

# ANIMALS OF THE RAINFOREST LAYERS

A Movement Lesson for Kids



Smithsonian  
National Zoological Park  
Conservation Biology Institute



FRIENDS  
OF THE NATIONAL ZOO

# THE AMAZON RAINFOREST

The Amazon River in South America is the largest river on Earth.

The Amazon Rainforest is a big rainforest that grows around the Amazon River.

A rainforest is a place where it rains often and there are a lot of trees and other plants.

Lots of different kinds of animals live in the rainforest.

The Amazon Rainforest has many layers!





# RAINFOREST LAYERS

The layers of a rainforest are the different parts of the forest, from the bottom to the top.

A rainforest tree is like an apartment building. Different plants and animals live on each “floor” or layer.

Many rainforest animals move up and down from one layer to another.

Let’s move like animals and learn about the rainforest layers!



# RIVER

The lowest layer of the Amazon rainforest is the RIVER!

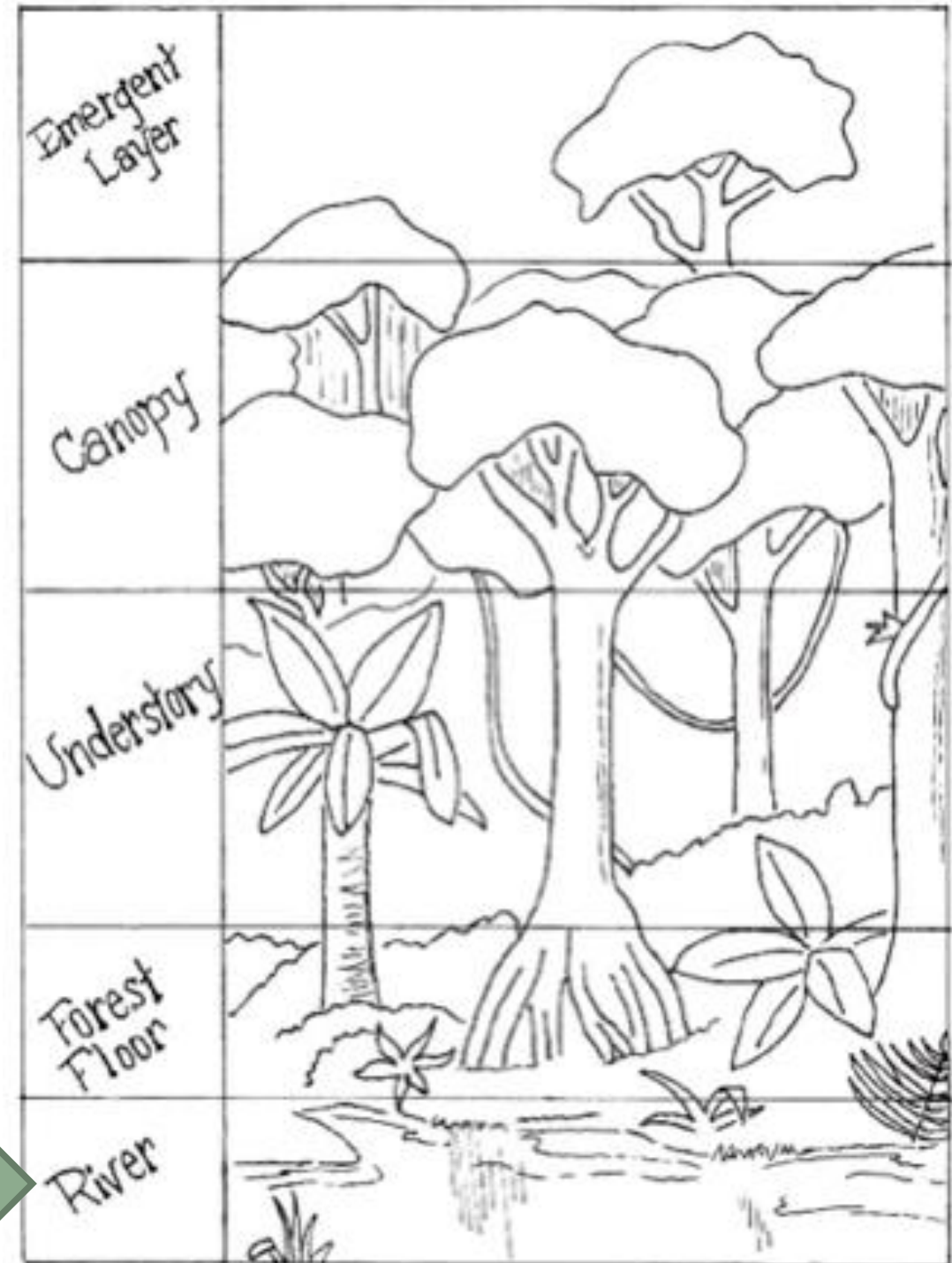
The Amazon River is the largest river in the world.

