

#9054

CAMEROON: AFRICA'S CHILD: MY RAINFOREST

BENCHMARK MEDIA

2000

Grade Levels: 5-10

15 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Cameroon's rainforest is a source of food, medicine, wood, and entertainment for Felix and his brother. Looks at their daily lifestyle and culture and Felix's love and appreciation for the forest.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Geography

- Standard: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place
 - Benchmark: Knows the human characteristics of places (e.g., cultural characteristics such as religion, language, politics, technology, family structure, gender; population characteristics; land uses; levels of development)
 - Benchmark: Knows the physical characteristics of places (e.g., soils, land forms, vegetation, wildlife, climate, natural hazards)
 - Benchmark: Knows the causes and effects of changes in a place over time (e.g., physical changes such as forest cover, water distribution, temperature fluctuations; human changes such as urban growth, the clearing of forests, development of transportation systems)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To label the distinctive aspects of a rainforest.
2. To explain why the rainforest is under threat of deforestation.
3. To explore the culture and lifestyle of the people who live in the rainforest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rainforests are possibly the most endangered habitat on earth. They cover about 6% of the earth's land surface, less than half the area they covered not so long ago. Rainforests are found in three main regions: in Central and South America, in West and Central Africa, and in Southeast Asia. They all occur in permanently warm and wet areas near the equator, where

there is at least 24 inches of rain in a year, with rain falling almost every day. The average temperature is around 25 degrees Celsius, with little seasonal variation. Rainforests around the world are uniform in many respects: they can contain a larger diversity of plants and animals than anywhere else on earth; the forests have three layers—an evergreen canopy in the middle, a layer of smaller plants on the forest floor, and towering above the canopy, scattered taller trees known as emergents.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Using a wall map, have students locate Cameroon. Locate the three main regions of rainforests: in Central and South America, in West and Central Africa, and in Southeast Asia. Review their common attributes in rainfall and temperature.
2. Discuss elements that make up a culture such as: language, recreation and leisure activities, foods and medicines and how obtained, family structure and division of responsibilities, etc. Ask students to list how various cultures have shaped their lives, for example, the foods they eat, the sports they play, the language(s) they speak, and their family responsibilities.
3. Discuss how urban and rural locations, climate, and natural and cultural resources affect the way people live and work in your local area.
4. List on the blackboard, how the students think their everyday lives would be different if they lived in a rainforest. Ask them to notice in the video, what the culture is actually like in the Cameroon rainforest and the connection between the rainforest in Cameroon with its climate, natural and cultural resources and the way our young Cameroon boy lives.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

Return to the list on the blackboard of how the students thought their everyday lives would be different if they lived in a rainforest. Discuss and list how those concepts have changed.

Applications and Activities

1. Set up a role-playing scenario. Re-enact a meeting in a Cameroon village between representatives of a multi-national company that wants to clear cut trees in order to create a new tea plantation, which would offer jobs for the villagers, and representatives of the villagers. Give the students time to research their roles and to develop their characters.
2. As a follow-up to the role-playing, categorize what action the children would like to see take place into two groups: those which they can do something about; and those which rely on others taking action.
3. Have the students write a trail guide in which they imagine themselves to be Felix, showing a group of tourists around his rainforest home.
4. Make drawings of the three main layers of vegetation in a rainforest, and explain why these layers are characteristic of a rainforest.

SUMMARY

Felix and his brother, Francis, live in an isolated small house with their great-grandmother, on the edge of the rainforest in Cameroon, in West Africa. They collect firewood daily, and she cooks meals over an open fire, with food grown in the forest. They speak a pidgin English. Felix shows his 10 year-old brother different useful plants, and how to set a trap for animals, their only source of meat. They attend a dance festival in the nearby village. The dances honor various animals.

Many trees have been cut for timber or plantations growing tea or palm trees for palm oil. The deforestation troubles Felix deeply, since his life depends so heavily on the plants and animals of the rainforest. The bark of the African cherry tree is used to reduce a fever, while the juice of another plant will take away eye pain.

At school he plays soccer, and studies mathematics, geography, and the dangers resulting from deforestation. It usually rains heavily and daily.

At a wrestling competition in a nearby town, Felix successfully defends his winning title.

Felix likes the rainforest because he can find everything he needs there, and knows that when he grows up, he will want to remain there.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- The Tropical Rain Forest: Utilization and Destruction #3526



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK**

<http://www.ran.org/>

Click on "Kid's Corner" to see how "Rainforests are full of life!" "Rainforest people," "Animals," "Protect-an-Acre," "Fact Sheets for Students," and much more!

- **PASSPORT TO THE RAINFOREST**

<http://passporttoknowledge.com/rainforest/home.html>

Find out what are rainforests and its animals, and locate them on a map. Meet the researchers in the field and go behind the scenes. Send emails to researchers, collaborate with other students and teachers to participate on online discussions.