

All About...

# Amazon Tribes



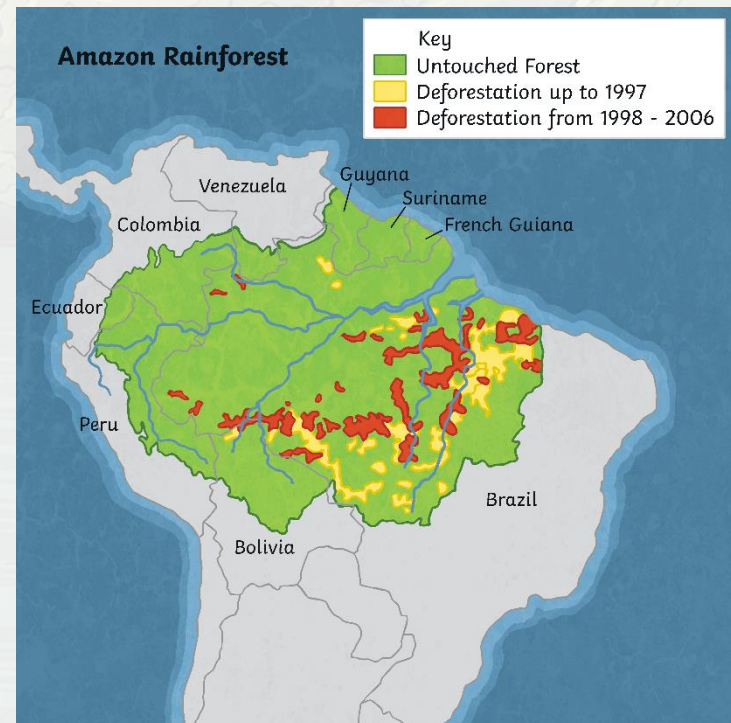
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# The Amazon Rainforest

The Amazon rainforest is the world's largest rainforest.

It spreads across parts of nine countries in South America: Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela.

As you can see on the map, the biggest part of the Amazon rainforest is in Brazil – 62% in fact. People speak about the Amazon rainforest being 'the lungs of the Earth'. This is because 15% of the photosynthesis that happens on our planet takes place here. In photosynthesis, plants transform carbon dioxide into oxygen, which humans and animals need to breathe.



# How Many Amazon Tribes Are There?

The Amazon rainforest receives its name from the Amazon river, which you can see in the picture.

It is home to more than 400 tribes, also known as tribal peoples and indigenous peoples. These tribal peoples have always lived in the Amazon rainforest, which makes it their ancestral home.

International law recognises the rights of tribal peoples to live in their lands – this is known as tribal peoples' land rights. Both the United Nations and other organisations that protect human rights have declared that ancestral lands belong to the tribes that live in them and need to be protected. In reality, these tribes are in danger, especially those that have had no contact with other people (known as uncontacted peoples).



# Dangers to Amazon Tribes

Amazon tribes face many dangers; the most significant being colonisation and deforestation.

## Colonisation

When European settlers arrived in the Americas in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, millions of indigenous people died due to diseases, such as flu, that the settlers brought with them.

Today, colonisation comes in the form of land grabbers. These are people who settle illegally, often by means of violence, in the lands where tribal peoples live, bringing with them illnesses, such as malaria.



## Deforestation

In 2001, the Amazon rainforest covered 5.4 million km<sup>2</sup> - approximately 87% of the surface it originally covered. Most of the deforestation occurred in the Brazilian forest, mainly due to cattle ranching and crop growing.

However, in areas where tribes have been able to stay in their land, deforestation has been stopped. Scientists have referred to the lands of tribal peoples as 'the most important barrier to Amazon deforestation'.



# The Amazon Rubber Boom

The Amazon Rubber Boom took place between 1879 and 1912.

The boom occurred as a result of several events. Firstly, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Charles Goodyear discovered that cooking and treating latex from rubber trees turned it into a product that had many different uses. This was followed by the invention of tyres by John Dunlop in 1888. Finally, Henry Ford began mass production of the newly invented motor car at around the same time. These events created a pressing need for rubber.

When it became known that the rubber tree grew abundantly in the Amazon rainforest, thousands of fortune-seekers rushed into the lands of the Amazon tribes. However, they needed workers to collect the latex. Tens of thousands of members of the Amazon tribes were enslaved and those who escaped were victims of the epidemics that the fortune-seekers brought with them.



# The Yanomami

The Yanomami are considered the largest isolated tribe in South America. Their population is approximately 35,000.

They live in northern Brazil and southern Venezuela in communal, circular homes, known as 'yanos' or 'shabonos'. The yano has a big, central space for celebrations. The Yanomami sleep in hammocks made from cotton or palm fibre, hung from the roofed area of the yano.

One of the greatest threats to their survival is a road that was built in the 1970s. This was used during a gold rush in the 1980s, where 40,000 gold miners invaded the Yanomami land after a survey project detected mineral deposits in the area. The gold prospectors brought diseases to the area, to which the Yanomami had no immunity. In only seven years, 20% of the Yanomami died.



# The Tupi

Before colonisation, the Tupi were one of the most numerous tribes indigenous to Brazil.

It is estimated that, in 1500 when the Portuguese arrived in Brazil, their population was around 1 million - nearly the same as the population in Portugal at that time.

However, they were enslaved or killed by diseases transmitted by the Portuguese, and later Brazilian, settlers. Having never been exposed to these diseases, the Tupi had no immunity to them. One of these diseases was smallpox.

Today, the Tupinambá are one of the few remaining Tupi communities who have had their land rights recognised in the Brazilian state of Bahia.



# The Kayapo

The Kayapo live in a vast area that spreads across the Brazilian states of Pará and Mato Grosso. They live along the Xingu river.

They use intricate black body paint to cover their entire bodies, which allows them to blend into their surroundings when hunting in the forests.

It is estimated that they number around 9,000.

The main threat to their survival comes from the hydroelectric dams that the Brazilian government have begun to build along the Xingu river. The biggest of these is the Belo Monte dam, which is the fourth largest in the world.



# The Awá

The Awá live in the eastern Amazon rainforest. There are approximately 350 members, 100 of which are uncontacted.

Although they originally lived in settlements, they adopted a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle around 1800 to escape from European invaders.

Having had so little contact, or none in the case of their uncontacted members, with the outside world, they are especially vulnerable to diseases. Illegal logging companies have been accused of hiring gunmen to kill them so that they can exploit the rainforest. As the tribe use bows and arrows to hunt, they cannot defend themselves against firearms.



# The Korubo

The Korubo are one of the tribes living in the Javari Valley indigenous territory in the western Brazilian Amazon.

Their main threat comes from the outbreaks of diseases, particularly Hepatitis B and C, that have taken place since the tribe was contacted in the 1990s.

The majority of the Korubo are uncontacted. After various attempts, the Brazilian FUNAI (the government's protection agency for indigenous peoples) contacted a small group of them to provide protection in the form of vaccines.



# Guardians of the Rainforest

In recent years, scientists have discovered that the lands of tribal peoples act as barriers to deforestation.

Using satellite images, researchers have observed indigenous reserves in Brazil. These are lands that have been protected by the FUNAI so that illegal loggers and land grabbers cannot enter them. They found that deforestation was 66% higher outside indigenous reserves than inside while forest fires were considerably higher outside the reserves.

This shows that Amazon tribes have a truly respectful and environmentally friendly lifestyle and that we can consider them guardians of the rainforest.



Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021

## Amazon Tribes Spider Chart

Read the information about the Tribes in the Amazon and create a spider chart to show off your information. Here is one I started for you as an example:

