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### **Golden Amazon: Review and Reflection**

The video *Golden Amazon*, takes us on a journey through the rainforest and provides valuable information about three major economic resources involved with the forest. We began by looking at the illegal lumber industry being run by Brazilian and Japanese heads. It was focused on one illegal sawmill and it was explained that, that sawmill alone could harvest 150 trees a day. Each tree has an impact radius of 50 m surrounding it. This demand for Brazil's hardwood comes from the exploitation of the forests in southeast Asia and tropical Africa. Not all of the mills are illegal or environmentally damning, Mil Madeireira, is a Swiss run mill based on respect for the trees they harvest. Every tree is sampled to test quality, and for every one harvested, three are planted to replace them. They are one of the few mills in Brazil to be certified by the FSC.

Next topic that was covered was the sustainable fishing done by the locals. They use a technique of selective fishing using nets and harpoons to capture the "king of the river" the piraquara. They keep the fishery sustainable by only harvesting fish at certain seasons and making sure not to waste any meat from the fish. In fact even the skin is saved and tanned to use in fashion and science. Overall, fish in the Amazon is a key aspect to life there. People in the Amazon consume more fish than anyone else, but still manage to keep their fisheries healthy.

Finally the video discussed the never ending search for El Dorado, the Golden city. Gold holds a tight grip on the Amazon and its people. There is said to be 2,000

mines employing over 400,000 people today. The environmental impacts of the industry have plagued the landscape from the beginning. For every one gram of gold produced, one tone of quartz is stripped from the earth and crushed. On average the mines produce 4 grams of gold a day, and dump 150 gallons of toxic mercury infused water into the locals waterways. Brazil is the sixth largest gold producing country in the world, but is destroying its environment in the process.

If the exploitation of the Amazon continues, it will only be a matter of time before it the entire ecosystem collapses. Deforestation is an act of complete sin. With every tree that is illegally harvested, so much life is striped away from its surroudings. I found it amazing that the effect of one tree radiates for 50 meters. Every tree that they cut, is also damning us as a population. So much vital oxygen is produced in the rainforest and its being destroyed by greed. These millionaires buying the wood, may have a beautiful dining room table to eat off of, but if there's no oxygen to survive, the table is worthless.

The fisheries in the Amazon is a glimmer of hope. I admire that they recognize the fact that they can not just harvest whatever they please whenever they please. The fisherman are also very efficient using all of the parts of the animal, something most American's lack. The practice that most inspired me was the fish skin being used as leather. The people have symbiotic relationships with the vultures to clean the skin, and then they turn it into a useful product. As an avid fur harvester, I admire the use of the leather. I am inspired to attempt to tan a batch of brown trout skin in the later fall. They use the same techniques to tan the fish as I use to tan raccoons, and beavers. I hope to be able to make it work as nice as they did.

As for the gold, I believe the entire industry is worthless. Gold is overvalued and not worth the price that so many people pay. It's a mineral from the ground, and I don't see what makes gold any more desirable than any other minerals. The reason that the trade continues is the fact that people continue to create a demand for it. In order to slow down the industry and lower the environmental impacts it causes, is to stop buying it. With no demand, there is no need for a supply. We hold the key to our environmental future. We can continue to live the way we have or we can rethink our decisions. The environmental fate lies in our hands.