Feeling bored with your day-to-day environment? A journey through a tropical rain forest could be the perfect pick-me-up. And thanks to Jungle, you can visit the life-teeming tropics without ever leaving the comforts and conveniences of your own home. In Jungle, all manner of flora and fauna are explored—from the treetops to the forest floor—in Central American, South American, African, Tropical Asian, and Australasian rain forests. Vivid photographs with intriguing captions introduce readers to exotic places and creatures they've likely never heard of before. Meet, for example, the harpy eagle, the pygmy anteater, the shovel-nosed catfish, the spear-nosed bat, and the gaboon viper. Learn about the natural medicinal powers of many jungle plants. Discover the various foods, such as ginger, cocoa, sweet potato, and pineapple, which are sold around the world but have their origins in the rain forest. Topics covered include What Is a Rain Forest?, In the Water, Climbers, Seed Dispersal, Dusk to Dawn, Hidden Dangers, Natures Architects, Medicines, Hunters and Killers, Disguise and Warning, Tricks and Traps, Jungle Produce, and Under Threat. The text is factual but never dry; thorough without being too much to swallow. Kids will be fascinated by the animals and plants featured within the glossy, beautifully-designed pages, and adults may be tempted to wrestle the book from the hands of their children—just to get a closer look. Another winner in Knopfs excellent and informative Eyewitness Books series, Jungle reveals that if indeed it is a jungle out there, then out there is a pretty cool place to be. (Ages 8 and older)

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My Personal Review:
Eyewitness Books is a series of volumes aimed at young readers. As such, they provide a wonderful educational and learning opportunity for this age group. This volume is no different, providing a lively introduction to jungles.

The first segment, answering the question What is a rain forest, provides basic background. The prose notes that rainforests are complex and old ecosystems, with a dazzling array of plant and animal life. Page 7 notes that rain forests come in several stories--at the top, with birds and some monkeys, forest canopy with a different set of life, and then the forest floor, where we would find many plants, insects, mammals, and so on. The text goes on to note that there are a variety of tropical forests--from mountains to swamps to lowland rain forest and so on. These two introductory sections provide useful context for the young reader.

Thereafter, section after section (normally about two pages each) addresses a large set of issues, from seed dispersal of plants to Central American jungles to African jungles to forest apes to Asian and Australasian forests. To illustrate in more detail, lets consider a couple subjects in a bit more detail. One section is entitled Explorers. Here, we are introduced to jungle explorers such as: William Bligh (Yes, Captain Bligh), who was commissioned to bring breadfruit tress from jungles back to England; Alexander von Humboldt, who explored Venezuela; Henry Bates, who explored Brazilian rain forests. Just a snippet for each, but enough to inform young readers of the human face of exploration.

Another segment focuses on Tricks and Traps. The focus here is on predatory plants, some of which have evolved to become carnivores, feeding off one sort or another of life, from insects on to small mammals and birds.

All in all, another valuable entry in the series. For young readers interested in tropical rain forests, this is a fine introduction.

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