

UNIT

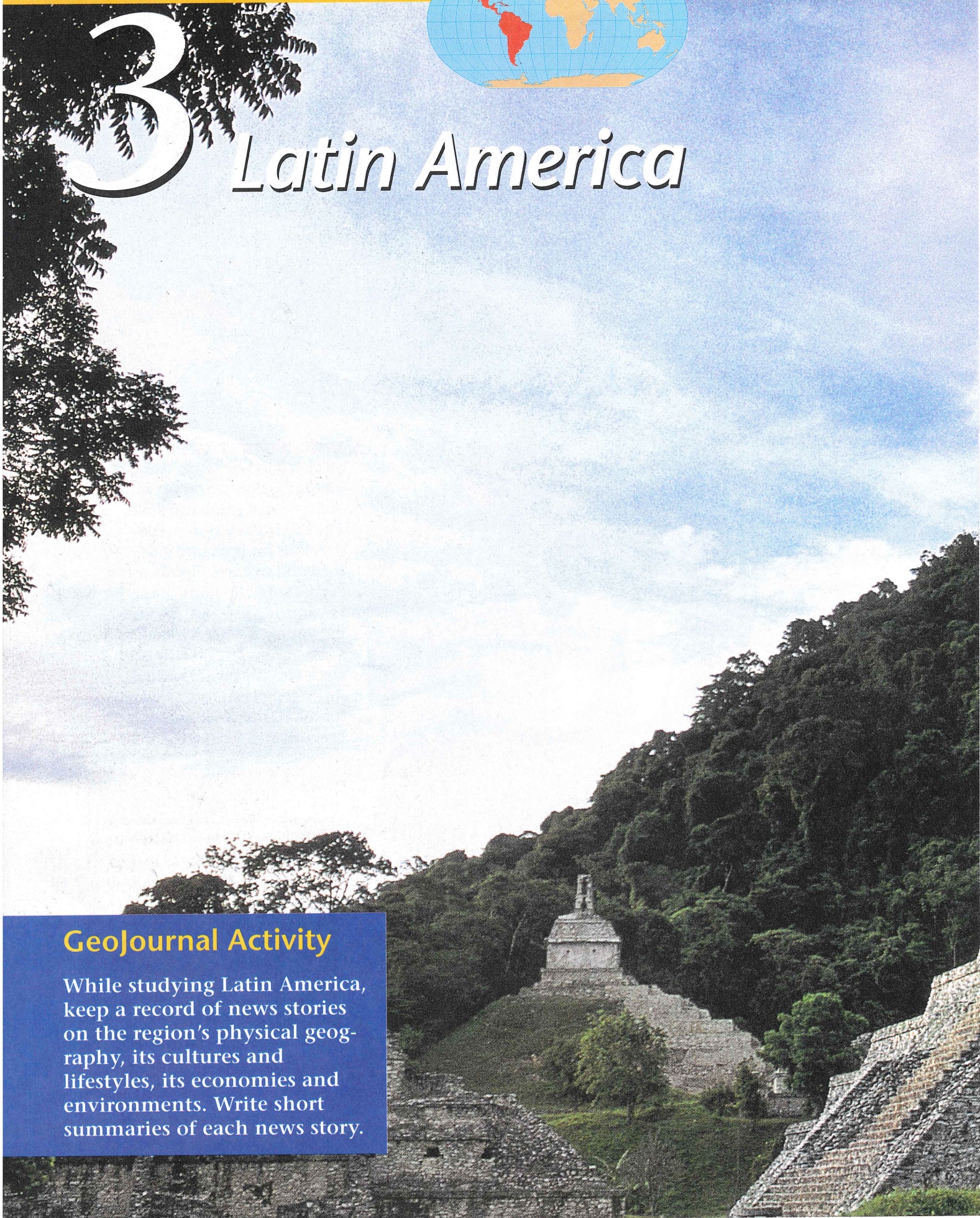


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Latin America

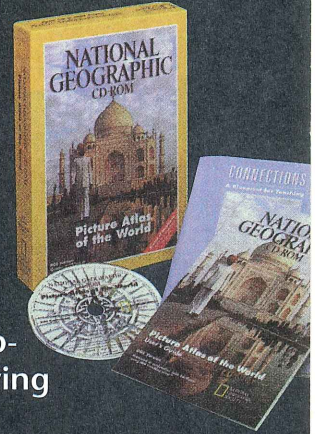
GeoJournal Activity

While studying Latin America, keep a record of news stories on the region's physical geography, its cultures and lifestyles, its economies and environments. Write short summaries of each news story.



