



Secrets of the Rain Forest

Written by Carron Brown

Illustrated by Alyssa Nassner

This unique book reveals the secrets of the animals in and around the kapok tree: spider monkey, tree frog, harpy eagle, golden lion tamarin, parrot snake, leafcutter ant and more. The hidden wonders of this amazing habitat are all inside.

Before Reading

- Ask the children what they think the book will be about.
- Ask, "How can the rain forest have secrets?"
- Ask the children to describe what they know about rain forests and what they expect to see in the book.

The Read-Aloud Experience

To read aloud a Shine-a-light book, shine a flashlight behind each page asking, "Can you see...," or hold it to the light to reveal what is hidden in and around the kapok tree.

- First, read the text of the page, including the question.
- Next, use light to reveal the hidden surprise.
- Once they have seen the surprise, turn the page and read more about the secret.
- This read-aloud experience should not be rushed. Allow the children time to look closely and to make comments on each page.
- Depending on the age and the attention span of your child or your group, you may consider reading half of the book in one sitting and the other half in a later sitting. Then the next time the children will be familiar with the secrets, and you can read it cover to cover. Subsequent readings will be just as exciting, because there will always be new things to see and new things to talk about.

After Reading

Ask the children

- What they saw that they'd never seen before.
- Their favorite secret of the rain forest.
- Whether or not they'd ever want to visit a rain forest and the reasons why or why not.

Names of Animals

- Ask if they think a parrot snake is part parrot, part snake. How about a golden lion tamarin or a spider monkey?
 - Ask how they think animals' names are chosen.
 - Provide several photos and illustrations of these animals for the children to examine and decide how descriptive their names are.
- Consider pink river dolphins, harpy eagles, wandering spiders and tree frogs. Ask what their names say about them.
- Provide supplemental materials along with photos and illustrations of these additional animals to enable older children to make their own project about this topic such as a book, painting, or poster.



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- Some children may want to “invent” their own animal using characteristics from different species.

Hummingbirds

- **Math:** Share with the children that hummingbirds are usually two and a half to four and a half inches long and weigh about one-eighth of an ounce, which is the same weight as a penny.
 - Have each child measure the length of their hand, palm to fingertip with a ruler, then draw a line on paper the same length as their hand. Next to that have them draw a three-inch line, the average length of a hummingbird, then compare the lengths.
 - The children can then measure other items, such as their pencil, a crayon or marker, their shoe or thumb, and compare using words such as longer, shorter, wide, narrow, etc.
- **Movement:** Share with the children that hummingbirds' wings move very fast. Hummingbirds move so quickly that sometimes it's hard to see where they have flown. They can fly from 30 miles per hour up to 63 miles per hour if they are diving, as fast as cars drive on the highway.
 - Play a fast piece of music such as Rimsky-Korsakov's “Flight of the Bumblebee” and encourage the children to “fly” like hummingbirds.
 - Change the pace with a cool-down piece such as Beethoven's “Ode to Joy.”
- **Observation:** Explain that hummingbirds have long tongues that they use to drink the nectar from flowers, but that they also eat small insects, insect eggs and spiders. They will chase other birds and even bees that are getting near their food.
 - If hummingbirds live in your area, put a hummingbird feeder filled with sugar water outside your window to allow the children to observe them.
 - Older children may want to keep a journal of their sightings with time of day, how many they saw at a time, how much sugar water the hummingbirds drank, how long they stayed at the feeder and so on.

Art

Provide photos and illustrations of the red-eyed tree frog to show the students how colorful it is: green with bright-red eyes, gold feet, blue stripes and a white underbelly. Then have them choose another rain forest animal to draw or paint, encouraging them to add splashes of unexpected colors. Display all their creations.

Creative Writing

First share that the leafcutter ant cuts bits of leaves with its jaws and carries them to its nest for food. Their trails can extend more than 100 feet. The ant colonies are divided into four classes or castes: majors who are large defenders against intruders, mediae, the foragers that cut leaves and bring them to the nest, minors making up perimeter patrols, and minims, the small ants that tend the gardens and the young.



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- Have the children write a story with four ant characters in it, one from each of the four classes of leafcutter ants.
 - You may want to write the beginning of the story to set the stage so the students will understand what each of the characters is about. Include a conflict or a scenario that will lend itself to further adventures, Read your part to the students then ask them to finish the story.

Science/Growing Plants

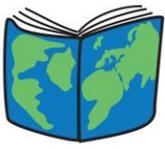
Bromeliads live on tree branches in the rain forest, but these spiky plants are also ideal indoor plants that you can grow at home or at school. Care instructions are easily found on the Internet, but be sure not to let the children overwater them, and don't use a metal watering can. The children will enjoy seeing something every day that is also found in the rain forest!

Guided Independent Study

- Have each child choose a creature to study from the list at the end of this document.
- Provide many resources for them to use to find out as much as they can about their chosen creature.
- Ask them to write several sentences or paragraphs about what they've learned.
- Students may want to present their project to the group.
- This project might also include
 - Drawings and photos
 - Diagrams
 - Diorama
 - Maps
 - Video
 - Posters/display boards
 - Models (figures)
 - Songs
 - Script for a skit
 - Sound effects
 - Costumes/masks
 - Sculpture

These additional topics from *Secrets of the Rain Forest* may be used to explore science, math, literacy, art, and movement as a group, or as subjects of guided independent study projects.

1. Beetles
2. Butterflies
3. Golden lion tamarins
4. Harpy eagles
5. Hummingbirds
6. Jaguars
7. Leafcutter ants
8. Parrot snakes



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9. Pink river dolphins
 10. Plants: bromeliads (spiky plants) and deadly pitcher plants
 11. Sloths
 12. Spider monkeys
 13. Tapirs
 14. Tree frogs
 15. Wandering spiders