Here you'll find animals who:

- Like or need to swim
- Eat food found in the water

Can you think of animals that might live in the river?

## Layers of the Rainforest



# WHO LIVES IN THE RIVER?





# GREEN ANACONDA



Imagine you are a giant snake!

**Anacondas** are constrictors: they squeeze their food before eating it.

- *Wrap* your arms around your belly and *squeeze* like an anaconda. (Snakes don't have arms! They squeeze with their bodies!)

**Anacondas** swim in water and slither on land.

- *Wiggle* your body like you're *swimming* then *climbing* up to the shore and we'll visit the next layer...

# FOREST FLOOR

The next layer of the rainforest is the FOREST FLOOR.

The forest floor is the ground, just like the ground outside where you live! Leaf litter covers the ground.

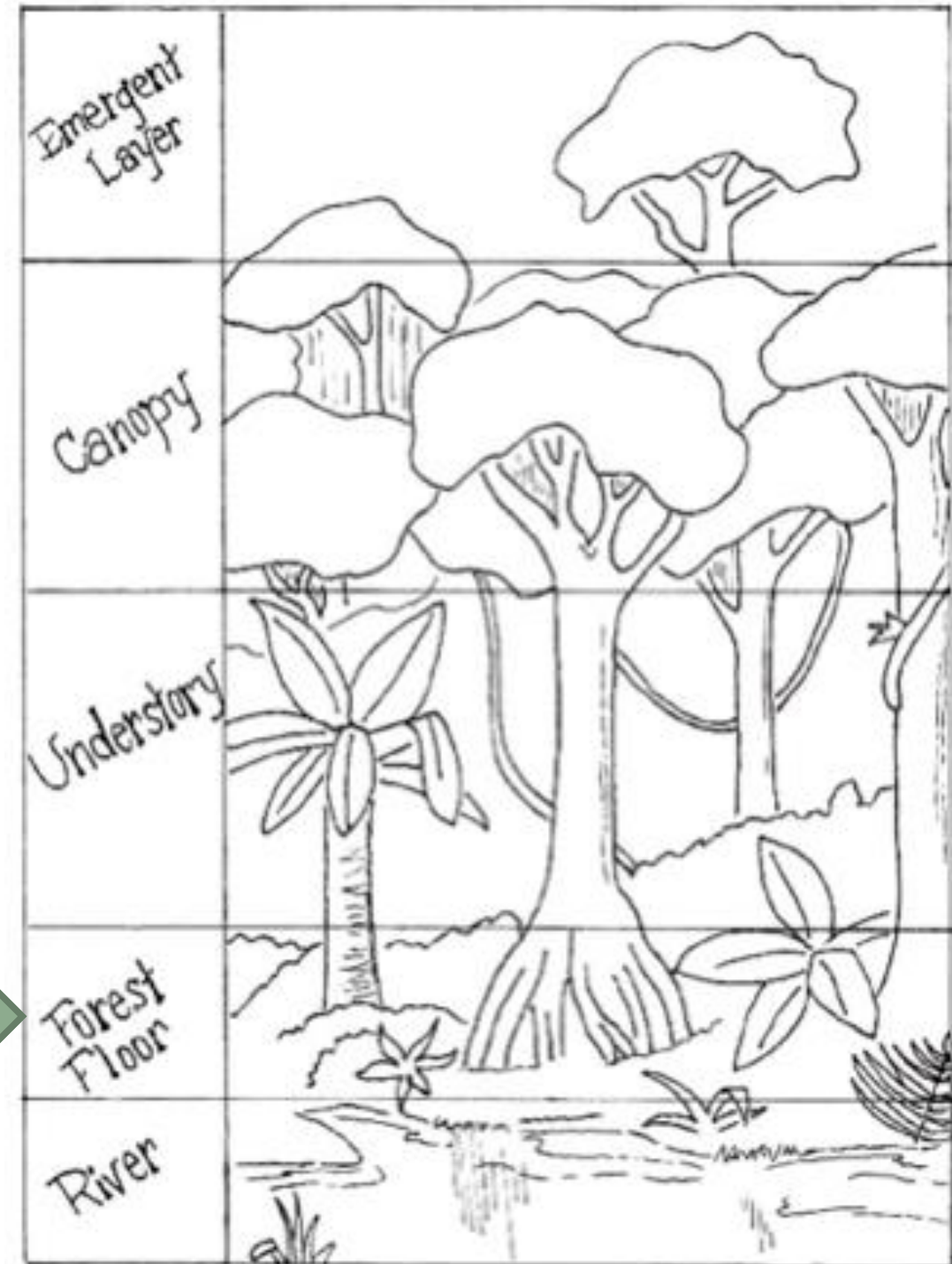
Here you'll find animals who:

