Rain Forest

At the Children’s School, our year is separated into theme-related units. During each theme, the teachers change the classroom materials. In October we planned various activities that made the Rainforest theme meaningful to each Green Room friend.

The Earth’s rain forests have been given well-deserved nicknames, such as “lungs of the planet” and “cradles of biodiversity.” Tropical rain forests cover no more than about 6 percent of the planet, yet one of the Earth’s major rain forests, the Amazon rainforest in South America, is believed to produce about 20 percent of the world’s oxygen, while also absorbing nearly 20 percent of the world’s carbon dioxide. It is estimated that rainforest biodiversity represents more than half of the world’s combined animal and plant life. (from about.com)

During the Rain Forest thematic unit in the Green Room, the friends explored the following questions: What and where is the Amazon Rain Forest? How is the Amazon Rain Forest different from where we live? What animals and plants live in the different parts of the Amazon Rain Forest? Why is the Rain Forest important? What is a life cycle?
Layers of the Rain Forest

There are four layers of life in the rain forest. The **emergent layer** is the very top of the forest where the tallest tree tops stick out of the forest. Here one can find monkeys and birds of prey. The **canopy** is made up of the thick branches and leaves of tall trees. A refreshing breeze and sunlight make this the most popular place to live in the jungle. More wildlife lives here than any place else. Sloths, monkeys, bats, toucans, and macaws make their home here. The next layer is the **understory** with its leafy bushes and the tops of small trees. It is dark and hot here. Tiny frogs hide in the leaves, and sparkly birds hover in front of flowers. Snakes and butterflies blend in among the leaves and branches. The bottom layer, the darkest part of the forest, is the **forest floor**. Here the air is still and moist, and ferns, moss, and dead leaves cover the ground. Some animals that live on the forest floor are insects, jaguars, and giant armadillos. It is impossible to travel far on the forest floor of the rain forest without crossing one of the many streams and rivers that slice through it. The murky **Amazon River** winds its way through the South American tropical rain forest, and is home to crocodiles, many large fish, and pink dolphins!

Betsy prepares to hoist some animals with a pulley system up to the canopy of the tree house.

Grace, Malena, Ava and Tomer help to make a Rainforest In A Jar terrarium.

Sean and Grace make big leaves to decorate the canopy of the rain forest in the Dramatic Play Center.

Marina records another found animal in the Rain Forest Scavenger Hunt.

Kaya prepares her morning snack of Ants On A Log - celery sticks, sun butter and raisins.

Parker, Atticus, Ben R., and Eugene pretend in the Rain Forest Tree House.
Life Cycles and Ecosystems

A Life Cycle is a sequence of changes from the birth to death of a living organism. In the Green Room, we studied the Butterfly (egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, adult butterfly) and Frog (egg, tadpole, frog) life cycles. Both animals are found in the canopy of the Amazon Rain Forest in South America.

An Ecosystem consists of the plants and animals found in a particular area that rely on each other to survive. An ecosystem also includes how the plants and animals interact with their environment. During the Rain Forest theme, we discussed the entire rainforest ecosystem (including the Food Chain and Camouflage) and, specifically, the Amazon River ecosystem and its animal life.
Ksenia makes a green arm print to represent a Crocodile, one of the main predators in the Amazon River ecosystem.

Evan, Tomer and Tiger take a trip down the Amazon River in a boat.

Max, Evan and Parker observe Mrs. Cherin as she de-bones a smoked fish. Many children enjoyed tasting the fish and examining the bones.

Leeza signs her name to the story line she wrote about the rain forest.

Ava, Atticus, Owen, Max, and Leeza use their whole bodies to play Jump The Snake with Mrs. Myers.

Owen uses the broom to help to take care of the playground sandbox.

Marina and Ben use recycled materials to create a sculpture in the Makeshop. Reusing, recycling and conservation of resources is a common thread throughout the school year.
Fall Fun in Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh has four distinct seasons: winters are cold, cloudy and moderately snowy, springs and falls are generally mild with moderate levels of sunshine, and summers are warm to hot and humid. It is Fall in Pittsburgh now. In the Green Room we did many fall activities and discussed how the changes we see do not happen in the Amazon rain forest where it is always hot and humid.

Ms. Vizzini, the Green Room student teacher from Pitt, leads the circle time in a discussion about how an apple tree would look in each of Pittsburgh’s four seasons.

Deborah carries the pumpkin and apple she collected in The Pumpkin Patch provided by Facilities Management Services at CMU.

Morgan spends time outdoors in the cool, fall weather mixing mud, water and other natural items together in the Mud Kitchen.

Tiger helps a friend find a pumpkin in the Pumpkin Patch after he is successful in his search.

Jovie fits a piece into the house the children are repairing as they talk with Louise Sturgess, from PHLF about house preservation.

Isaac and Deborah clean out a pumpkin to get it ready for carving into a Jack-o-Lantern.

Andrew, Kaya and Jovie use various kitchen tools to smash cooked apples to make applesauce.

Owen and Eugene sort fall leaves by color.
Morgan, Kendal, Andrew and Betsy work to pick all of the fruit before the crow arrives as they play The Orchard Game.

Parker and Atticus do some shopping in the fall market in the Dramatic Play Center.

Kendal and Cash count and collect acorns for the squirrels in the Squirrel Nut Counting Game.

Deborah and Evelyn load the buckets with fall pumpkins and gourds to try to balance the scale.

Ben H. puts objects in the balance scale buckets to test his prediction of which weighs more.

Evan practices drawing basic shapes by tracing around them on a white board. In the Green Room in the fall, we concentrate on the skills of identifying and drawing shapes.

Izhak blows the bubbles off of the Bubble Art he made that will be the background of the Open House invitation to his family.

Malena and Tomer practice basic kitchen rules as they help make play dough for the classroom.

Javi practices hammering nails on the Hammering Log. All of the Green Room friends are introduced to basic hand tools in the Woodworking Center.
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Ben H.’s mom, Evan’s mom, Malena’s mom, and Max’s mom for reading stories to the Green Room friends and enjoying birthday snacks with their children.