

Episode Five: Amazon Special—Can the Amazon Survive? (originally aired 2/23/2020)

VIEWING & DISCUSSION GUIDE

TARGET AUDIENCE

English and Language Arts, Social Studies, Media Literacy, Environmental Science, Social Emotional Learning: Ages 11–14

EPISODE THEMES

- Climate Change
- Global Connections and Concerns
- Youth Activism
- Economics
- Diverse Viewpoints

U.S. EDUCATION STANDARDS

Media Literacy

ISTE 1.c. Use technology to seek feedback that informs and improves their practice and to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways.

ISTE 7.a. Use digital tools to connect with learners from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, engaging with them in ways that broaden mutual understanding and learning.

ISTE 7.d. Explore local and global issues and use collaborative technologies to work with others to investigate solutions.

English and Language Arts

Reading Informational Texts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.7
Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.7
Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

EPISODE OVERVIEW

Produced by the BBC World Service, *My World* is a program for tweens and teens who want to know more about the key stories and issues shaping our world. Episode Five is a special investigation into the threats facing the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. Changes in government policy have led to an alarming trend of forest fires with an unprecedented increase in 2019. Episode Five features BBC/My World journalist Nomia Iqbal traveling through Brazil to investigate the impact of the fires. She repeatedly asks the clear question: can the Amazon survive? Her investigation includes:

- The perspective of **indigenous** young women fighting the Brazilian government’s change in policy to preserve the Amazon and its indigenous communities.
- A historical explanation of the settlement of the Amazon since the 1970s, and the **economic** interests of ranching and farming families.
- The horror of **illegal fires**, raging out of control, decimating virgin forest, and destroying grazing lands.
- A snapshot of Brazilian **youth activism** to bring attention to climate change and to stop the destruction of the Amazon.
- A challenging inquiry about the **world’s responsibilities** for fires as consumers of produce from the Amazon.
- An examination of **Jair Bolsonaro’s policies** to develop the Amazon, and his reaction to global criticism.
- Probing questions from teens about the **effects of deforestation** on plant and animal life.
- A guest appearance from outer space by International Space Station Commander **Luca Parmitano** and his view of the Amazon fires of 2019.

NOTE: This episode covers multiple topics. If you want to take a deeper dive into a particular topic from this episode, head over to our chaptered segments. Each segment is 3-5 minutes and includes a list of prompts to engage your students in the topic covered in that segment.

- A Threatened Global Treasure
- ‘Mother’ Amazon to Indigenous Youth
- Amazon Populations: Humans Increase as Trees Decrease
- The Heart and Lungs of the World

National Council for the Social Studies Themes

5. Individual, Groups, and Institutions: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

9. Global Connections: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

10. Civic Ideals and Practices: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

Next Generation Science Standards

MS-ESS3-2 Analyze and interpret data on natural hazards to forecast future catastrophic events and inform the development of technologies to mitigate their effects.

MS-ESS3-5 Ask questions to clarify evidence of the factors that have caused the rise in global temperatures over the past century.

CASEL Core Competencies— Collaborating States Initiatives

Social Awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

Responsible Decision Making: The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the wellbeing of oneself and others.

PREVIEWING DISCUSSION

Suggested prompts include:

- When you think about the Amazon rainforest, what comes to mind about its biodiversity (variety of species) and sustainability (ability to survive)?
- What role does the Amazon play in the Earth's ecosystem?
- Why do you think people want to burn parts of the Amazon?
- Why might the rest of the world be concerned about forest fires and deforestation in the Amazon?
- What is your connection to the Amazon? (Encourage students to think about the food they buy or the clothes they purchase.)

POST VIEWING DISCUSSION

Suggested prompts include:

- How is the Amazon vital to Earth's ecosystem?
- What chapter of *BBC/My World Amazon Special* did you connect to the most? Why?
- What chapter of the episode made less of a connection for you? Why?
- Consider the perspectives of the Arara young women and the young ranchers: Carina, Rodrigo, and Gustavo.
 - How did their points of view differ? How could they find common ground to save the Amazon?
- Thinking about Anika's question to the conservationist, how do you think more awareness can be raised about the need for the Amazon to survive?
- Consider the following stakeholders and their positions in relation to the Amazon rainforest. Who do you think holds the strongest position?
 - The Brazilian government
 - Indigenous groups like the Arara
 - Ranchers like Carina, Rodrigo, and Gustavo
 - Youth climate activists like Conscious Next in Manaus
 - Farmers who illegally burn the Amazon to provide more land for food
 - The global community
- Do you think the Amazon can survive?

INFOBASE SUGGESTED RESOURCES

For additional instructional opportunities, Infobase suggests reviewing these resources.

EXTEND AND CONNECT

1. Have students go global and investigate how organizations and governments outside of Brazil are working to protect the Amazon.
2. Nomia, the BBC/My World journalist, explained that settlement of the Amazon increased by one million people since the 1970s. Guide students through an examination of policies that shifted Brazilian demographics when settlers moved into the Amazon.
 - What incentives were provided?
 - What impact did the development of Brazil's infrastructure, such as the Amazon Highway, have on population movement?

- What economic conditions led to government policies of resettlement and land distribution?

Recommended source: Vis, Karin-Marijke, "The Road Transforming the Amazon," *BBC-Travel*, 4 November 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20141028-the-road-transforming-the-amazon> Accessed 22 September 2020.

3. Students can create a storyboard about the fires in the Amazon with National Geographic's photo montage from "[As the Amazon burns, cattle ranchers are blamed. But it's complicated.](#)" Keep the captions hidden as students write their own explanations for each photo and develop a narrative.
Source: James, Charlie Hamilton, "As the Amazon burns, cattle ranchers are blamed. But it's complicated," *National Geographic*, 30 August 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/2019/08/amazon-burns-cattle-ranchers-blamed-complicated-relationship/#/amazon-fires-slash-burn-western-amazon-13.jpg> Accessed 22 September 2020.
4. Explore the efforts of [Amazon Aid Youth Activists](#) and other young activists working to protect the Amazon. Encourage students to consider the danger activists face by being vocal in their efforts.
5. Try this lesson from California Academy of Science, "[Amazon Cycle Water Role-Play](#)" to demonstrate the idea that the Amazon is the 'heart' pumping water into the atmosphere.
6. Think globally about other rainforests that face similar threats from deforestation and human activity. Ask students to research similar threats to ecosystems in Africa and Asia.
7. Emphasize the importance of data collection and the role of satellites documenting human changes in the Amazon with Landsat satellites. Every two weeks since the early 1970s, this program has documented each region of the Amazon. Use NASA's Earth Observatory's "[Making Sense of Amazon Deforestation](#)" to guide your instruction.