- Might not climb very well
- Like to dig

Can you think of animals that might live on the forest floor?



## Layers of the Rainforest





# WHO LIVES ON THE FOREST FLOOR?





# POISON FROG



Imagine you are a tiny frog!

**Poison frogs** hop around on the forest floor looking for their favorite foods. They are insectivores, which means they eat insects.

- *Hop* around on the ground like a frog searching for food.

**Poison frogs** also spend time on plants called bromeliads that grow on the trunks and branches of rainforest trees.

- *Stretch* your arms up like a frog climbing up a stem to the next layer of the rainforest...



# UNDERSTORY

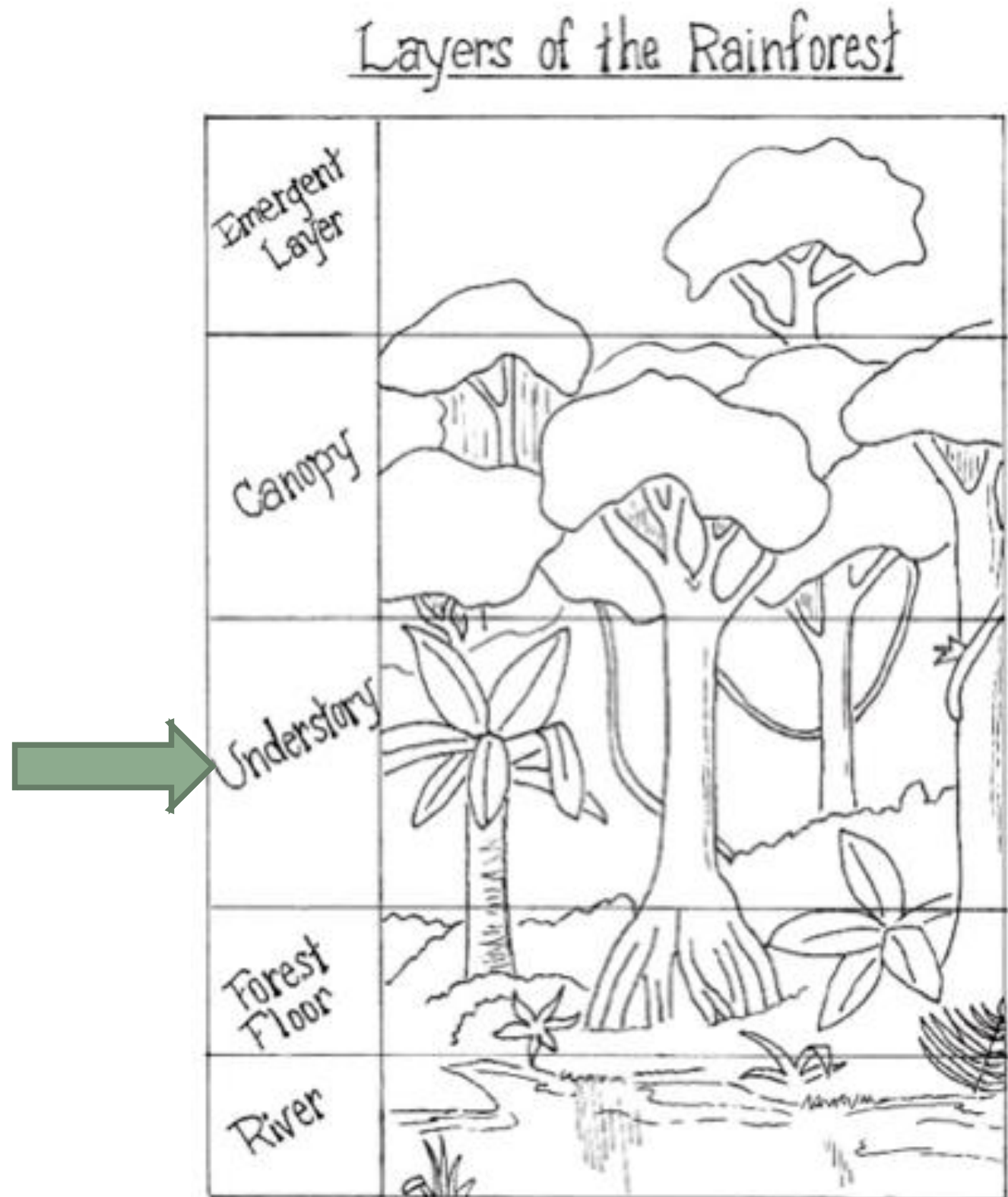
The next layer of the rainforest is the UNDERSTORY.

