

Surprised! (or Tiger in a Tropical Storm)

1891

painted by Henri Rousseau

This oil painting depicts a tiger in an imaginary tropical rainforest environment

Geographical enquiry and skills

- enquiry – asking and answering questions
- using geographical vocabulary
- using primary and secondary resources to investigate rainforests
- using globes, maps and atlases

Geographical knowledge and understanding

- locational knowledge – global location of tropical rainforests
- climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts
- the features of rainforests – plants, animals, weather and climate
- local/global links
- the impact of human activity in rainforests on climate change

To access extra resources from the Everyday Guides web page, see page 2.



Surprised! was the first of the jungle scenes that Henri Rousseau (1844–1910) became famous for painting. Rousseau described the painting as representing a tiger hunting explorers – so it became known as *Tiger in a Tropical Storm (Surprised!)*. Rousseau taught himself to paint and, although his style was ridiculed during his lifetime, since the artist died his talent has been recognised. His simplistic style is now copied by other artists: pupils may have encountered Rousseau-like paintings in children's picture books. *Tiger in a Tropical Storm* provides an ideal starting point for an investigation of rainforests and the plants and animals that live in them. It also lends itself to encouraging pupils to consider the value and reliability of paintings as a source of information about places.

Sharing the painting

Invite the pupils to look carefully at Rousseau's *Tiger in a Tropical Storm*. What sort of environment do they think it depicts? What kind of clues are there in the painting? Discuss the plants and animal. What do these suggest about the weather and climate? Establish that the painting shows a tropical rainforest by drawing pupils' attention to salient features (including the dense, lush undergrowth and the thick canopy of trees). Although Rousseau claimed knowledge of the jungle while in Mexico, it is more likely that he drew inspiration from visits to Parisian hothouses and zoos. Do pupils think *Tiger in a Tropical Storm* is a realistic representation of a rainforest? Why/why not? Discuss whether the accurate depiction of reality is important in art.

Teaching activities

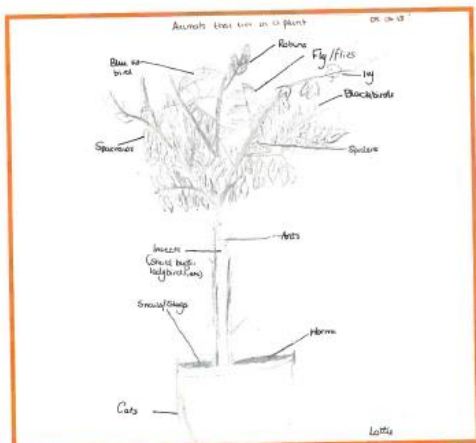
Art activity

Work together as a class to research, design and create a large rainforest frieze or convert a corridor into a rainforest. It should illustrate all the features of a rainforest environment. Challenge pupils to demonstrate all they learn about rainforest environments, the plants and animals as well as the weather and climate, through this artwork.

Investigating rainforests

Ask pairs of pupils to talk about what we can learn about the rainforest from *Tiger in a Tropical Storm*. Sort their answers into categories (e.g. weather and climate, landscape, plants, animals) then give each pair a photograph of the rainforest and ask them to repeat the same activity (download the 'Using paintings and photographs' activity sheet from the Everyday Guides webpage). Provide extra photos in order to demonstrate the value of studying additional images.

Introduce, or revise, the concept of primary and secondary sources with pupils. Discuss the similarities and differences between the photos (a primary source) and Rousseau's painting (a secondary source). Which provides more accurate information about the rainforest? Finally, discuss whether accuracy is important when you are trying to answer geographical questions.



Biodiversity in the local area

Identify a mature tree in the local area and take the pupils to study it. They should look for evidence of the variety of organisms that rely on the tree. Invite pupils to draw the tree and the plants, birds, animals, insects, etc., they observe in and around the tree (e.g. tree creeper, squirrel, woodpecker, ants, butterflies, primroses). Discuss the different habitats within the tree. Which parts of the tree do the animals / birds / insects inhabit? Which animals use all of the tree, and which ones use part of it? This discussion provides an opportunity to introduce the concept of rainforest layers: forest floor, undergrowth, canopy and emergent layer.

Record the fieldwork by taking photos and create a montage, invite pupils to annotate it with captions or sticky notes recording what they have learned.

Why rainforests matter

Using a number of secondary sources, investigate how the rainforests affect our lives in the UK and why they matter. Introduce pupils to the concept of biodiversity, describe some of the huge variety of plants and animals that live in and rely on the world's rainforests.

Challenge pupils to find out why rainforests matter. Working in small groups, they could look at rainforests as a source of food and medicine, a habitat for plants and animals, as climate regulators, and/or rainforests as a home for people. Following the research, each group then presents their findings as a news report or documentary to the class in a format (e.g. video, audio, slide presentation) of their choosing.

Locating rainforests

Use an environmental globe or atlas to identify where tropical rainforests are located. Can pupils see a pattern in the location of rainforests? Encourage them to look at the distribution of rainforest in relation to the Equator and the Tropics. Are there rainforests in every continent? Discuss why this is the case.

Use Google Earth to find images of different rainforests. Invite small groups or individual pupils to choose a particular rainforest or area of rainforest for a case study. Challenge them to locate where that rainforest is and find out what type of rainforest it is (including mangrove, lowland, cloud and temperate) and what this label means. Pupils can also investigate the climate, the plants and animals that are found in their rainforest. Explain that each group/individual must produce a poster for a class display. The posters can be positioned around a world map to indicate the distribution of the different types of rainforests.



