

The Umbrella Unit Study

Book by Jan Brett

Literature based unit study by Ginger A.

Language Arts

Fingerplay/Rhyme

This poem can be used to start a discussion about the rain forest. This poem is easily learned if used to begin each day's lesson.

Five Beautiful Parrots

Five beautiful parrots in a rain forest tree.
Sitting all together, happy as can be.

Someone saw their feathers and took them away.
Only four beautiful parrots got to stay.

Four beautiful parrots really like that tree.
Someone cut it down, now there are three.

Three beautiful parrots didn't know what to do.
Along came a bulldozer, now there are two.

Two beautiful parrots weren't having much fun.
The rain forest started burning; now there is one.

One lonely parrot didn't have a place to stay.
His home, the rain forest has gone away.

News Paper Article

Tell older children to pretend they have observed someone in the Monteverdi Rain forest illegally cutting trees, or capturing animals for illegal trade. Have the child write an article telling all that he observed and the future effects of this criminal activity.

Summary

Have the children write a summary. Younger children could do this orally. Tell the children that a summary is a shortened version of the story that only includes the main points.

Writing project

Imagine you are living with a family in the Monteverdi Cloud Forest. How is your life different than life in your home state? Write about the foods, towns, transportation, clothing, local government etc.

Creative Writing

Pretend to be a scientist in the rain forest. You have made a discovery. You will need to answer these questions. Is your discovery a plant or an animal? What is the name of your animal? In which layer does it live? If it's an animal what does it eat? If your discovery is a plant tell which animal uses it for food. Is your discovery the last of its kind? Could it survive outside of the rain forest? Draw a picture of your discovery.

Letter Writing

If you enjoyed this book, write Jan Brett and let her know!

Jan Brett
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Science

Water Cycle

Talk about the water cycle. Ask why the rain forests are so important. Does the earth make new water?

Explain the relationship between the rain forest and weather all over the earth. You can make rain in a plastic bag as a visual aid to help your child see the significance of protecting the rain forests. You will need a house plant, clear dry plastic bag [1 gallon zip-loc works well] and a twist tie. Cover some or all of the leaves with the plastic bag. Use the twist-tie to keep the bag tightly closed. Wait several days. Soon you'll see water droplets inside the bag. Point out that this is

similar to the water cycle. Use the word *transpiration* in your discussion. Explain that transpiration is constantly going on in every leaf in the rain forest. Thus, the rain forest gives off enough water to affect the weather all around the world.

Parts of the Rainforest

Learn the four levels of the rain forest: forest floor, understory, canopy, emergent. Study the plants and animals found in each level. Have the child compare this information to a tall building. What do we see at the street level? Which birds nest along the window ledges and under the eaves? What do we find at the top?

To help your child learn more about the layers, try singing this song to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It."

There are layers in the forest, yes indeed.

Yes indeed!

There are layers in the forest, yes indeed.

Yes indeed!

Emergent, canopy, and the understory.

There are layers in the forest, yes indeed.

Yes indeed!

The emergent's home to birds, and butterflies.

Butterflies!

The emergent's home to birds and butterflies.

Butterflies!

The trees are so high that they almost touch the sky.

The emergent's home to birds and butterflies.

Butterflies!

The canopy is like a big umbrella.

Big umbrella!

The canopy is like a big umbrella.

Big umbrella!

Monkeys, sloths, orangutans, eat all the fruit they can.

The canopy is like a big umbrella.

Big umbrella!

The understory's home to many snakes.
Many snakes!
The understory's home to many snakes.
Many snakes!
They eat cats and bats and rats,
And they like the gnats for snacks.
The understory's home to many snakes.
Many snakes!

The forest floor is dim and dark and wet.
Dark and wet!
The forest floor is dim and dark and wet.
Dark and wet!
Oh, the ants go marching by,
As they watch the birds up high.
The forest floor is dim and dark and wet.
Dark and wet!

Source: by D. DePauw (1993) Fun in the Rainforest

Flora and Fauna

Classify the plants and animals in the story. A young child can use the coloring sheets from Jan Brett's site and simply put the pictures into groups. The child can draw and color pictures that do not have coloring sheets. An older child could follow a classification system for the plants, animals and insects.

