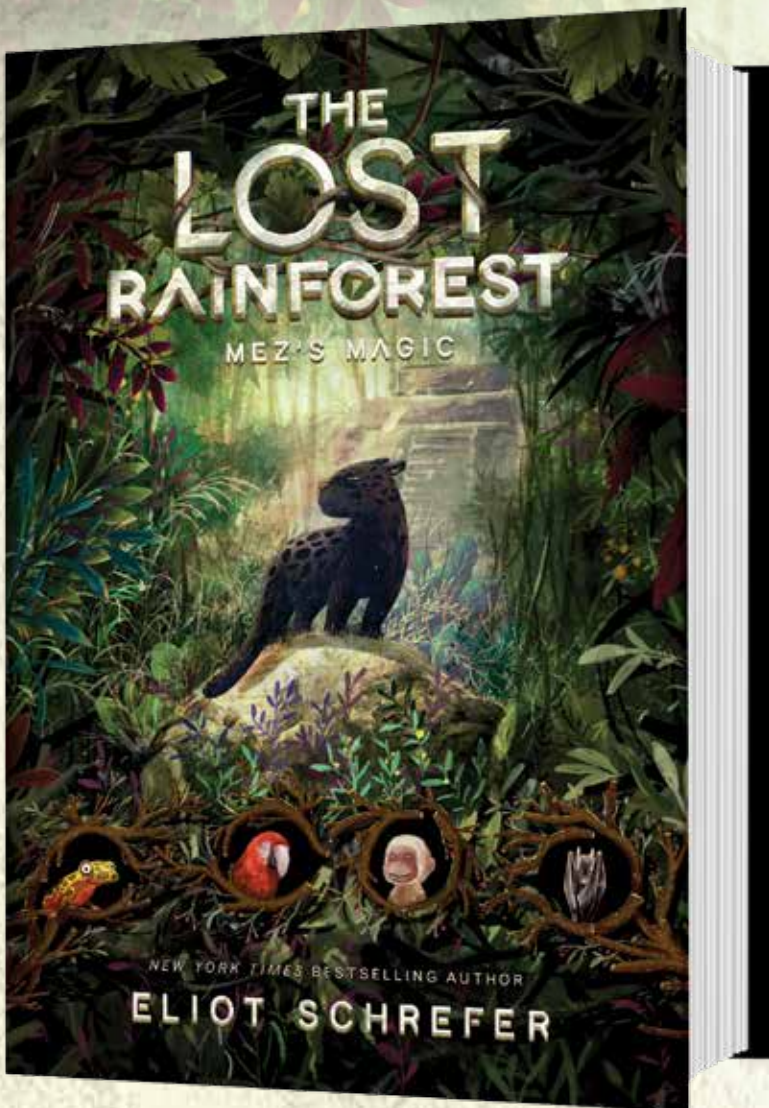


# THE LOST RAINFOREST



Art by Emilia Dziubak

## CLASSROOM KIT

### INCLUDES:

Discussion  
questions, activities,  
an author Q&A, and a  
behind-the-book look at  
the author's research  
and inspiration  
behind the story!



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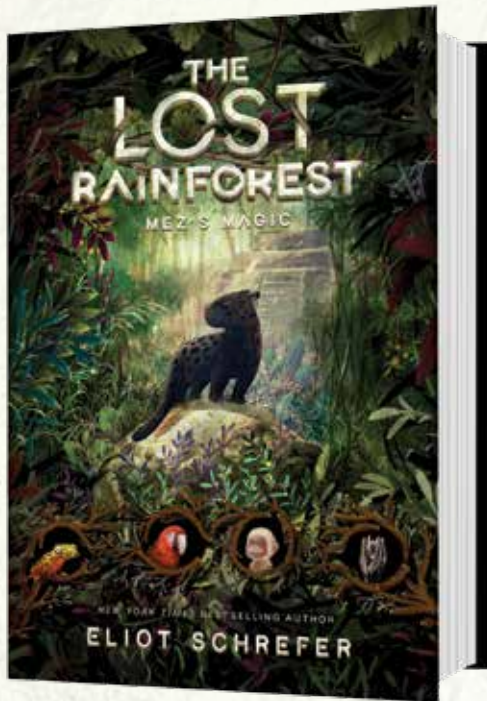
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# THE LOST RAINFOREST



