

Land Use Conflict in the Amazon Rainforest

12.1 Introduction

Picture yourself in a hot, steamy forest. It has just stopped raining, and everything around you is green and moist. Green vines wind around the slender trunks of trees that reach more than 100 feet into the air. High overhead, a tangle of vines, branches, and leaves nearly blocks out the sun. Except for the buzzing of insects, the forest is practically silent. Then you hear a strange barking sound coming from the treetops. You look up and get your first glimpse of a red howler monkey.

Welcome to the Amazon rainforest, an enormous **tropical rainforest** in South America. The rainforest seems timeless, yet it is changing rapidly. For thousands of years, small groups of **indigenous peoples** have made their home here, making a living by hunting and gathering. In more recent times, other groups have come to the rainforest, including rubber tappers, farmers, cattle ranchers, and loggers. In addition, the rainforest is of great interest to environmental groups, which are organizations that work to protect the natural world.

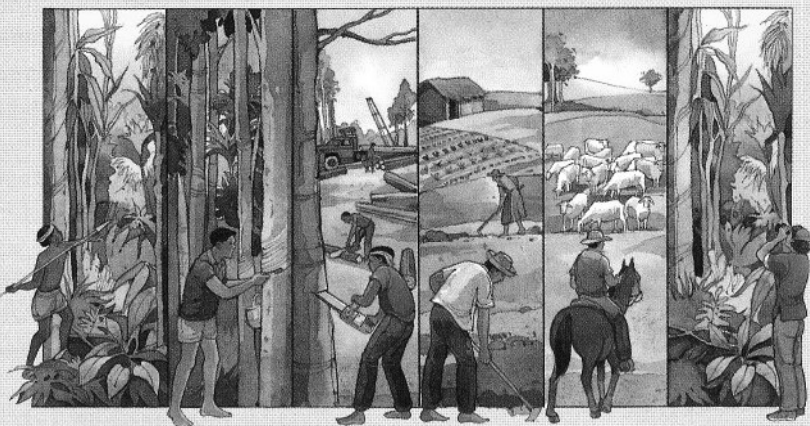
Each of these groups has its own ideas about the Amazon rainforest. The rubber tappers, farmers, cattle ranchers, and loggers want to use the rainforest to make a living. Indigenous peoples want to maintain their traditional way of life. Environmental groups want to preserve the rainforest in its natural state. These differences have led to **land use conflict**, or arguments about the best ways to use the land. In this chapter, you will learn what the various groups want and examine some possible solutions to land use conflict within the Amazon rainforest.

Essential Question

How should the resources of rainforests be used and preserved?

This illustration shows six groups that are interested in the Amazon rainforest. Some want to use the resources of the rainforest to make a living. Others want to preserve the rainforest in its natural state. Keep the possible conflicts among these groups in mind as you try to answer the Essential Question.

Graphic Organizer



Native Amazonians

Rubber Tappers

Loggers

Settlers

Cattle Ranchers

Environmentalists