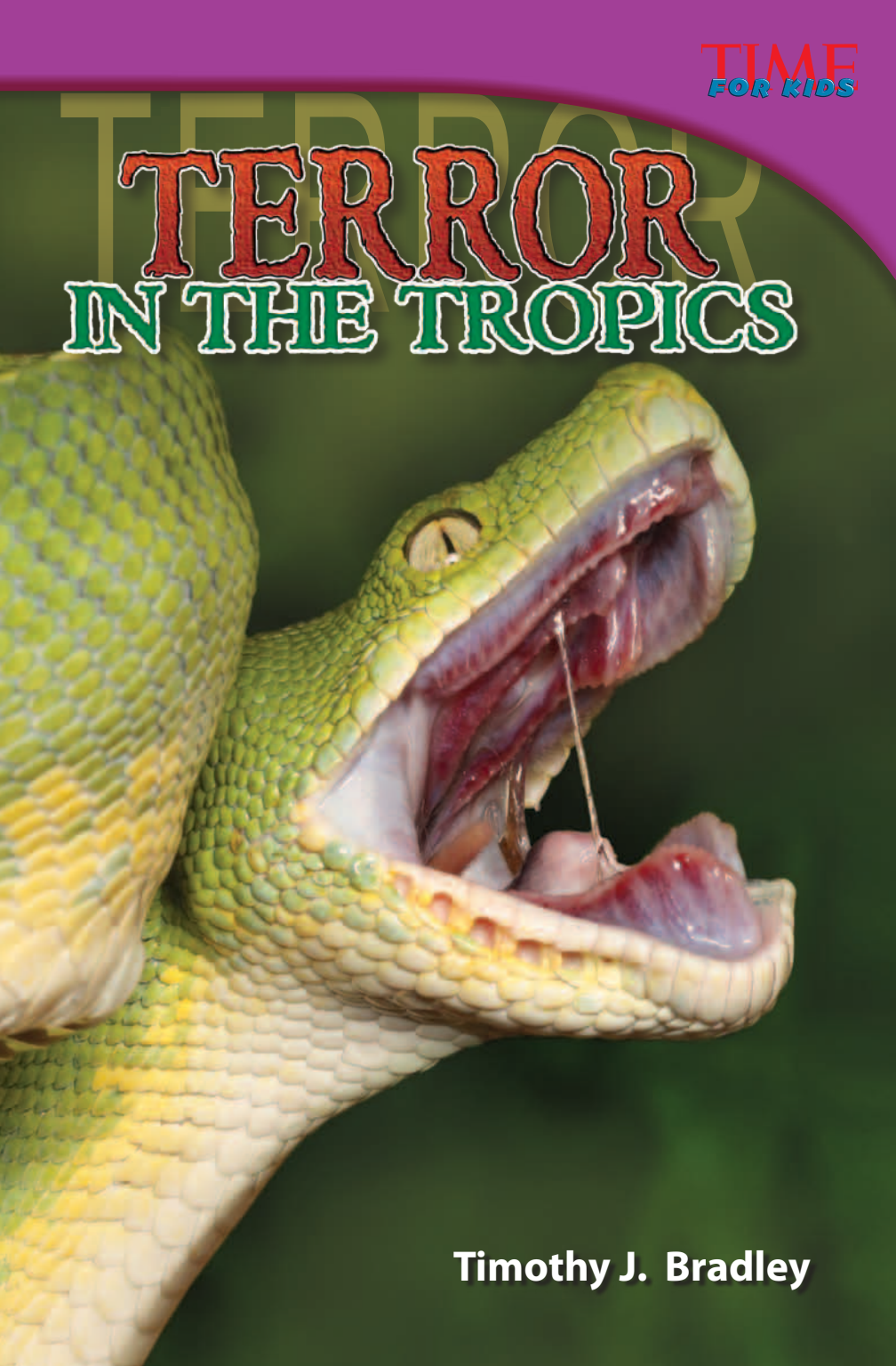

TIME FOR KIDS
TERROR
IN THE TROPICS
Timothy J. Bradley

For teachers' inspection ONLY

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Welcome to the Jungle

The tropics may appear lush and even like paradise, but behind the trees can lie a terrifying world. Slithering snakes twist through branches without a sound. Jaguars stalk their **prey**, waiting to attack. Insects as small as an ant can deliver a **lethal** sting strong enough to kill a human. Even plants are poised to kill. Those who dare travel through the tropics should watch their step—it's a jungle out there.

macaws

THINK LINK

- What are the fiercest creatures in the tropics?
- Are the largest creatures the deadliest?
- Why might plants be the biggest threat in the jungle?



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Most rainforest species have not yet been named or scientifically studied.

In spite of the seeming dangers, the rainforest is a place where life thrives. More than half of all **species** on Earth live in rainforests. The Amazon rainforest alone is home to millions of species. The most successful creatures can adapt to a wide range of situations. Those that can't must find their **niche**.

Truly Tropical

What makes a rainforest a rainforest? Tropical rainforests are areas with:

- High **humidity**
- Warm temperatures
- 70–100 inches of rain per year
- A forest of trees that includes a canopy of broad-leaved evergreen trees

Survival Secrets

Many new medicines have been developed after discovering plants that can only be found in the rainforest. Nearly 70 percent of anti-cancer plants are found in the rainforest and there are still more to be discovered. Check out some of the plants that are already saving lives.