## CLASSROOM KIT



GRADES 3–7

### ABOUT THE BOOK

When Mez, a young panther, meets a huge boa constrictor named Auriel, she learns that the land of Caldera may soon be destroyed by the powerful Ant Queen. Only Mez and others like her, who have magic from being born during an eclipse, can save their rainforest home. Auriel convinces Mez to travel to the Ziggurat of the Sun and Moon with her new friends, an intellectual frog, a chatty bat, and an anxious monkey. Facing a series of dangers, Mez must figure out her magical power before it's too late for Caldera in this mesmerizing rainforest fantasy.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**ELIOT SCHREFER** is a *New York Times* bestselling author, has twice been a finalist for the National Book Award in Young People's Literature, and has won the Green Earth Book Award and the Sigurd Olson Nature Writing Award. His novels include *Endangered*, *Threatened*, *Rescued*, and two books in the Spirit Animals series. He lives in New York City, is on the faculty of the Fairleigh Dickinson MFA in Creative Writing, and is the children's book reviewer for *USA Today*. Visit him online at [www.eliotschrefer.com](http://www.eliotschrefer.com).



### PRAISE FOR *THE LOST RAINFOREST*

★ "While the story is pure fast-paced fantasy, the underlying issues are real. Magic with depth in this new series stunner."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"*The Lost Rainforest* feels unlike anything I've read. Eliot Schrefer has mined the richness and depths of his setting to find a deeper magic, immersing us in a world that is at once complex, dangerous, beautiful, and ultimately demanding of our protection."

—**Soman Chainani**, *New York Times* bestselling author of the *School for Good and Evil* series





## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



**BIPOEMS.** Convey the personality of a fictional person or animal by writing a biopoem. Have students create one about a character in the novel, using this format or a similar one.

**Line 1:** Character's first name

**Line 2:** Four adjectives to describe the character

**Line 3:** relative/brother or sister of.../friend of...

**Line 4:** feels...(three ideas, things, or people)

**Line 5:** needs...(three ideas)

**Line 6:** fears...(three ideas)

**Line 7:** accomplishments...(three ideas)

**Line 8:** Character's species name



**ANT FACT AND FICTION.** How much do the Ant Queen and ants resemble real ant society and communication? Have students research ant colonies and behavior, and each find five relevant facts to bring to a discussion. In the class discussion, compare the fictional ants and the real ants' behavior to find the overlap. Discuss the Q&A with the author at the back of the book where he talks about why he made one of the villains an ant.



**ANIMAL RESEARCH.** Have students choose one of the types of animals in the novel, except for ants, to research using print and digital sources. As a class, make a list of topics to include, such as physical characteristics, habitat, eating habits, sounds and communication, predators, and so on. The student should create a multimedia presentation to share with the class that includes text, images, and if possible, sounds.

**ANIMAL MONOLOGUES.** Mez could have used more allies in the fight. Have students come up with a different eclipse-born animal who might have helped with a different magical power. Have them write a monologue from the point of view of this animal, which could be a real rainforest creature or an imaginary one. What would the animal have contributed to the mission to save Caldera? Students should read their monologues aloud to the class.

**PLOT POINTS.** To analyze the book's plot, have students choose five consecutive chapters and summarize each of them in a paragraph that highlights the chapter's main actions. Students who have summarized some of the same chapters should meet in small groups and compare their summaries, discussing their choices of what was most important in each chapter.

**VIVID LANGUAGE.** The novel is full of vivid metaphors and similes, many of them drawn from nature. Have students find ten similes which create images that they like. Then have them come up with their own similes for the same sentence. They can create a chart with the originals and their versions, and post the charts for everyone to read.



**TRAVEL TO CALDERA.** Ecotourism, including traveling to rainforests, has become popular. Have students create a travel brochure for a trip to Caldera with a section on the ziggurat. It should highlight the flora and fauna that tourists would see including the eclipse-born and their powers. It should also warn tourists about dangers they might encounter.