Picture Atlas of the World CD-ROM

Put together a cultural reference file on the Andes. (See the *Picture Atlas of the World User's Guide* on how to use the Collector button.) Collect photos on the CD-ROM from Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Read the photo captions and answer the following questions:

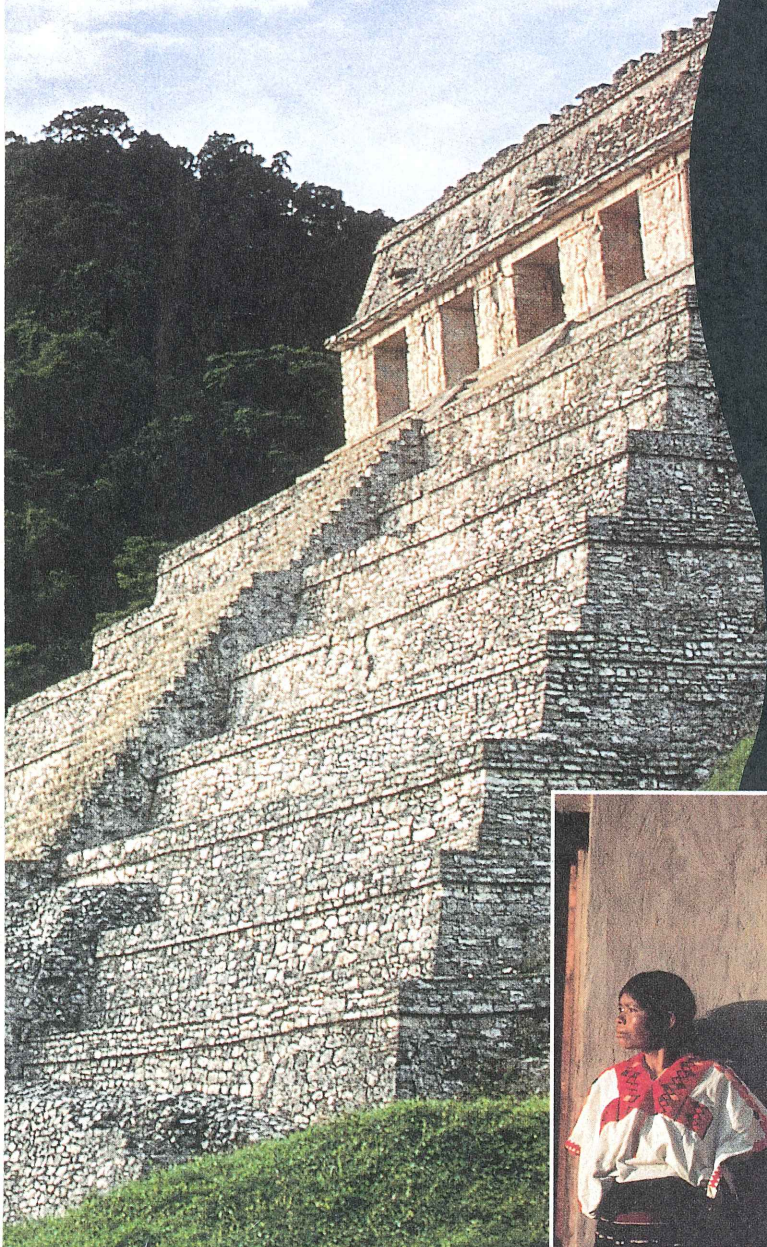


1. Name a popular product tourists often buy in the villages of the Andes.
2. What instrument did the ancient Inca play?
3. Name a major textile product of Peru.

interNET CONNECTION
























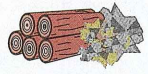


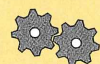





















For more information about Latin America visit the National Geographic Society's Web site.
www.nationalgeographic.com

For a unit-based activity visit the Glencoe Social Studies Web site.
www.glencoe.com




































The Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque, Mexico.





















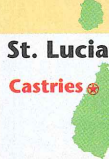









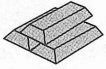

















◀ These two Mexican women wear a mix of traditional and Western clothing.