Rainforest Plant	Medical Use
cinchona (sing-KOH-nuh) tree	extract can be used to prevent malaria
curare (kyoo-RAHR-ee) liana	treats bruises and fevers
cocoa tree	extracts can soothe fears, coughs, cuts, and bruises
clavillia	treats infections
mammosa	treats sinus infections and sores caused by some skin cancers
periwinkle	extracts used to treat a type of cancer
sorosi	used to treat tick bites and lice
annatto tree	extracts used for protection from the sun and hungry insects

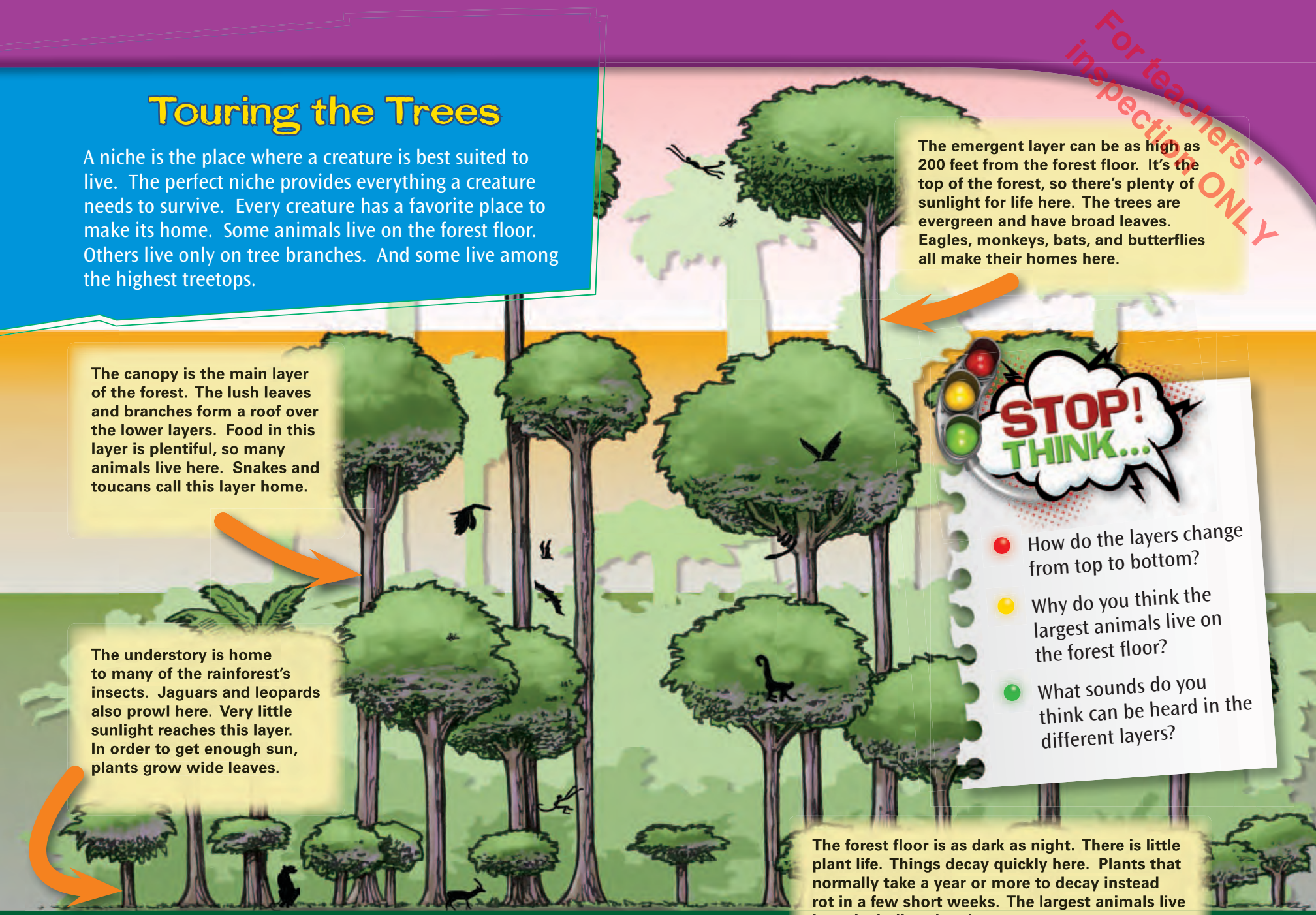
Touring the Trees

A niche is the place where a creature is best suited to live. The perfect niche provides everything a creature needs to survive. Every creature has a favorite place to make its home. Some animals live on the forest floor. Others live only on tree branches. And some live among the highest treetops.

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The emergent layer can be as high as 200 feet from the forest floor. It's the top of the forest, so there's plenty of sunlight for life here. The trees are evergreen and have broad leaves. Eagles, monkeys, bats, and butterflies all make their homes here.

The canopy is the main layer of the forest. The lush leaves and branches form a roof over the lower layers. Food in this layer is plentiful, so many animals live here. Snakes and toucans call this layer home.



- How do the layers change from top to bottom?
- Why do you think the largest animals live on the forest floor?
- What sounds do you think can be heard in the different layers?

The understory is home to many of the rainforest's insects. Jaguars and leopards also prowl here. Very little sunlight reaches this layer. In order to get enough sun, plants grow wide leaves.

The forest floor is as dark as night. There is little plant life. Things decay quickly here. Plants that normally take a year or more to decay instead rot in a few short weeks. The largest animals live here, including the giant anteater.