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Can you recognize a Goliath Bird-eating Spider? Do you know what a Bromeliad looks like? Did you know that 20 percent of all of the fresh water on Earth is in the Amazon River? If not, or if you're just interested in the Amazon region, then *The Amazon Trail* by MECC may be just for you. A spin-off from their award-winning *Oregon Trail*, which has been on every platform imaginable, MECC strikes gold with this title. An excellent learning tool for children grades 5 to 12, *The Amazon Trail* teaches about the geology, ecology, geography, and history of the Amazon region.

[Up The River?](#)

Better stretch those arms out so you don't pull anything, because we're going to start out at the Amazon basin and work our way up the river. Students are given the mission of traveling up the Amazon river by canoe to find some cinchona, a medicinal plant that cures malaria, and to safely deliver it to the Inca King. This is no easy mission; navigating the Amazon river is a demanding job, and not hitting other boats is a challenge. Plus, the students may encounter wild creatures, hungry piranhas, or even dangerous conquistadors.

While canoeing up the river, the students will be able to explore the rain forest where they can identify plants and animals, to visit landmarks where they can talk to others and trade, to go fishing for food, and to read their guidebook in order to gain information about people, places, plants, animals, diseases, and trade items. In addition, the students can always

check their supplies, check to see which plants and animals they have already identified, check to see what items they have already collected for the Inca King, check in with one of the two wonderfully annoying guides which you can pick from, and check the map to see their present location.

These activities will let the students know when they need to rest, when to go fishing, and when they need to change directions. This adventure provides an excellent opportunity for students to learn new things about the Amazon region and its diverse inhabitants. In addition, they get the privilege of traveling back in time and meeting many scientists, explorers, and naturalists from the past. This adventure also helps students in developing their problem-solving and decision-making skills and in further developing their reading comprehension skills.

The Amazon guidebook is a wonderful part of the game. The students can look up information on 10 different topics, including diseases, bugs, birds, mammals, plants, reptiles and amphibians, fish, places, trade items, and people. Each entry contains factual information, and many include a colorful picture as well.

If the students make it to the lost city of Vilcabamba, they will be rewarded by the Inca King with either a gold (if they bring cinchona) or a bronze shield. The shield will contain jewels that represent the number of people they met in the journey, the number of plants and animals that they identified, and the number of items that they collected for the King. Gold shields will be placed in the Hall of Shields where the best eight shields will be displayed for their classmates to see.

[The Bottom Line](#)

If you are looking for a piece of software that will teach students about social studies while at the same time developing their problem-solving and decision-making skills, then The Amazon Trail is an excellent choice. Not only will the students be entertained, but they will develop important skills that will help them succeed in other areas as well. The Amazon Trail is an excellent learning adventure.

Pros

- Easy to operate
- Excellent music and realistic sounds
- Wonderful artwork and super photographs
- All of the entries in the guidebook can be read by the computer
- Excellent User's Guide that can be read from the screen
- Sound can be turned off for classroom use if need be

Cons

- Guides get annoying to older students
- Cannot print from the guidebook

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