for meals.

The forest floor is the lowest level. This layer is very dark – in fact, only 2% of the sunlight that hits the canopy layer reaches the forest floor. The plants that grow in this layer are well adapted to low light conditions. Large rainforest animals like anteaters live in this layer.

In this book we will look at three of the creatures that make the rainforest their home. We'll find out how they hunt for food, how they look after their young, and what their relationships with other creatures are like.