The understory is where tree trunks, bushes, and vines grow. It is dark and quiet.

Here you'll find animals who:

- Can climb very well
- Live in the trunks of trees
- Like to hide

Can you think of animals that might live in the understory?





# WHO LIVES IN THE UNDERSTORY?



**JAGUAR**



**SOUTHERN TAMANDUA**



**BRAZILIAN RAINBOW BOA**



# JAGUAR

Imagine you are a big cat!

**Jaguars** hide in the dark and shady understory looking for food. They eat other animals, like monkeys, birds and rodents.

- Imagine you have huge teeth and claws and use them to *snarl*.
- Now *flex* your sharp claws and *swat* like a jaguar catching food.

**Jaguars** use their spots as camouflage, so they can blend into their surroundings.

- *Sneak quietly* like a jaguar, and we'll move to our next layer...





# CANOPY

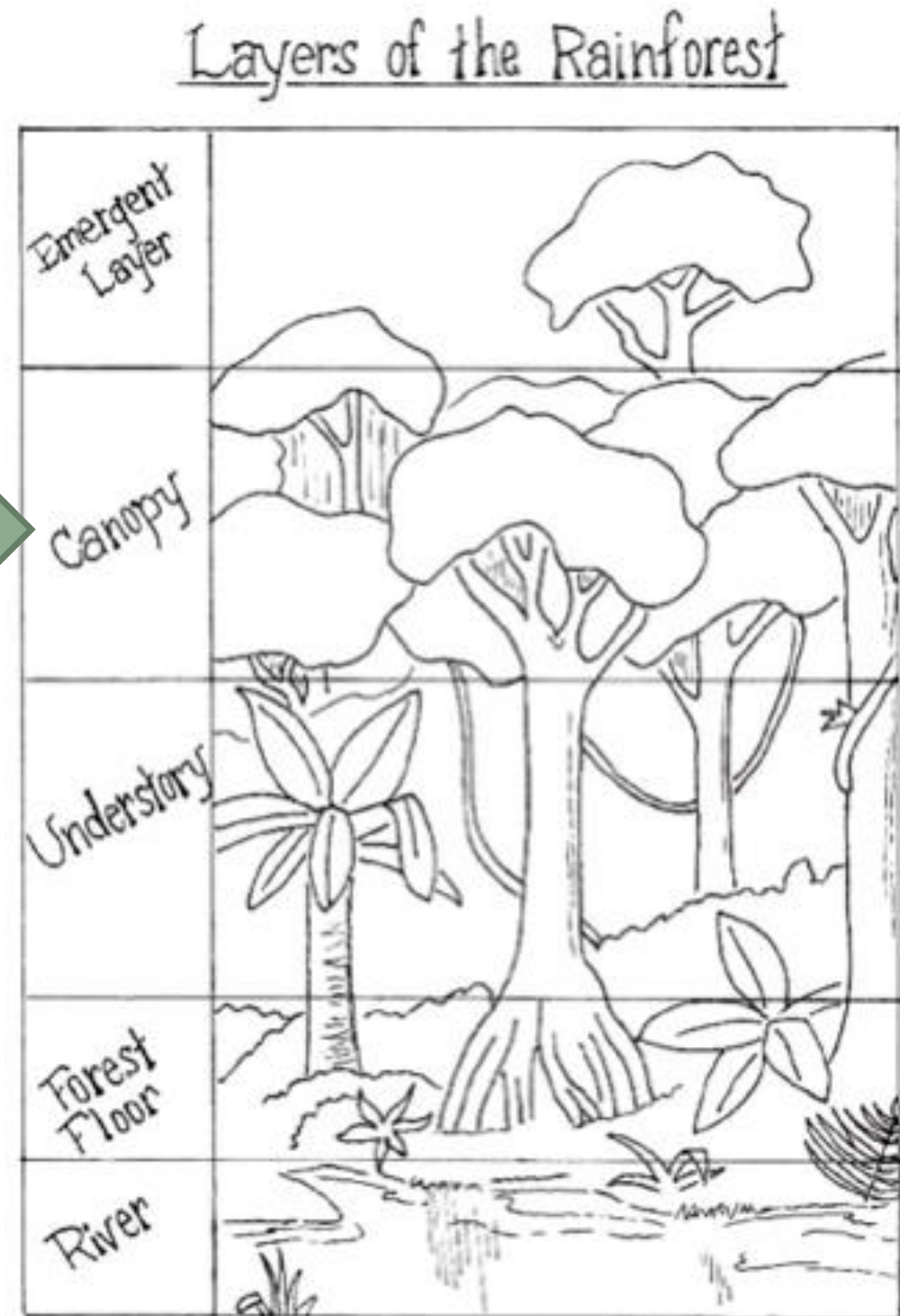
The next layer of the rainforest is the CANOPY.

