

RAINFOREST ORCHESTRA

AGES 3-8



ARTS
FUN
FROM ART TO HEART

In the orchestra, one person is the conductor who directs the musicians as they play. At first, the caregiver, parent, or teacher should be the conductor. When the children are ready, take turns being the conductor and bringing out the sounds of the rainforest. If you do this activity with one child and one adult, each person will play more than one instrument.

MAKING THE ORCHESTRA

The Beat

If you have a keyboard that produces a steady percussion beat, select a beat that is favorable for accompaniment. If you don't have a keyboard, you can select an appropriate instrumental CD. If you have bongos, you may be able to provide a steady beat with older children playing.

The Rain

Make a rainstick. Use a long potato chip can. Bend 7 cardboard strips (the cardboard wrapping of canned biscuits works well) slightly and stack inside the can. The strips must be long enough to hold in place. Fill the can halfway with rice, beans or small rocks. Seal tightly by gluing the lid or securing with tape. Reinforce the seal with masking tape around the lid edge and over the can. Create a pattern or otherwise decorate a piece of construction paper and tape around the can.

Note: *The rainstick has roots in Central and South America, where many rainsticks are still produced today. They are made by pushing the thorns of a cactus inward and filling the inside with rocks. The thorns of the cactus help create the falling sound of rain.*

Toucan Kazoo

Roll up scrapbook paper or any heavy cardstock paper and tape it to make a sturdy roll. Cover the ends with aluminum foil. Hold the kazoo without touching the foil.

The foil needs to vibrate to get a good sound. Say "do" into the kazoo. This will make a sound to represent the toucan, whose voice has been described as harsh and raspy and sometimes like that of a frog.

Stringed Instrument

This will sound like small animals skittering through the rainforest. Use a small cardboard box with a clear plastic window such as a pasta box. Cut out the plastic window and put rubber bands around the box. Pluck the strings quickly to show the quick movement of small animals.

Tissue Paper Accordion

This will sound like bats. Using duct tape or masking tape, secure ends of tissue paper to plastic lid tops. Make handles on one side of the lids with construction paper. Hold the lids as you would hold cymbals. Move the tissue paper in and out to make a crinkling sound. Fast movement indicates faster flight.

Oatmeal Box Drum

Use an oatmeal box as a drum to represent the sloth. The sloth of the rainforest is heavy and slow moving. The player of the oatmeal drum plays a slow, steady beat.

Crocodile Cymbals

Use a pan with a lid or two lids as cymbals to represent the crocodile. The crocodile often is silent and sneaky before snapping at its prey.

PERFORMING A SOUND STORY

Make up a story using the characters represented in the orchestra. One child or adult can act as a conductor and/or narrator.

Sample story:

This is the rain that falls from the sky in the rainforest. (*rainstick*)
The toucan is dressed like a rainbow and calls from the treetop. (*kazoo raspy call*)
Meanwhile, the crocodile finds some food and snap its jaws together. (*pan cymbals*)
Night comes. The mice skitter around to find food. (*rubber band stringed instrument*)
The sloth moves every so slowly. (*oatmeal box drum*)
The bats fly quickly as the swoop in and around the trees. (*tissue paper accordion*)
The rainforest is a place of many animals. (*Everybody plays.*)
And they all need the rain that falls from the sky in the rainforest. (*rainstick alone*)

EXPANSION RESOURCES

- Eric Carle's book "Slowly, Slowly, Slowly," said the Sloth has beautiful collage illustrations and tells the story of an Amazon sloth.
- Reading Rainbow's 11th Annual Young Authors and Illustrators Contest features a book called *Rainforest Orchestra*, written and

illustrated by a student. Visit <http://pbskids.org/reading/rainbow/contest/2005/authors/authorsr.html>

- The Kinderpond web site has information about various activities for a rainforest unit, including a list of books on the rainforest. <http://www.kinderpond.com/rainforest.html>

