Amazon Rainforest

The Amazon Rainforest is fed by the longest river in the world and stretches across eight countries in South America, including, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Guyana, Venezuela, Suriname, and Colombia. The rainforest, also known as Amazonia, encompasses an area roughly the size of the United States of America and is home to thousands of unique plant and animal species. This amazing diversity makes the Amazon rainforest the largest ecosystem in the world.

According to archaeological findings, the Amazon basin was inhabited by humans as far back as 10,000 years ago. The native tribes of the Amazon first encountered Europeans in the 16th century when the Spanish arrived in the Americas. Francisco de Orellana was on a mission to find El Dorado, the fabled City of Gold when he entered the Amazon rainforest in 1541. Though his journey brought exciting stories of travel and adventure, he never found the City of Gold, and in the end, the Spanish were not interested in developing the vast wilderness with little to no foreseeable resources.

Over the next 300 years, several more expeditions into Amazonia were led by the French, English, and Portuguese, but they all failed to gain complete control of the region. The settlers did notice an interesting material the natives used to waterproof items, but it proved unsuitable for use outside the basin. It wasn't until 1842 when Charles Goodyear invented vulcanization, a process which made rubber durable that reignited interest in the area. Goodyear's development had created an insatiable demand for rubber. In the beginning, Brazil had a complete monopoly over the market. However, Brazil's control came to an abrupt end when an Englishman, Henry Wickham, succeeded in smuggling rubber tree seeds into England. Soon after rubber was being produced overseas.

Brazil's attitude of keeping Amazonia away from foreigner investors led to the construction of a vast network of roads through the rainforest. The roads were a means of encouraging local people to settle in the region. Unfortunately, the plan involved cutting great areas of rainforest to make room for new settlements and fields. The situation became so severe that during the 70s and 80s the rate of deforestation in Amazonia equaled one football field a minute. Over the course of twenty years, one-fifth of the Amazonian rainforest was cut down.

Thousands of acres of forests that provide precious air, as well as invaluable plant and animal species are in danger. The loss of such life would disrupt the fragile balance of nature on this planet, as well as the lives of the descendants who still inhabit the area. Fortunately, the people of the world is beginning to realize the importance of this primeval forest and nations are uniting their efforts to save and regenerate what's left of it.
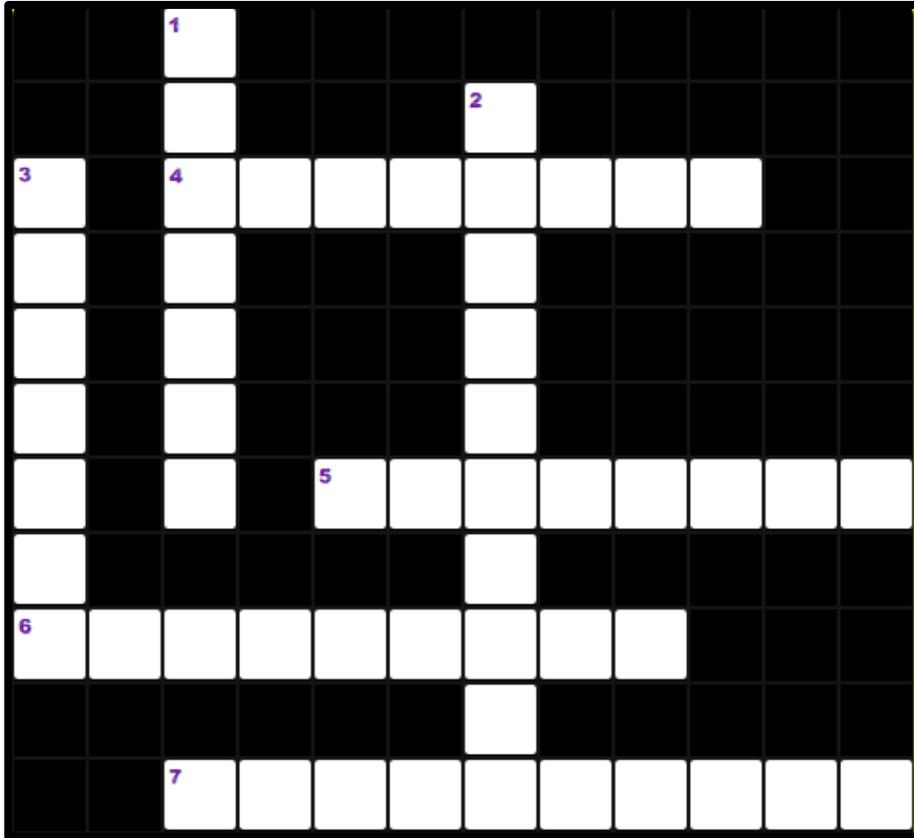
Vocab Match

Word	Answer	Definition
1. encompass	1. ___	a. adjective- able to last for a long time
2. descendant	2. ___	b. noun- the act of cutting or burning trees
3. durable	3. ___	c. noun- exclusive possession and control of something by one party
4. insatiable	4. ___	d. noun- directly originating from the previous generation(s) of people or things
5. monopoly	5. ___	e. verb- to illegally move goods from one place to another
6. smuggle	6. ___	f. noun- ancient
7. deforestation	7. ___	g. phrasal verb- to destroy completely
8. wipe out	8. ___	h. adjective- impossible to satisfy
9. invaluable	9. ___	i. adjective- priceless
10. primeval	10. ___	j. verb- to surround and include something

Discussion Topics

1. Why is deforestation a big issue?

2. In what ways are people destroying the planet?

3. What small changes can we make in our every-day lives to reduce pollution?

4. What do you think about the colonization of Mars?

5. Do you think it's better for children to play indoors or outdoors? Why?

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Hint!

ACROSS

4   noun- ancient

5   noun- exclusive possession and control of something by one party

6   verb- to surround and include something

7   adjective- impossible to satisfy

DOWN

1   phrasal verb- to destroy completely

2   noun- directly originating from the previous generation(s) of people or things

3   adjective- able to last for a long time

Quiz

1) Where is the Amazon rainforest?

a. Australia b. Asia c. Africa d. America

2) Which of the following countries is <u>not</u> a part of Amazonia?

a. Rwanda b. Ecuador c. Peru d. Suriname

3) How many years back was the Amazon basin inhabited?

a. 5,000 years ago b. 1,000 years ago c. 10,000 years ago d. 30,000 years ago

4) What was Francisco de Orellana looking for when he entered Amazonia?

a. drinking water b. food c. gold d. God

5) Which material did the settlers want from Amazonia?

 a. rubber b. copper c. plastic d. leather

6) What's the name of the process Charles Goodyear invented?

a. decarboxylation b. vulcanization c. fermentation d. legalization

7) Which country held a monopoly over the material discussed in the article?

a. Venezuela b. Chile c. Peru d. Brazil

8) What did Henry Wickham smuggle from Amazonia?

a. seeds b. a tree c. rubber d. money

9) What was the rate of deforestation in Amazonia during the 70s and 80s?

a. a football field a minute b. a football field an hour c. a football field a day d. a football field a month

10) What did Brazil do to encourage people to move to Amazonia?

a. gave people free food b. built roads c. bought livestock d. paid new residents

Key

Matching	Quiz
1. j	1. d
2. d	2. a
3. a	3. c
4. h	4. c
5. c	5. a
6. e	6. b
7. b	7. d
8. g	8. a
9. i	9. a
10. f	10. b

PROJECT: Make a presentation showing ways we (your class, school or community) can help protect the environment. Create a poster describing your idea that can be displayed to your specific audience.