



Termites in rainforests

Due to **climate change**, there are more droughts in rainforests than there used to be. This could affect the survival of the plants and animals living there. Termites play an important role in decomposing forest waste. Changing conditions affect termite tunnels that enable this waste to be recycled.

ACTIVITY

Will termite tunnels be stronger in wetter or drier conditions?

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Watch the video using the QR code to find out more about termites.

Activity leader to demonstrate making a tunnel using a sticky note.

Children should place a tunnel on a flat surface and test its strength by placing coins onto the tunnel until it collapses. Encourage the children to balance their pennies in different ways - does it make a difference to their results?

Ask the children to compare the strengths of a dry tunnel and a wet tunnel. To make a wet tunnel, a paper tunnel can be dipped into a jug of water until it is completely wet. Children could go on to test different tunnel lengths and diameters to see whether these affect tunnel strength. Ask: Does this matter to a termite? Why do you think this?



KEY FACTS/SCIENCE

Termites are insects that live in colonies underground.

Termites are not just **detritivores** (organisms which feed on dead plants, animals and their poo) but are also **decomposers**. This means that, with the help of micro-organisms in their guts, the termites can break down woody fibres into simple substances such as water and substances containing useful nutrients including nitrogen and phosphorus. Termite poo containing water and nutrients improves soil moisture and makes it nutrient rich and able to support plant growth.

Due to **climate change**, drier soil means stronger tunnels and this means the termites are able to recycle even more waste, which improves the soil that would otherwise have suffered more during these drier conditions.

RESOURCES

Making tunnels

(per child/pair of children)

2 sticky notes

jug/beaker of water

1p or 5p coins

QUESTIONS FOR LEARNING

- Which conditions allowed for the strongest tunnels?
- Which conditions will be most favourable for tunnelling in the rainforest? Why?
- How will the termite activity in these conditions help other plants and animals?

