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‘The story of the forest has been one of struggle and of change. But it’s who shapes the change and how it’s made that matters to the children of the Amazon’

Denise Zmekol, Children of the Amazon



# LEARN IN FOCUS

Latin America is home to approximately 570 million people living in the countries of South and Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico.

The region is rich in natural resources and blessed with some of the most magnificent and abundant biodiversity on the planet. The people of Latin America are living through a period of rapid change.

Change has brought riches through supplying the world with things like soy, beef, timber and palm oil. Change has brought better living standards and lifted millions out of poverty. But change has also emphasised the gap between rich and poor in a region with the most unequal distribution of income in the world. There's lots of shared wisdom about change: change is inevitable; change always comes bearing gifts; change brings opportunities. If change is inevitable, should we all just sit back and watch it happen? Is change something that's beyond our control? Is it wrong to try and shape the changes that affect us; to make sure that change moves things in the right direction and to think of the price as well as the benefits?

A large part of the price of change has been paid by the rainforests of Latin America; by the people whose lives depend on these forests and by the wildlife that live amongst the trees. Every year, an area of rainforest the size of England is cleared. The land is used to graze cattle; to plant soy and palm oil or harvest timber.

These changes are happening in distant places; thousands of

miles away from your classroom. The changes affect the lives of people who we'll probably never meet. But they're changes that are often shaped by the things we do; the things we buy and the things we want and value. The UK is one of the largest importers of illegally harvested or traded timber and buys more Colombian palm oil than any other country. European countries import half of the region's soy. Our cheap meat, cut-price shoe leather and low-cost wooden furniture have a price which goes beyond the one shown on the price tag – the price paid by the environment that sustains us all.

Brazil has one of the fastest growing economies in the world and exports more soy, beef, sugar, coffee and ethanol than any other country in the world. Activities like cattle ranching, soy farming and growing the sugar cane used to make ethanol requires lots of land. Growth has been achieved by converting massive areas of rainforest and savannah into farmland.

The activities on this poster use the Children of the Amazon film as a starting point and focus on some of the changes that have affected the people of Brazil. The online activities take a wider and more in-depth look at the changes affecting Latin America, enable pupils to explore some alternative voices, and encourage them to explore the ways in which the lives of people across the planet are linked to these issues.



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#### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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## WELCOME TO LEARN

The only thing that's constant in life is change. Change affects all of us – people and wildlife – because we're all part of an interconnected web of life.

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In recent decades, we've come to recognise that some sorts of development are unsustainable and that the changes they bring have a damaging impact on our world. For example, damage to environments in faraway places like the Amazon rainforest in Latin America are driven in part by the development choices of so-called Western societies. This environmental damage, in turn, can cause global changes in things like climate, and impact on the lives of people, places and wildlife all over the world.

This poster is the second in a series looking at the links between poverty and environmental destruction, and is accompanied by a short film which can be downloaded from [wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyandenvironment](http://wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyandenvironment). Poster 1 looked at the relationships between people and the rainforest, and the impacts on both of the Madeira River hydroelectric project. This poster focusses on the Brazilian Amazon in Latin America and the nature and impact of change within the region: the online activities will help you to broaden your exploration. Poster 3 will explore development in Latin America within the context of climate change.

WWF works to conserve the forests and wild places of Latin America and to help protect the welfare of the millions of people whose struggle against poverty relies on access to natural resources – nature's bounty. Reducing the impact of agricultural and infrastructure development, and increasing the value of forests through sustainable forestry and agriculture is vital. But the effective management and governance of Latin America's natural resources is a major challenge. It's a challenge that's vital today and for future generations – in Latin America and all around the world.

## INFORMATION

Visit our website for weblinks, further activities, links to other resources and background information – [wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyandenvironment](http://wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyandenvironment)



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# LEARN IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

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## Children of the Amazon

Imagine that you're one of the children in the 'Children of the Amazon' film – [wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyandenvironment](http://wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyandenvironment). Use the poster and the film to make notes about the changes to your world. What's caused the changes; were you able to shape these changes; how have you been affected; how has it impacted on the environment? Find out how soy and cattle farming have brought more changes since the film was made. Use your notes to create a role play in which you are one of the Children of the Amazon being interviewed for the film.

## Brazil

Almost 150 million of Brazil's 187 million people live in towns and cities. Most will never visit the Amazon rainforest. Create a moodboard using facts and images about Brazil.

**Discussion:** Many people in Brazil have benefitted from things like food and energy that come from the development of the Amazon. Does this mean that the changes to the Amazon are a good thing? If turning forest into farmland helps more people than it harms, should deforestation continue?

## Every picture

Design a piece of artwork that tells people about soy farming in the Cerrado and/or cattle farming in the Amazon. The work must be presented within the outline of a cow, jaguar or maned wolf and must have a written description explaining the work, the issues and the link with the animal. Visit [wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyandenvironment](http://wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyandenvironment) for websites to start your research.

