

AV Reviews

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ECOLOGY

Tropical rain forests under fire. 1984. educational images ltd., Elmira, NY. Color/sound filmstrip. About 15 min. \$39.95.

The title and first few frames of this filmstrip, produced by the World Wildlife Fund in cooperation with the Garden Club of America, suggest that the devastation of the tropical rain forests is imminent (within 30-50 years by some estimates). However, the program never clearly develops its thesis. The narrative does focus on a few of the economic plant resources while describing a small part of its ecology and ethnobotanical diversity. No attempt is ever made to explain why ecological diversity is directly linked to man's destructive activities, except by indirect reference. Technically, the sound effects and narration are excellent, but many frames suffer from poor color quality, sharpness and depth of field, and visual integrity and congruity.

The ethnobotany discussion represents the best treatment. Several Amazonian plant species (e.g. cocoa, rubber, *Croton*) are illustrated with commentary on their medicinal or economic use. The "overview" of rain forest ecology is interspersed with side tracks of agricultural and historical use of the forests. The only real conclusion the program makes is that we need the rain forest for yet undiscovered foods, medicines, and other "useful" products.

The study guide, printed directly from computer copy, includes a short bibliography, a list of major ecological terms with definitions, a complete script, and a teacher's guide with suggested student activities. A mixed bag of supplementary readings is also included (none carry copyright permissions).

A teacher's guide should provide insight to the filmstrip, especially for a subject wherein the teacher may lack direct experience or training. This teacher's guide provides the only

apparent topical organization of the program. It does identify the broad rain forest subjects treated in the filmstrip, providing better conceptual summaries than the script does.

However, the topical emphasis is disproportionate to the script treatment. No summary carries much specific detail. For example, the problem of greenhouse effect is never mentioned in the script, but detailed here and in the readings. The issue of "slash and burn" agriculture implied in the title and visualized in the opening frames is never mentioned in the guide. The "suggested student activities" may require time or text resources far beyond those ordinarily available to junior high or secondary students.

The readings include one fairly lucid account of the reasons underlying the nutrient poor Amazonian soils. The second reading is a dated but short *New York Times* article on the "greenhouse effect." The final reading is a partial summary of an ethnobotanical report on the medicinal and agricultural potential of tropical species.

This filmstrip may be of interest to those teachers who not only have an interest in economic and cultural uses of tropical plants and animals but who are also willing to use the program as lead-in to discussions of the myriad issues confronting the world's rain forests today.

Louis Mule
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Trackdown—waste oil. 1984. New England Regional Wastewater Institute, South Portland, ME. Color/sound slides. 30 min. Rent \$4. Purchase \$75.

Solving a mystery is the theme of this program. Our detective takes the audience through the mystery of finding one billion gallons of waste oil.

A brief discussion of recovered "used" lubrication oils removes 75

percent of the mystery. The game begins as crude oil is drawn out of the ground. Oil is traced through transportation, refining, and production. Next follow the uses of oils and the causes for their classification as "waste" oil. Environmentally dangerous wastes are dumped into oil as a holding substance. Crankcase oil just "disappears" as it is discarded in milkjugs and landfills. Recycling sites help to collect this waste, but may also cause problems. Resale as "new oil" after filtration is shown as a problem because of dissolved contaminants. Poor storage facilities, use in space heaters, toxic emissions from burning and open area storage sites are discussed. A brief discussion of public health hazards leads to a problem with waste oil burning in plant boiler systems. The game ends with governmental regulations for waste oil usage. New York and New Jersey are shown as examples of problems in regulation. Finally, the mystery is solved by thorough refining of all waste oil—back to its original manufactured state. The cost of refining and federal regulation finish the presentation.

Reference back and forth to the board game helps to reduce audience confusion in a complex presentation. The opening sequence is confusing, but once the "board game" begins the direction becomes clearer. The cassette does not have an audible tone for mechanical advancement. To follow the accompanying script, with its black dots to indicate slide changes, makes it necessary to preview the program several times before presenting it to an organization or class.

This program offers a good overview of public misunderstanding of

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