RAIN FORESTS of INDONESIA



0. RAIN FORESTS of INDONESIA - Story Preface

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A palm-oil plantation at Cigudeg, Bogor—on the western side of the island of Java, Indonesia—has replaced native trees. Photo by Achmad Rabin Taim; license CC BY 2.0.

In fair Indonesia
Where orangutans live;
People wanted the palm oil
Not the gifts their trees give.

Indonesia is a country with many different islands, including Java and Sumatra. Some of those islands have special habitats for plants, trees and wildlife. The rubber tree is one species especially well-suited to Indonesia's climate and growing season.

Like many developing countries, however, Indonesia has environmental problems to solve. Some of those problems arose when people decided to cut-down native trees and replace them with non-native trees (or not replace them at all).

Although Indonesia has a warm climate, oil palm trees were not part of the rain forests which once covered Indonesia's islands. Because oil palm trees produce a valuable oil, which can be used for many purposes, Indonesians decided they would get rid of native trees - sometimes by burning huge sections of the forest - and replace them with oil palm trees.

When we change the way things grow naturally, we create a risk that the change may be a bad one. Cutting-down (or burning) millions of trees - including replacing some of those lost trees with oil palm trees - has created serious problems for Indonesia.

Indonesian land, where rainforests used to grow, is now damaged. Some of the land is *very* badly damaged. When the land is damaged, plants and wildlife - not to mention people - suffer the consequences.

The loss of so many trees has threatened animals whose natural habitats are in Indonesia. Some of those threatened animals are:

- Sumatra Orangutan
- Sumatra Tiger
- Sumatra Rhino

Like other countries with damaged land, caused by cutting-down too many trees, Indonesia is trying to reforest the countryside. Experts who know about these things, however, worry that the reforestation efforts might be too little, too late.

Reforestation, in parts of America, did turn-out to be too little, too late. Let's examine a few of those places.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/RAIN-FORESTS-of-INDONESIA-The-Lorax

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/RAIN-FORESTS-of-INDONESIA-The-Lorax

Questions 2 Ponder

When Is It Acceptable to Alter the Natural Environment?

In some areas of Indonesia, people have replaced one type of tree (which is native to the area) with another type of tree (which is not native to the area). How would you decide if that is a good idea?

Suppose your family earned a living by working with oil-palm tress. In that instance, would you support, or not support, uprooting native trees and replacing them with non-native oil palms?

Do People Tend to Decide Issues Based on Their Own Self Interests?

Adam Smith, a Scottish philosopher and economist who published "The Wealth of Nations" in 1776, observed that people seem to be guided by an "invisible hand," causing them to make decisions based on their own self interests which often end-up benefitting society as a whole.

Do you think that decisions—which benefit ourselves, and our own self-interests—usually end-up benefitting society as well? Why, or why not?

Is Adam Smith's conclusion, about human behavior, more or less true today than it was in the 18th century? Explain your answer.

Media Stream



Indonesian Palm Oil Plantation

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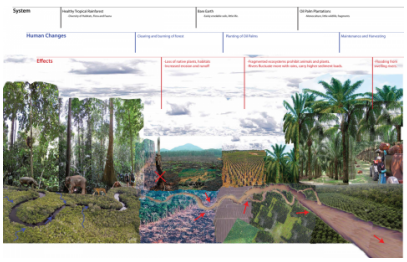
This picture, by Achmad Rabin Taim, depicts part of a palm-oil plantation in Cigudeg, Bogor (located in West Java, Indonesia).
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Indonesia - Map Locator

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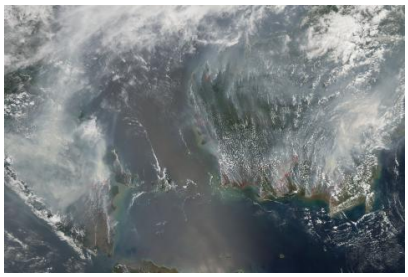
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Oil Palm Trees - Indonesia

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Burning Trees in Indonesia

NASA image - online, courtesy NASA web site - created by Jesse Allen, Earth Observatory, using data provided courtesy of the MODIS Rapid Response team.
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Deforestation in Indonesia

Photo of deforestation - in Indragiri Hulu, Riau Province, Indonesia - by Aidenvironment. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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