## FACT BOX

- 200 to 300 tree species can frequently be found within one hectare of Amazon forest – more than in the entire European Union
- On average, a new species is discovered every three days in the Amazon
- Indigenous peoples of Amazonia use approximately 1,600 species of medicinal plants to cure different diseases - the US National Cancer Institute estimates that 70 percent of the anti-cancer plants identified so far are rainforest plants
- Brazil nut trees will not grow anywhere but in undisturbed sections of the Amazon rainforest.
- About 13 million hectares of forest are lost per year; 80% of current deforestation is due to cattle ranching.
- The Amazon is home to one in ten species on the planet.
- In 20 years, Brazil's national income more than tripled and it's now the 9th wealthiest country in the world. However, 35% of the population in the Brazilian Amazon live with medium or serious food security issues.

## Poverty, Inequality and Development

The gap between rich and poor is a big problem in Brazil where 45 million people live in poverty and half of the land is owned by the richest 1% of society. Brazil exports more soy, beef, sugar and coffee than any other country in the world – but does this trade help everyone? Use our website to find out about poverty and equality and then use Activity Sheet 1 to help you think about the benefits of trade and development.

## All children of the Amazon

'We are all children of the Amazon: breathing the same air; walking the same planet; sharing the same fate' – 'Children of the Amazon' film. Use the website to help you think about this statement. Describe your thoughts in less than 70 words – as a poem, statement, slogan, podcast, email or any other style of your choice.

## In Our Hands

Create a piece of work telling people about taking action using the theme of hands – see the shadow puppet film 'Save the Cerrado' on our website. You could create an animated shadow-puppet film; a tree with leaf-shaped hands displaying pledges or handbills.

## Looking Ahead

What will the Amazon and the Cerrado be like 20 years from now? How will life have changed for the people in the forests of Brazil? Will the jaguar and the maned wolf still walk the lands? Will the forests still stretch across the horizon? Make notes about probable and preferable futures. Work with a partner or a small group to identify the things that must happen to achieve your preferable future

# LEARN QUESTION TIME

## Question 1

Watch the 'Children of the Amazon' film ([wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyanddevelopment](http://wwf.org.uk/learn/povertyanddevelopment)) and look at the children in the poster overleaf. Logging brought great changes when they were young. Soy and cattle ranching are creating massive changes today. Imagine you are making a documentary film about the Amazon – describe what you expect to find when you get there. What will you try to explain in your film?

## Question 2

Imagine that you are one of the children in the poster. Tell the film makers about yourself; the area where you live and the things that have been happening to this place over the last 30 years.

## Question 3

How do these changes make you feel? Think about this question in different roles – as a film maker, as one of the children and as yourself.

## Question 4

In the film, 'Children of the Amazon', Motira talks about the changes – 'In the forest time it was really beautiful but now it's not beautiful to me.' What do you think Motira means by 'beautiful'? Things like roads, towns, factories, soy farms and hospitals may not be 'beautiful' to some people, but they may bring things like jobs, money, food, education and better health care for others who might otherwise not have access to these things. Would Motira have access to such things as a result of developments in the region? Who would?

## Question 5

How could we decide if the changes that have affected the Amazon are a good thing or a bad thing (and for whom)? Could we do this by comparing the things that have been gained against the things that have been lost? Are some of these things more important than others? For whom?

## Question 6

The rainforest is the home of rubber tappers and indigenous people like the Surui – people whose livelihoods depend on the survival of the forest. Do these people 'own' the forest? What about colonist farmers who were promised land, jobs – and basic modern conveniences – by the government? Do they own the forest?



## Question 7

Infrastructure projects like hydroelectric dams bring energy to millions of city dwelling Brazilians. Together with big roads, cattle ranches and large farms they are also a source of pride for some Brazilians and have brought wealth for certain sections of the population outside of the Amazon. Should the voices of these people count more than those of the local or indigenous people of the Amazon? Is everyone's opinion worth the same?

## Question 8

Many people in countries like the UK are worried about deforestation in the Amazon, concerned about the threat to species like the jaguar or angered by the plight of indigenous people. Yet many of us take advantage of goods exported from the region – cheap meat and shoe leather from animals fed on soy-based feeds, coffee, timber, paper, sugar and biofuels. What should we do to stop the changes to places like the Amazon? Should we even try?

## Question 9

Look at the quote on the poster. Who 'shapes' the change in the Amazon? Which voices need to be heard? Local or indigenous people? Colonists? Wealth city dwellers far away? Government? People in places like the UK? How could this happen? What's the best way to make the decisions that shape the change?

## Question 10

Imagine that you are one of the children in the poster. What is your message to the children of the UK?