**ZIGGURAT OF THE SUN AND MOON.** Create a class wall with the panels from the Ziggurat of the Sun and Moon. Have students work in pairs to draw one of the numbered panels based on the description in the book. They should add a caption beneath their drawing that explains what's happening in the drawing. Then arrange them on the wall in numbered order.







## CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

The rainforest, along with many of the incredible animals that inhabit it, are endangered. Bring awareness to this important issue with the activities below.

**EARTH DAY.** Organize an Earth Day Celebration in your school or library in April. Brainstorm a list of things you can do as a community to help take care of the earth, such as: biking, walking, or carpooling to school, improving and enforcing your community's recycling practices, planting a tree or a community garden, writing letters to local government about supporting environmental policy, and reading books that celebrate the environment!

**RAISE FUNDS FOR A CAUSE.** Research environmental causes, and organize a fund-raiser to support it. Some examples of organizations that you might consider are: The World Wildlife Fund, Wildlife Conservation Society, The Nature Conservancy, Mongabay, The Rainforest Alliance.



**FIELD TRIP!** Take your students on an environmental themes field trip. Ideas to consider: Visit a local zoo, a nature or wildlife refuge, or national park. Take a tour of your local recycling center. Screen a film or documentary related to wildlife or the environment. Organize a local beach sweep or park clean up. If a field trip isn't an option, invite a speaker from a local organization to come to your school and present!

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Describe Mez physically and in terms of her personality. What is her family history? What are her strengths? What are her weaknesses? How does she change in the course of the story, and what makes her change? Give examples of how she's different at the beginning and the end of the story.
2. Mez and Chumba have a close relationship. What shows this? What are the differences between the two of them, and how are they alike? Point to scenes that show Mez's attitude towards her sister. Why does Mez choose to get exiled instead of Chumba? Was it a good decision? What role does Chumba play in the book's final chapters?
3. How does Mez meet Auriel and what's her impression of him? How does Auriel recruit Mez to help fight the Ant Queen? What are Mez's motives for helping? Why does Auriel want to defeat the queen? Discuss Auriel's character and how he deceives and manipulates the eclipse-born.
4. Auriel tells Mez, Lima, and Rumi to travel together to the ziggurat. Describe Lima and Rumi and their backgrounds. Why are the three of them called shadowwalkers? What obstacles and dangers do they encounter on their journey? Identify ways in which each of them contributes to the group's success in completing the journey.
5. How does Gogi help the three reach the ziggurat? What is his magical power? What is his background and why is he called the Seventeenth? Give excerpts from his conversations that show his personality. How does Gogi change during their time at the ziggurat? What's he like at the end of the book?



*Continued on next page...*





...Continued from previous page



6. Each of the major characters has a distinct speaking style. Choose two or three characters and analyze what distinguishes their voice from others.

Point to specific conversations that illustrate the different styles. Discuss how the speaking styles convey the characters' personalities, giving examples from the text.

7. Mez and her allies at the ziggurat all have different special powers. Explain what each one is and how it is important in defeating their enemies. What is Mez's power and why does it take her so long to figure out? How does her power relate to being a panther? Why won't Rumi say what his power is?
8. Who is the Ant Queen and why is she dangerous? What is her relationship to the ants that Mez first encounters in her family's den? Explain why the Ant Queen is buried, when she will emerge, and what she hopes to do next. How does she try to get Mez to help her? How do Mez and her friends fight back?
9. Many of the eclipse-born have had problems with their families. Discuss those problems and how they had an impact on the eclipse-born character. Talk about Mist's personality and his attitude towards Chumba and Mez. Why is he so harsh to them? What is his role in the fight against Auriel and the Ant Queen, and what happens to him at the end?
10. When Auriel takes Mez aside and she realizes what he's really up to, it seems likely that he will kill her. She thinks about how she was raised to respect Aunt Usha's authority above everything and concludes that, "Now, her unquestioning obedience has surely killed her" (p. 247). What does she mean? Discuss the concept of obedience, when it's a good idea, and when it should be questioned. How does Mez later start questioning Aunt Usha's orders?
11. Describe the end of the book. What is the state of the ziggurat? What happened to Auriel, the Ant Queen, and Mist? What do Mez and her friends say they will do next? Discuss what you think will happen in Mez's life in the coming year and at the end of the year. What dangers are still remain that worry Mez and her friends?