The canopy is made up of many treetops all crowded together.

Here you'll find animals who:

- Can climb very well
- Eat leaves, fruits, and nuts
- Hide in the leaves

Can you think of animals that might live in the canopy?





# WHO LIVES IN THE CANOPY LAYER?



**GREEN ARACARI**



**EMPEROR TAMARIN**



**TWO-TOED SLOTH**





# EMPEROR TAMARIN

Imagine you are a tiny monkey!

**Emperor Tamarins** eat fruit and insects. They also love sweet, sticky nectar from flowers and sap from trees.

- *Grab* a pretend piece of fruit from a tree and *eat it* like a tamarin.

**Emperor Tamarins** are fast and very flexible. They jump from tree to tree searching for food and playing with their family members. Their tails help them balance.

- *Balance* on one foot, then *leap* like a tamarin, and we'll move to the highest layer in the rainforest...

# EMERGENT LAYER

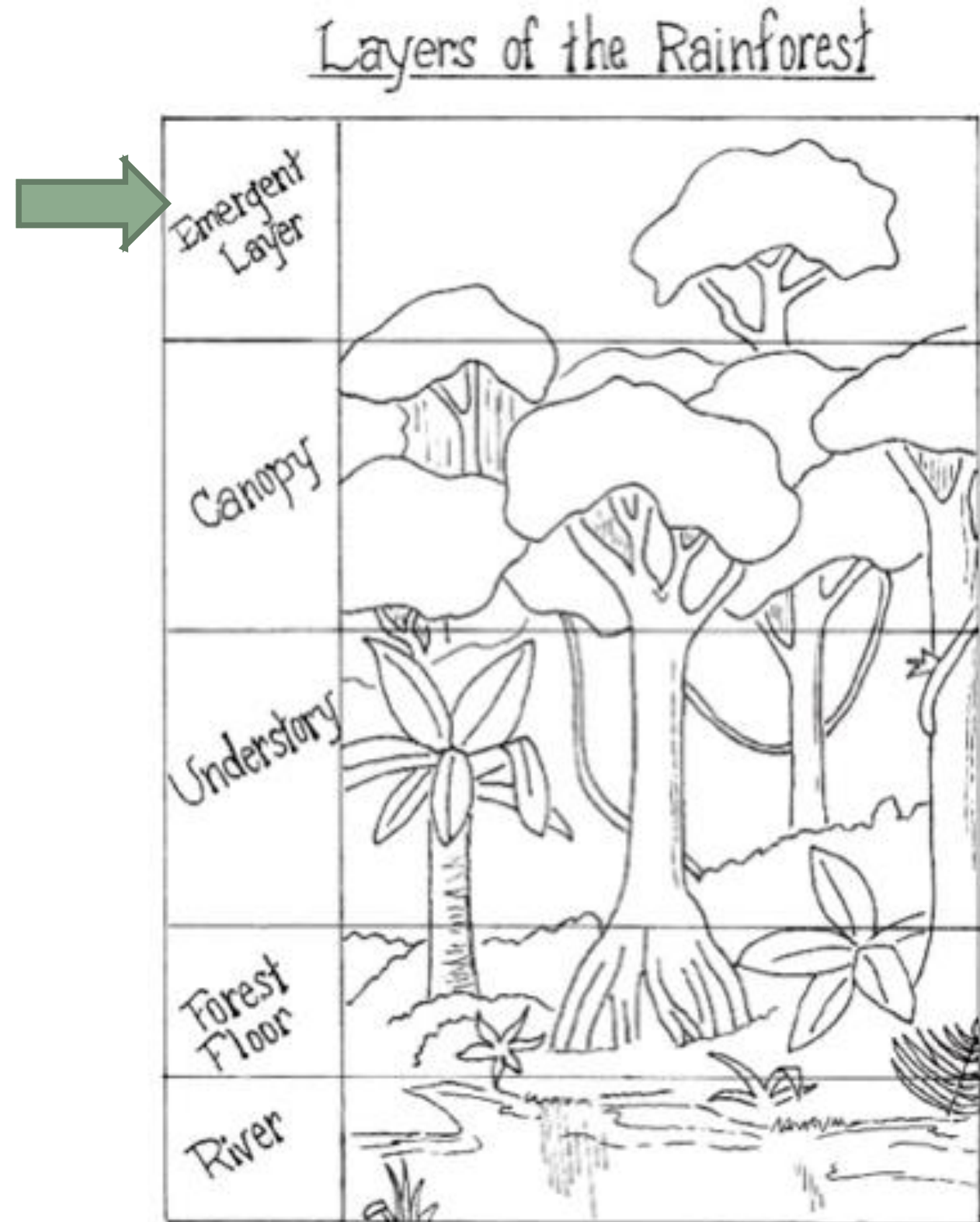
The highest layer of the rainforest is the EMERGENT LAYER.

This layer is made of the very tallest treetops. It is bright and sunny, with lots of space.

Here you'll find animals who:

- Can fly
- Have very good balance
- Are excellent climbers

Can you think of animals that might live in the emergent layer?





# WHO LIVES IN THE EMERGENT LAYER?



**BLUE MORPHO BUTTERFLY**



**HOWLER MONKEY**



**GREEN-WINGED MACAW**





# GREEN-WINGED MACAW

Imagine you are a big, colorful bird!

**Green-winged macaws** have large, strong wings that they use to fly from tree to tree, looking for fruit, nuts and leaves to eat.

- *Stretch out* your arms and *fly* around the room like a macaw.

**Green-winged macaws** have strong feet and sharp claws that they use to grip onto branches.

- *Squeeze* your toes into the ground like you are gripping a branch.
- Now hop to take off and fly above the rainforest. You have reached the very top!



# YOU CAN HELP THE AMAZON RAINFOREST!



Many animals in the rainforest are in danger of losing their homes. You can help save rainforest animals by learning about them and telling a friend or family member.

Use the links on the next page to learn more about the animals you met in this lesson.



# LEARN MORE FROM THE SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL ZOO

Arapaima

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/arapaima>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGO2zphuL20>

Emperor Tamarin

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/emperor-tamarin>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGBBo3Dvh1A>

Green Anaconda

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/green-anaconda>

Green-Winged Macaw

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/green-winged-macaw>

Poison Frog

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/poison-frogs>

Southern Tamandua

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/southern-tamandua>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_p0aL5nQDps](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_p0aL5nQDps)

Two-toed sloth

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/southern-two-toed-sloth>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-Vbk8tpa7k>

Visit our website for more animal activities! <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/education>

