

DIY Layers of the Forest Booklet

Activity Guide

Purpose:

Students will draw each layer of the forest (forest floor, understory, canopy, and emergent layer), and assemble the pages into their own forest layers booklet!

Materials:

- Scissors
- Hole punch
- 3 paper fasteners

Directions:

1. Cut out the forest layers on the next three pages by cutting along the thick gray lines (don't cut along the thinner gray line near the edge).
2. Fold each page forward along the thin gray line.
3. Use a hole punch to punch a hole through each of the gray x's.
4. The student should read through the description on each page and draw a picture of each forest layer on the corresponding page, above the dashed black line.
5. Put the pages in the following order (top to bottom):
 - "Layers of the Forest" title page
 - Forest Floor
 - Understory
 - Canopy
 - Emergent Layer
6. Attach the pages with paper fasteners.
7. Enjoy exploring the layers of the forest with your students!



Understory

The understory is the second lowest layer of the forest. In this layer you will find plants like shrubs, ferns, sapling trees, and forbs.

This layer provides foods such as leaves and berries. These food nourish ground dwelling animals that eat plants, such as deer, moose, and rabbits. The dense, shrubby plants in this layer also provide shelter for prey animals to hide from predators.



Forest Floor

The forest floor is the lowest layer of the forest. In this layer you find mushrooms, moss, lichens, as well as dead and decaying plant matter.

The decomposition that happens in this layer helps to provide soil nutrients that help trees and other plants grow. This layer provides shelter and dens for a variety of animals including ground-dwelling birds, mammals, and insects.



Canopy



The canopy is the second highest layer of the forest. In this layer you find young and mature trees, as well as standing dead trees called snags. Vines, moss, and lichens attached to tree branches are also found in the canopy.

The canopy is an important habitat for many species of birds, as well as other arboreal (tree-dwelling) animals. The trees of the canopy also provide the nuts, seeds, fruit, and leaves that many animals eat.



Layers of the Forest





Emergent Layer

The emergent layer is the highest layer of the forest. In this layer you find the tallest species of deciduous and coniferous trees as well as very old trees that have lived long enough to grow to great heights.

This layer provides an important habitat for songbirds and raptors. You will also find mammals like squirrels and chipmunks, certain amphibians like tree frogs, and a variety of insects. Some arboreal animals construct their nests in the emergent layer.