

# Exploring the Wonders of South America

*Learning objective: To identify and describe the key geographical features and biomes of South America.*

Read the following passage carefully with Finn the dolphin, then answer the questions below using full sentences and evidence from the text.

South America is a vast continent located mostly in the Southern Hemisphere, though it stretches across the Equator. It is a land of incredible geographical contrasts, ranging from the world's driest desert, the Atacama, to the lush, sprawling Amazon Rainforest. The Amazon Basin acts as the planet's lungs, housing an unmatched level of biodiversity, including species found nowhere else on Earth. Stretching along the entire western coast like a jagged spine is the Andes mountain range, the longest continental mountain chain in the world. These towering peaks influence the climate of the entire region, creating rain shadows that determine where forests flourish and where arid scrublands persist. The continent also features the expansive Pampas grasslands and the mighty Amazon River, which carries more water than any other river globally. Because of its complex topography, South America supports diverse human civilisations and unique ecosystems. Understanding this landscape is essential for recognising how physical features shape the way people live and how animals adapt to survive in such varied environments. From the high-altitude plateaus to the humid tropical lowlands, South America remains a masterpiece of natural geography.

*Word bank: Continent · Biodiversity · Equator · Amazon · Andes · Plateau · Climate · Topography*

**1. Identify two distinct physical features of South America mentioned in the text. (2 marks) (2 marks)**

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**2. According to the text, which mountain range runs along the western coast, and how does it influence the surrounding environment? (2 marks) (2 marks)**

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**3. Why might the author refer to the Amazon Basin as the 'planet's lungs'? (2 marks) (2 marks)**

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**4. Explain why the climate of South America is described as having 'incredible geographical contrasts'. (2 marks) (2 marks)**

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**5. Justify your answer: Which geographical feature do you believe is most vital to the continent's success, and why? (3 marks) (3 marks)**

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**Draw: Draw a map of South America that labels the Andes Mountains on the west and the Amazon Rainforest in the north, adding a small illustration of a local animal in each region.**



*Extension challenge: Imagine you are an explorer travelling from the high Andes to the Amazon basin. Write a diary entry describing how the temperature, vegetation, and landscape change as you descend. Explain why humans might choose to settle in one area over the other based on these geographical differences.*