12. The story is told in present tense, using a third-person limited omniscient point of view. Find examples that show these characteristics of the narrative. Why do you think the author choose to tell the story in present tense instead of past tense? How does it affect you as a reader? What are the advantages of a third-person narrative? How would the story have felt different with a first-person voice?



13. The interactions among Mez, Lima, and Rumi when they first start traveling together are sometimes humorous. After they escape the monkey attack, Rumi complains that "it seems a little overboard to chase us down and murder us." To which Lima answers, "It's so *rude*" (p. 103). Find some other examples of funny dialogue and analyze how the author made it humorous.
14. How important is the setting to the novel? Could the story have taken place somewhere else? Vivid descriptions throughout the book bring the rainforest alive to readers. Find a descriptive passage and analyze how the author paints pictures with words. Look for effective metaphors and similes, adjectives, and other visual images.
15. As you're reading, take note of unfamiliar words, first trying to understand the meaning from the context. If that doesn't work, look the word up in a dictionary. Below are some possibilities.

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • <b>impenetrable</b> (p. 4) | • <b>mandibles</b> (p. 162)  |
| • <b>scathing</b> (p. 45)    | • <b>vortex</b> (p. 198)     |
| • <b>arthropod</b> (p. 76)   | • <b>pensive</b> (p. 265)    |
| • <b>harbingers</b> (p. 113) | • <b>dissipated</b> (p. 319) |
| • <b>prattles</b> (p. 139)   |                              |







### REAL-LIFE RESEARCH



Eliot Schrefer drew from his experience traveling to the Tambopata Research Center in the Amazon rainforest to create the characters in *The Lost Rainforest*.



The closest the author got to seeing a panther, the most elusive of rainforest animals.



A juvenile emerald tree boa.



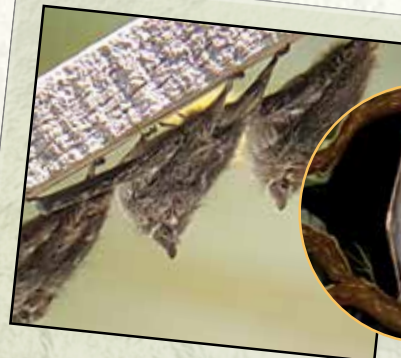
A little nocturnal tree frog, surprised by a sudden bright flashlight.



Two orphaned macaws live at the research center. They like to steal e-readers and cameras!



A spider monkey eating clay to neutralize toxins from plants. (Gogi is a capuchin, but they often cohabitate with spider monkeys.)



A group of bats beat the heat of the day by resting in the shade.





## LOST ANIMALS OF THE LOST RAINFOREST

There are many rainforest animals that didn't make it into the pages of *The Lost Rainforest*. Choose one of the following animals to research and complete the exercise below:

- hoatzin
- capybara
- peccary

- glass frog
- opossum
- tapir

- Brazilian porcupine
- Arrau turtle
- Fer-de-lance (pit viper)

Print, cut, and paste an image of the animal.  
Record facts about the animal's traits and behavior below.

Sketch the animal. Give your character a name, decide if your animal is a daywalker or nightwalker, and come up with a magical ability and a personality for your character.

**Species Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nocturnal/Diurnal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Favorite Food:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notable behaviors:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Daywalker/Nightwalker:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Magical Ability:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Personality Traits:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CREATE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE!** Use your imagination to write an adventure for your animal to go on. Did Auriel come looking for this eclipse-born, too? What happened next?

### TIPS FROM THE AUTHOR

- 1. Be as specific as possible.** Let us know small details about the animal's environment—and make them relate to how that animal would see the world. (A tree rat will view a scene differently from a harpy eagle!)
- 2. Come up with a conflict.** The best stories have something interesting go wrong. Why can't/won't this animal go with Auriel? Or what's going on with the animal's home life that it needs to go fix somehow?
- 3. Resolve the conflict through magic—and personality.** When animals have magical abilities, it's very fun to imagine them playing out in exciting ways. Your story should have an emotional impact, too—let the outcome of the conflict come through magic, but also through your specific animal's personality.