After classifying the animals, your child can create a rainforest mural by taping the pictures to a large sheet of butcher paper. At the end of this unit, talk about the rate at which the rain forest is destroyed. Every hour, have your child take down some pictures and explain that that part of the rain forest is gone forever. By the end only a few plants drawn on the paper will be left.

Conservation

Write a list of 5-10 reasons to save the rain forest. Here are a few:

1. Many plants and animals haven't been discovered. What a tragedy it would be for them to become extinct before we even find them.

2. Many scientists believe that plants within the rain forest could be used for medicines to fight certain modern illnesses.

3. The rain forest can provide certain foods so that the need to cut down the forest to plant field crops could be limited. These edible plants need to be discovered and protected. Can you think of some items we already enjoy? (chocolate, cinnamon, nuts)

More options for your older student

Make a display of some of the products found in the rain forest. The child should be able to tell in which layer each product is found.

Research and find the names of some birds that spend the winter in the rain forest.

Many animals are mentioned in *The Umbrella*; choose the one you know the least about and write a report on it. Include the layer the animal lives in, foods that it requires, is it a food source for another animal? How is it classified? Can it survive outside the rain forest? On which day of creation was it made? Make a detailed drawing emphasizing unusual attributes of the animal. Include the common and scientific name for your animal.

Social Studies

Field Trip

Go to a health food store and look for products that are from the rainforest. Many have special packaging that tells about a specific group that is working to increase awareness of the rain forest resources.

Geography: Costa Rica

The Umbrella was written after Jan Brett toured the Monteverdi Cloud forest in Costa Rica. The name literally means "rich coast."

Costa Rica is a country in Central America, bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the south-southeast, the Pacific Ocean to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Costa Rica is the only country in which both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans can be seen from the same point.

Geography: Rainforests

Learn the locations of the earth's rain forests. What are the economic conditions like in these countries? What indigenous people are dependent upon the rain forest for food and clean water?

Cooking

Rain Forest Pizza

Spread a bagel, rice cake, or slice of bread with peanut butter. Let your child choose from a variety of Rain Forest topping to complete the pizza. Topping could include: macadamia nuts, coconut, dried pineapple, chocolate chips, fresh banana slices, or dried banana slices.

Rain Forest Trail Mix

Mix together 2 cups each of peanuts, chocolate chips, cashew nuts, banana chips, dried papaya, Brazil nuts, macadamia nuts, and coconut flakes. Enjoy!

Math

Poison Frog Tumble

Children are fascinated by poison dart frogs. Use lima beans that are spray-painted blue on one side and red on the other to represent poison dart frogs. Let the child put ten frogs in a cup, shake and toss on a green felt mat. They count how many reds they tossed and how many blues.

Pattern Block Snakes

Use the pattern blocks to make snakes in an AABB pattern. For example, triangle, triangle, square, square, triangle, triangle, square, square. Then use paper pattern blocks to make a pattern snake on paper.

Sizes

Each child uses 15 pieces of plastic straws (cut 1-inch long) and 2 pieces of yarn. They use these to make snakes of two different sizes: one short and one long. They must problem-solve and choose how many pieces of straw they want to string on each snake.

Story Problems

Older children can create story problems using the characters and setting of this story.

Multiplication

The rain forests have at least ten times the amount of plant and animal life as other types of forests. Measure off a two foot square area in a forest. Carefully count all the plants and animals in that area. Multiply the number by ten. This answer represents the amount of plants and animals you would probably find in that same amount of space in the rain forest.

[I was given this information at an elementary teacher's science workshop about 10 years ago, so the number to multiply by may have changed.]

Arts and Crafts

Frames

Jan Brett has lots of frames and borders for her artwork. Try to use this technique. Draw a large leaf or animal from the rain forest. Paint a picture inside. Then add smaller frames to the pictures and paint inside those. Now add some texture to your picture. Use pieces of fake fur, shiny fabrics, sequins, colored rice etc. to add excitement to your picture.

Drawing Animals

Jan Brett offers many drawing videos on her website. Try one this week.

Materials and information on this website may be used for your own personal and school use. **Material may not be shared electronically or be used for resale.**

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