

Amazon wildfires

The Amazon rainforest in South America is one of the most important environments on Earth. It is not just a vital resource in regulating the climate and filled with a vast range of animals and plants, but is also home to hundreds of thousands of indigenous people. These people rely on the forest to provide their food, shelter and most of what they need to survive.

But this precious resource is under threat. Fires are common in the dry season between July and October, but in 2019 there were more fires than ever before – an estimated 74,000 fires between January and August, which is a more than 80% increase on 2018. Thousands of these fires have started on protected or indigenous land.

Learning objectives

Learners will:

- > discuss the human causes of destruction of the Amazon rainforest
- > explore the role of the Amazon in the lives of indigenous people
- > understand how the recent destruction of the Amazon can affect people's lives.

Photo activity: The Amazon is burning

While the fires that have raged across the Amazon region in 2019 are devastating for many reasons, this activity encourages learners to focus on the causes of the fires and the effect on the people who live there.

Show the learners the photos of the recent fires in the Amazon (in the PowerPoint). As you present the images, discuss the following questions:

- > Why do you think people are burning the Amazon rainforest? *Some reasons are: farming is a way for people with fewer resources to make money and feed their families, although large corporations are also involved in mining and logging in the region.*
- > Why are the 300 indigenous groups in the region so badly affected? *The forest is vital to people's way of life, providing food, shelter and much more.*
- > How do you think the people feel about the forest being destroyed around them?
- > What can the indigenous people do about it? *Feelings of powerlessness may have been discussed as part of the previous question. The photo of firefighters training (Slide 3) shows that they are trying to fight the destruction themselves.*
- > How might the indigenous people need to adapt their lives to the increasing fires? *They may need to move to different areas*
- > What are the effects on people outside the Amazon? *The pollution has immediate effects in the region but there are also the long-term impacts of climate change and loss of habitats for living things. You could also discuss the loss of cultural traditions.*

Extension activity

For a more extended activity on this topic, learners could write persuasive letters and other texts about the situation of the indigenous people to increase empathy. They could research the topic in more detail, looking at:

- > The effects of fires in the Amazon
- > What people are doing now to tackle them

- > What help they need in future
- > Actions that people across the world can take to help; encourage the learners to discuss anything they could do.