

Brazil Today: The Amazon River and Basin

by ReadWorks



Amazon river through the Amazon rainforest

Deep within the Andes Mountains of northern Peru, you will find the source of one of the greatest bodies of water in the world. This is the Amazon River. The Amazon flows down the Andes and across Brazil before it empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The river carries more water than any other river in the world. The only river that is longer is Egypt's Nile.

The Amazon and its tributaries have a huge impact on Brazil's environment. The river provides water for diverse plant and animal life. Along its banks in western Brazil is the largest rainforest in the world. The rainforest covers over 50% of the total land in Brazil. Rainfall in the area is very high, and the weather is always humid.

Many animals live in the warm, wet rainforest or the grassy savanna of central Brazil. Brazil has over 1,500 species of birds and more than 500 types of amphibians. Can you imagine the sounds of animals echoing through the rainforest? Unfortunately, many of Brazil's species are becoming endangered. Their habitats are being destroyed by farming and the timber industry.

The soil that is so fertile for the rainforest also provides rich farmland. Unfortunately, Brazil's rainforests are disappearing at a rapid rate. People cut the trees for timber. Sometimes

farmers burn the forests to make fields. Many plants and animals are killed or lose their habitats in the process. Fires release a lot of dangerous gases into the ozone layer of our atmosphere. Environmentalists worry that the forests' disappearance will increase global warming. Global warming happens when gases deplete the ozone layer.

The disappearance of the rainforests in Brazil may have a negative consequence for the whole world. Now, Brazil's government is taking steps to try to protect its amazing environment and natural beauty.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where does the Amazon River start?

- A. in central Brazil
- B. in the Atlantic Ocean
- C. in the rainforest
- D. in the Andes Mountains

2. Paragraph 4 begins with "The soil that is so fertile..." What does paragraph 4 mostly describe?

- A. businesses located in the Amazon basin
- B. threats the Amazon rainforest faces
- C. efforts to help save the Amazon rainforest
- D. ways that the rainforest causes problems for people

3. Why is it important that people work to protect the Amazon rainforest?

- A. to increase the number of gases released in our atmosphere
- B. to help increase the rate at which the earth is getting warmer
- C. to protect the wildlife in the forest
- D. to protect the timber industry the rainforest supports

4. Read the following sentences: "The Amazon and its tributaries have a huge impact on Brazil's environment. The river provides water for diverse plant and animal life. Along its banks in western Brazil is the largest rainforest in the world."

What does "impact" most nearly mean?

- A. factor
- B. danger
- C. effect
- D. increase

5. What is the main idea of the text?

- A. Environmentalists worry that the Amazon rainforest's disappearance will increase global warming. Global warming happens when gases deplete the ozone layer.
- B. Sometimes farmers burn areas in the Amazon rainforest to make fields. Many plants and animals are killed or lose their habitats in the process.
- C. The Amazon River is very important to the environment and wildlife in Brazil. Unfortunately, it faces threats that are causing it to disappear at a rapid rate.
- D. Many animals live in the warm, wet rainforest or the grassy savanna of central Brazil. Brazil has over 1,500 species of birds and more than 500 types of amphibians.

6. Why are many of Brazil's species becoming endangered?

7. Based on information in the passage, why is Brazil's government taking steps to protect its amazing environment?.

8. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Timber companies can use trees in the rainforest as timber. _____, cutting down trees can destroy many animals' habitats.

- A. Because
- B. Specifically
- C. However
- D. Additionally