

World Studies: Countries, Cultures, and Connections - 6

Chapter 12: The Geography and History of Latin America – Quick Notes

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SECTION 1: THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF LATIN AMERICA

➤ Essential Question:

- What are some natural and man-made features of Latin America?

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SECTION 1: THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF LATIN AMERICA

➤ What terms do I need to know?:

- isthmus
- pope

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LOCATION AND FEATURES OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

➤ Latin America is in both North and South America, and it exists in the western, northern, and southern hemispheres.

- It also has the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to its east and west.

➤ The region south of Mexico is an **isthmus**, which is a narrow strip of land connecting two landmasses.

➤ Latin America contains several natural features, including rivers, deserts, mountain ranges, and a large rainforest.

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LOCATING COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA

➤ There are 33 countries and 15 territories in Latin America and the Caribbean.

➤ Some of the countries are:

- Mexico, just south of the United States
- Panama, which includes the Panama Canal
- Brazil, the largest country in South America that includes the Amazon River and the Amazon Rain Forest.

➤ There are also many island nations, including Cuba, which is located south of Florida.

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LANGUAGES OF LATIN AMERICA

- The Spanish and Portuguese spread their language and religion across Central and South America as they conquered indigenous people.
- Spanish is the most common language today, with over 300 million native speakers.
 - Portuguese is the official language of Brazil, with over 200 million native speakers.
- Smaller numbers of people speak other languages in the region.
 - Dutch, French, and English are the official languages of some smaller countries and territories.
 - Some isolated indigenous people of Central America still use their own language, like Quechua, the language of the Incas.
 - There are also some African languages that have survived since the days of slavery.

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RELIGION OF LATIN AMERICA

- The Latin American region is mostly Roman Catholic, united under the leadership and ministry of the **pope**, the Bishop of Rome (Italy).
- Spain, Portugal, and France sent missionaries to the New World during the colonial period to establish missions and churches.
 - Missions were made to convert the indigenous people to Christianity while also ministering to Europeans.
 - Many indigenous people were forced to say they accepted Christianity, but many still practiced their traditional beliefs in secret.
- It is estimated that 40% of the Roman Catholic Church's population is Latin American.

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SECTION 2: FROM COLONIES TO INDEPENDENCE

➤ Essential Question:

- What changes were brought to the Old World and New World by the Columbian Exchange?

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SECTION 2: FROM COLONIES TO INDEPENDENCE

➤ What terms do I need to know?:

- Maya
- Aztec
- Inca
- Columbian Exchange
- conquistadors
- Monroe Doctrine

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

- The **Maya** civilization developed in Central America on the Yucatán Peninsula, reaching its peak around 2,000 years ago.
 - It had temples, cities, roads, ball fields, and pyramids.
 - They also traded corn, beans, squash, and chocolate.
- The **Aztec** and **Inca** Empires were present during European exploration.
 - The Aztec Empire was located in modern-day Mexico, with its capital, Tenochtitlán, built on an island on a lake.
 - The Inca Empire developed around the Andes Mountains and had over 14,000 miles of roads throughout the mountains with a message system of runners to deliver communications.

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THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE

- The **Columbian Exchange** was the exchange of goods, people, ideas, plants, animals, and diseases between the Old World (Europe) and the New World (the Americas).
 - Europeans wanted to increase their home country's wealth, so goods and items from the Americas were sent back to Europe to be sold for high prices.
- As the Spanish and Portuguese empires spread, the indigenous populations began to decline.
 - Disease was a major part of this decline, along with war against the Europeans.
- To meet demands for goods back home, the Europeans transported Africans to the New World as enslaved servants, working in mines, on plantations, and other jobs against their will.

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AFRICAN SLAVERY

- Gold and silver taken from natives by **conquistadors** (conquerors) made Spain and Portugal very wealthy.
- Europeans looked to Africa for a large workforce to mine more metals and grow cash crops.
 - Africans were forced into slavery and worked long hours, had poor housing, and ate little.
 - For 300 years, businesses relied on the use of slavery to grow.
- This labor force helped build many of the Latin American countries, but much of the wealth was sent back to Europe.

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INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS

- The American Revolution of 1776 was an example of colonies fighting for their independence.
 - This, along with the French Revolution, led to ideas of freedom in Latin America.
- Mexico's move toward independence began in 1810, and it finally gained independence in 1821, with an emphasis on freedom of religion and equality.
- Countries further south began their independence movements, too, with Brazil gaining independence in 1822.
 - Most of South America was free from Spanish rule by 1825.
- The United States helped protect Latin America from future European colonization by issuing the **Monroe Doctrine** in 1823.

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SECTION 3: MODERN LATIN AMERICA

➤ Essential Question:

- What is the impact on political and social life resulting from the rule of dictators?

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SECTION 3: MODERN LATIN AMERICA

➤ What terms do I need to know?:

- dictator
- drug cartel
- migration
- recession

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DICTATORS AND DEMOCRACY

➤ Many countries in Latin America were ruled by **dictators**, or people who rule with absolute authority, often harshly.

➤ During the Cold War, the US feared Soviet influence in the western hemisphere, which resulted in the US supporting leaders who were not always democratically chosen.

- However, democratic systems modeled after the US and Europe have spread over the past few decades.

➤ Dictator Augusto Pinochet ruled Chile for 17 years.

- Some saw him as a leader who kept communists from taking over the country, but others viewed him as a cruel leader who ignored the rights of those who opposed him.

➤ Elections are held in most Latin American countries today, and many leaders win support from citizens by blaming US policies for their problems.

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THE WAR ON DRUGS

➤ The war on drugs has been an ongoing battle in the United States and Latin America.

➤ The Mexican police force is working to restructure itself to better tackle **drug cartels** (criminal drug-trafficking organizations).

- The size of the police force has more than doubled over the last few years, and they encourage citizens' involvement in crime control.

➤ Cuba has worked to keep drugs from being a major problem on the island through prevention and information programs as well as harsh laws.

➤ Brazil has large drug cartels that operate in the country and are a major source of drugs found in Europe.

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POVERTY

- Latin Americans have suffered financially because of the history of inequality between Europeans and indigenous peoples.
 - Non-Europeans in most Latin American countries have struggled with inadequate pay, housing, education, and health care.
- Those born into a lower class tend to stay in the lower class with little chance of change.
- Even in cities, workers deal with low wages and labor-intensive jobs.

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MIGRATION

- New immigration laws and economic changes have changed old **migration** (movement from one locality to another) patterns.
- Many Latin Americans would move to the US searching for new opportunities, but the **recession** (economic decline) of 2007 caused many to instead settle in Mexico.
- An increase in violence along routes to the US has also caused a shift in migration, with people instead moving to areas that are growing in their own country.
- Due to free trade agreements, increased economic stability, advancements in technology and infrastructure, Internet access, improved education, and updated healthcare, many migrants are finding it less necessary to leave their country in search of a better life.

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