PAINT A RAINFOREST

Let’s paint and create! Mix art and science to design a beautiful tropical scene.
Paint a Rainforest

Let’s paint and create! Mix art and science to design a beautiful tropical scene.

About the Activity

Rainforests are tall, dense jungles where — you guessed it — it rains a lot. In fact, rainforests get anywhere from 79 to 394 inches of rain in a single year — that’s almost up to 33 feet of water! Compare that to the average amount of rain in Cleveland, for example, which gets 38 inches of rain a year, and you get an idea of just how soggy it is in a rainforest.

In this activity, we will combine science and painting to learn more about rainforests and the world around them. By the end of the activity, you will see how different paint materials and colors can work together to create a unique and beautiful jungle scene.

Supplies

You may have some of these materials at home, but you may need to pick up some art supplies, as well.

• Scratch paper
• Cups for water
• Paint brushes
• Construction paper (various colors)
• Watercolors (Red, yellow, and blue)
• Watercolor paper
• Watercolor pans
• Watercolor pencils
• Color wheel link
• Oil pastels (sticks)

Grades: 3-8

Topic: Art, Environmental Science
Time: 60 minutes
Activity Steps

The constant rainfall in rainforests helps to create rich soil and an environment that is prime for plants, which is why rainforests are so green and have dense vegetation. In fact, the world’s largest tropical rainforest – the Amazon – is home to more than 40,000 types of plant species.

Start Your Jungle Scene

We are going to start this activity with our watercolor paper and oil pastels. You can put everything else aside for now.

1. Start by drawing a few leaves. Just start with the outlines – don’t worry about coloring them in yet. Feel free to experiment with different shades of green if you have them available.

2. Add some flowers to your page. Feel free to experiment with different colors to add some focal points to your page. Like with the leaves, just draw the outline of the flowers; do not fill them in yet.

3. Set your paper aside. We will return to it soon!

DID YOU KNOW? There are two main types of rainforests: temperate and tropical. This activity focuses on tropical rainforests, which can be found in warmer climates that are closer to the equator in places like Brazil, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Western and Central Africa.

Explore with Color

Before we begin painting the insides of our leaves and flowers, let’s experiment with our watercolors by mixing them together to create some new colors.

1. Take your three primary colors (red, blue, and yellow), your paint brushes, water-filled cups, and a piece of watercolor paper. Using your art materials, paint three small circles, with each circle serving as the point of a triangle. The yellow circle should be the top point, the red circle will serve as the bottom-left point, and the blue will be the bottom-right point.

2. Next, let’s create your secondary colors. We can make these by mixing two primary colors together. Start by mixing your red and yellow together, then red and blue, then blue and yellow. As you mix each color, add them to the paper between the two colors you used to create them. What colors do you end up with?

3. Last, let’s create out tertiary colors. You can do this by mixing each new secondary color with the primary colors that are closest to it. For example, mix orange and red to create a red-orange, and then mix orange with yellow to create a yellow-orange. Add each new color to your paper between the two colors you used to create it.

4. Continue mixing each new secondary color with the appropriate primary colors until you have created six new tertiary colors.

WHAT DO YOU SEE? Your triangle of three colors, should now represent more of a circle with 12 different colors. You have created a color wheel! We will continue to experiment with these different colors in the next part of our project.

Complete Your Jungle Scene

Now that you know how to create a variety of colors, let’s bring them together to create a jungle scene.

1. Using the colors of your choice, fill in your shapes with your watercolors. It’s always fun to be creative, and the color palette you created can help you to incorporate various shades of green to represent the thick vegetation of the rainforest. Use your knowledge of primary and secondary colors to create the different shades of green.

REMEMBER: Oil and water do not mix. We are using oil pastels and watercolors for that reason. The oil pastel leaves and flowers will create a border that the watercolor cannot pass through.
Test Your Knowledge

We’ve learned a lot about rainforests and working with color!

**QUESTION 1**
True or false? The Amazon rainforest is home to more than 40,000 plant species.
a. True  
b. False

**QUESTION 2**
True or false? There are three different types of rainforest.
a. True  
b. False

**QUESTION 3**
Tropical rainforests are typically found:
a. In warmer climates  
b. Closer to the equator than temperate rainforests  
c. Far from the equator  
d. In drier climates  
e. A & B

**QUESTION 4**
How are secondary colors created?
a. By blending two primary colors together  
b. By blending two secondary colors together  
c. By blending two tertiary colors together  
d. None of the above

**QUESTION 5**
Which of the following are secondary colors?
a. Orange, green, violet  
b. Red, orange, red-orange  
c. Red, yellow, blue  
d. Red-Orange, yellow-orange, red-violet

**QUESTION 6**
Fill in the blank: Blue-green is a ______ color.
a. Primary  
b. Secondary  
c. Tertiary  
d. None of the above

Reflection Questions

Questions to deepen wonder and understanding

• Do you think it’s possible to create even more colors for your color wheel? How would you go about doing that?
• How will learning about mixing colors help you in your future art projects?
• How do you think temperate rainforests differ from tropical rainforests?
Take your new knowledge to the next level. Let’s learn more about species of the rainforest.

Rainforests are filled with tens of thousands of species -- and not just plant species. There are birds, animals, insects and more. If you want to take your masterpiece to the next level, or create another one, look up some species that you would find in a rainforest. Try adding some pictures of them to your paper with your oil pastels and watercolor paints.