

Rainforests

Read the text, answer the questions and complete the wordsearch.

Rainforests are forests which grow in areas of high rainfall. They are found between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn where rainfall can be as much as 200cm a year. The world's largest rainforest is in the Amazon region of South America. Before humans started destroying them, rainforests covered 15% of the Earth's land area. Today, because of deforestation they cover only 6%.

Rainforests are vital to the well-being of human beings and of our planet. For a start, they contain about half of the existing plant and animal species of the world. They contain a third of the world's bird species and 90% of its invertebrates. Hundreds of rainforest plants are used in modern medicines. As only 1% of the plant species have been studied, potentially there could be many more cures for illnesses waiting to be discovered. Rainforests have become known as 'the lungs of the world' because they absorb about 22% of the world's man-made carbon dioxide emissions and provide about 20% of the world's oxygen.

So what are the threats to the rainforests? In the last 200 years over 700 million hectares of forest have been lost. Who is to blame for this? The simple answer is: we are. There has been a huge growth of the populations in countries with rainforests. Forests have been cleared to make way for towns and cities and for setting up plantations for soya and palm oil production. 80% of deforested areas of Brazil are used for rearing cattle. The tropical hardwoods teak and mahogany have been in huge demand for furniture.

It's very easy to blame the local people. We don't chop down trees; they do. But the products are bought by people like you and me - the sound system with its teak loudspeakers, or the nice mahogany chairs in the dining room. Why are the rainforests being destroyed? Look around you.



Questions

- 1) Where are rainforests to be found?
- 2) Give three reasons for the view that rainforests are important to human beings.
- 3) Why have the rainforests been depleted?
- 4) What can be done about the problem?

Wordsearch

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S	M	C	N	O	C	S	O	D	M	S	M	S	F
A	I	A	E	R	L	D	L	E	A	S	E	N	R
A	N	N	G	T	A	O	L	M	H	T	D	R	R
E	V	M	Y	N	C	O	A	G	O	A	I	R	A
R	E	F	X	E	I	W	F	V	G	E	C	E	I
U	R	S	O	R	P	D	N	E	A	R	I	S	N
T	T	E	S	T	O	R	I	O	N	H	N	E	F
I	E	R	C	V	R	A	A	E	Y	T	E	I	O
N	B	A	L	I	T	H	R	N	S	O	O	C	R
R	R	T	U	T	C	U	R	E	S	K	K	E	E
U	A	C	N	A	A	E	T	G	N	A	R	P	S
F	T	E	G	L	A	I	F	L	E	O	A	S	T
C	E	H	S	T	T	E	X	T	L	C	U	G	T
R	S	E	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	S	C	E	A

RAINFOREST
 CURES
 MAHOGANY
 OXYGEN
 HECTARES
 VITAL
 TEAK
 FURNITURE
 SPECIES
 INVERTEBRATES
 EMISSIONS
 MEDICINE
 RAINFALL
 HARDWOODS
 THREATS
 TROPICAL
 LUNGS

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