COUNTRY* AND CAPITAL	FLAG AND LANGUAGES	POPULATION	LANDMASS	PRINCIPAL EXPORT	PRODUCTS IMPORT
Antigua and Barbuda 	 English	100,000 394 per sq. mi. 134 per sq. km	170 sq. mi. 440 sq. km	 Petroleum	 Food and Live Animals
Argentina 	 Spanish	36,100,000 34 per sq. mi. 13 per sq. km	1,056,640 sq. mi. 2,736,698 sq. km	 Food and Live Animals	 Machinery
Bahamas 	 English	300,000 76 per sq. mi. 29 per sq. km	3,860 sq. mi. 9,997 sq. km	 Petroleum	 Crude Oil
Barbados 	 English	300,000 1,596 per sq. mi. 616 per sq. km	166 sq. mi. 430 sq. km	 Sugar	 Machinery
Belize 	 English, Spanish	200,000 27 per sq. mi. 11 per sq. km	8,800 sq. mi. 22,792 sq. km	 Sugar	 Machinery
Bolivia 	 Spanish, Aymara, Quechua	8,000,000 19 per sq. mi. 7 per sq. km	418,680 sq. mi. 1,084,381 sq. km	 Zinc	 Raw Materials
Brazil 	 Portuguese	162,000,000 50 per sq. mi. 19 per sq. km	3,265,060 sq. mi. 8,456,505 sq. km	 Machinery	 Petroleum
Chile 	 Spanish	14,800,000 51 per sq. mi. 20 per sq. km	289,110 sq. mi. 748,795 sq. km	 Paper Products	 Intermediate Goods
Colombia 	 Spanish	38,600,000 96 per sq. mi. 37 per sq. km	401,040 sq. mi. 1,038,694 sq. km	 Petroleum	 Machinery
Costa Rica 	 Spanish	3,500,000 179 per sq. mi. 69 per sq. km	19,710 sq. mi. 51,049 sq. km	 Garments	 Petroleum
Cuba 	 Spanish	11,100,000 262 per sq. mi. 101 per sq. km	42,400 sq. mi. 109,816 sq. km	 Sugar	 Crude Oil
Dominica 	 English, French, Creole	100,000 256 per sq. mi. 99 per sq. km	290 sq. mi. 751 sq. km	 Bananas	 Machinery

*Country maps not drawn to scale.

COUNTRY* AND CAPITAL	FLAG AND LANGUAGES	POPULATION	LANDMASS	PRINCIPAL EXPORT	PRODUCTS IMPORT
Dominican Republic 	 Spanish	8,300,000 446 per sq. mi. 172 per sq. km	18,680 sq. mi. 48,381 sq. km	 Ferro nickel	 Petroleum
Ecuador 	 Spanish	12,200,000 114 per sq. mi. 44 per sq. km	106,890 sq. mi. 276,845 sq. km	 Petroleum	 Raw Materials
El Salvador 	 Spanish	5,800,000 724 per sq. mi. 280 per sq. km	8,000 sq. mi. 20,720 sq. km	 Coffee	 Chemicals
French Guiana Territory of France 	 French	200,000 5 per sq. mi. 2 per sq. km	134,035 sq. mi. 88,150 sq. km	 Shrimp	 Food
Grenada 	 English, French patois	100,000 731 per sq. mi. 282 per sq. km	130 sq. mi. 337 sq. km	 Bananas	 Machinery
Guatemala 	 Spanish, Mayan languages	11,600,000 277 per sq. mi. 107 per sq. km	41,860 sq. mi. 108,417 sq. km	 Coffee	 Petroleum
Guyana 	 English, Amer-indian dialects	700,000 9 per sq. mi. 4 per sq. km	76,000 sq. mi. 196,840 sq. km	 Sugar	 Fuels
Haiti 	 French, Haitian Creole	7,500,000 708 per sq. mi. 283 per sq. km	10,640 sq. mi. 27,558 sq. km	 Textiles	 Food
Honduras 	 Spanish	5,900,000 137 per sq. mi. 53 per sq. km	43,200 sq. mi. 111,888 sq. km	 Bananas	 Machinery
Jamaica 	 English, Creole	2,600,000 613 per sq. mi. 237 per sq. km	4,180 sq. mi. 10,826 sq. km	 Alumina	 Fuels
Mexico 	 Spanish	97,500,000 132 per sq. mi. 51 per sq. km	736,950 sq. mi. 1,908,701 sq. km	 Machinery	 Machinery
Nicaragua 	 Spanish	4,800,000 102 per sq. mi. 40 per sq. km	46,873 sq. mi. 121,401 sq. km	 Coffee	 Petroleum