## A Q&A WITH ELIOT SCHREFER



**Q. You traveled into the Amazon to research this book. What can you tell us about your experience there?**

**A.** I flew from New York City (where I live) down to Lima, Peru, then onward to Puerto Maldonado, the last airport before the jungle takes over from civilization. From there it was an hour's drive along dirt roads, then a few hours by boat, an overnight stay at a jungle lodge, and six more hours along the Tambopata River to the research center where I stayed for a week.



Each time my guide took me into the jungle we went deeper, eventually leaving entirely the trails established by the local people. Instead, he took his machete to branches and led us through nameless bogs and dense spiderweb-clogged stretches of forest. The second time we trekked, we started particularly late in the day. Twilight was near, and at the equator, when sundown comes, it comes fast. Soon we were in half-light, tromping through bogs and marshes, tree frogs chirping all around (hi, Rumi!), caimans staring at us, their eyes unsettling red orbs reflecting back in the light from our headlamps. These reptiles were only three feet long or so, but still! It was plenty unsettling to wander through the dark with them on all sides.

Oscar Mishaja Salazar, my guide, showed me a different world by night. There was no sign of any of the daytime animals we had seen just hours earlier—it was like they'd vanished from the rainforest entirely. Frogs, tarantulas, cats, and bats replaced the tamarind monkeys and bees. Click beetles buzzed heavily through the night, their glowing abdomens as large as marbles. When one landed on me, I could feel the heaviness of it.

I'd read about how completely the jungle was divided between nocturnal and diurnal animals, but never experienced it for myself until then. The magical Veil that separates day and night in *The Lost Rainforest* felt actual. Two kinds of animals really do inhabit the same rainforest without knowing much at all about each other.

**Q. Clearly ants had an important role in this book—and will continue to have one, we sense, in the next book of the series! How did that come about?**

**A.** I'd thought my biggest discomfort staying in the deep Amazon would be mosquitos. But I didn't get a single mosquito bite during my whole time in the rainforest! No, the real problem was the ants.

Really, they're the only constant of jungle life. Ants are active all day and all night. It got me to thinking about how, in the Peruvian jungle, humans and ants are the only creatures up at all hours. Both are the rare examples of hypersocialized creatures, in which groups of thousands and even millions of individuals can cooperate and coexist—and therefore dominate their world. The shared human-ant tendency to overrun our environment led Abbot Lowell to once observe that ants "like human beings, can create civilizations without the use of reason."

Army ants might be fearsome, but bullet ants are the biggest danger at the Tambopata Research Center. About two inches long, they are solitary hunters. Their bite isn't fatal to humans, but they get their name from how painful it is. They'll wander over any surface, and it's very easy not to look where you're putting your hand, go pick up a coffee mug, and wind up spending the following day writhing in bed in agony. Thus the Ant Queen was born.

**Q. The rainforest starts to feel like its own character in the book, with its own mysteries and revelations for Mez and her friends. What other tidbits came up for you in your research?**

**A.** Nineteenth-century explorers talked of the rainforest as "counterfeit paradise." It looks lush and full of richness, but life within it is an eternal struggle to find enough to eat, and to avoid being eaten. What defines a rainforest is—you guessed it—the rainfall. They get over eighty inches a year. It's easy to focus on its cool animals, but with high amounts of water and heat, the tropical rainforest can support some aggressive, giant plant life. Vines are everywhere. These colossal plants are engaged in their own combats against one another. Those fights are just as violent and lethal as those among animals, but occur over a longer period of time.

The rainforests cover only a small fraction of the earth, but are thought to be home to over half of the plant's plant and animal species. They remove a tremendous amount of carbon from the atmosphere and therefore mitigate global climate change, provide resources to indigenous people, and are an essential part of the global water cycle . . . yet they're being cut down rapidly. I hope that some of *The Lost Rainforest's* readers will join me in helping them.