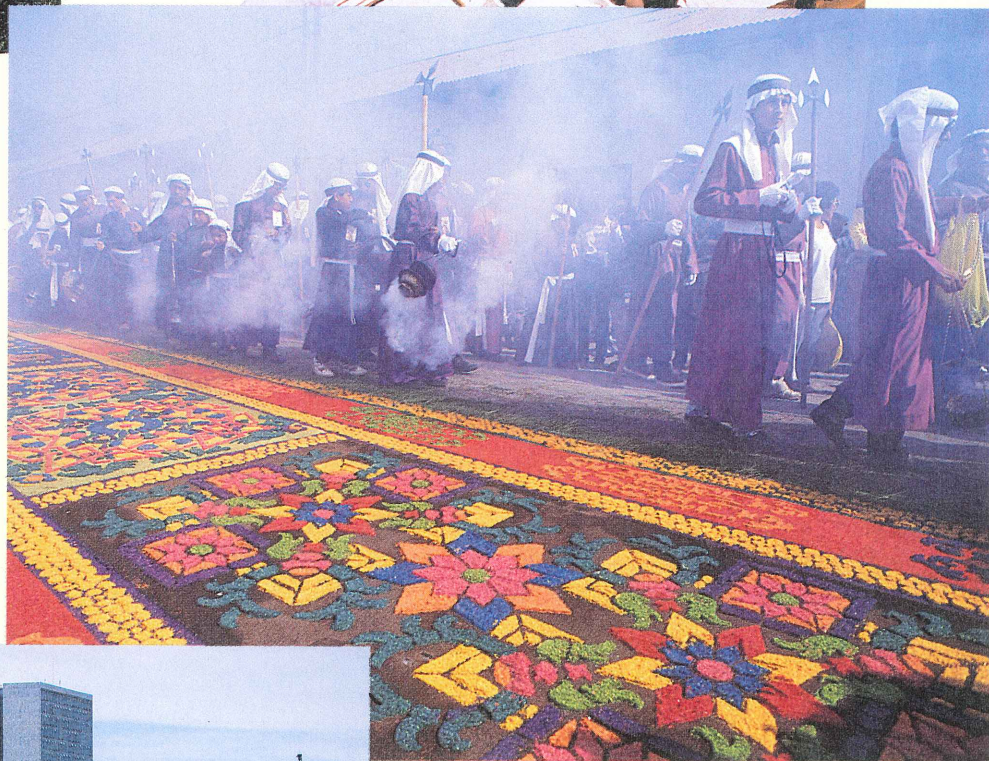
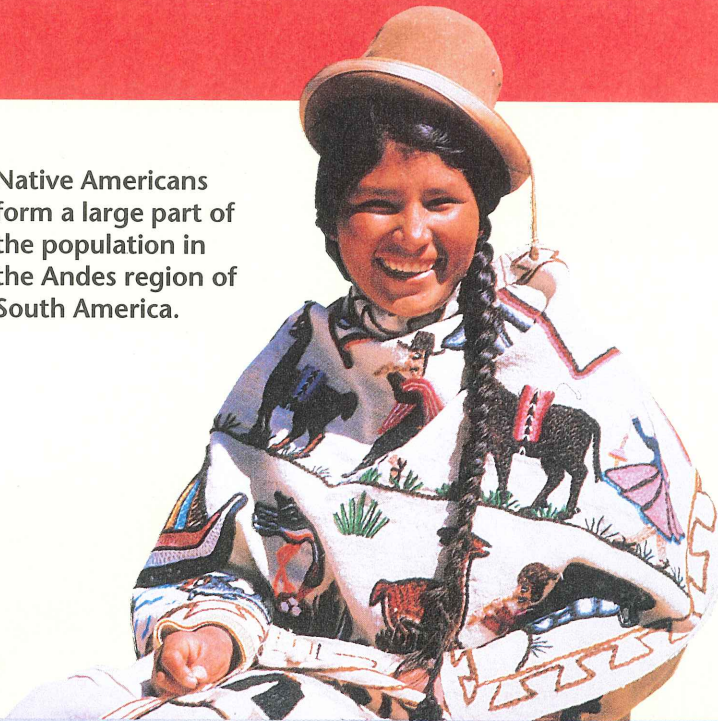
*Country maps not drawn to scale.

COUNTRY* AND CAPITAL	FLAG AND LANGUAGES	POPULATION	LANDMASS	PRINCIPAL EXPORT	PRODUCTS IMPORT
Panama 	 Spanish, English	2,800,000 96 per sq. mi. 31 per sq. km	28,737 sq. mi. 74,428 sq. km	 Bananas	 Fuels
Paraguay 	 Spanish, Guaraní	5,200,000 34 per sq. mi. 13 per sq. km	153,400 sq. mi. 397,306 sq. km	 Cotton	 Machinery
Peru 	 Spanish, Quechua	26,100,000 53 per sq. mi. 20 per sq. km	494,210 sq. mi. 1,280,004 sq. km	 Copper	 Machinery
Puerto Rico 	 Spanish	3,900,000 1,129 per sq. mi. 436 per sq. km	3,420 sq. mi. 8,858 sq. km	 Chemicals	 Chemicals
Saint Kitts and Nevis 	 English	40,000 302 per sq. mi. 117 per sq. km	140 sq. mi. 363 sq. km	 Sugar	 Food
St. Lucia 	 English, French patois	100,000 628 per sq. mi. 242 per sq. km	236 sq. mi. 611 sq. km	 Bananas	 Machinery
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines 	 English	100,000 797 per sq. mi. 308 per sq. km	150 sq. mi. 389 sq. km	 Bananas	 Food
Suriname 	 Dutch, English	400,000 7 per sq. mi. 3 per sq. km	60,230 sq. mi. 155,996 sq. km	 Alumina	 Machinery
Trinidad & Tobago 	 English	1,300,000 646 per sq. mi. 250 per sq. km	1,980 sq. mi. 5,128 sq. km	 Petroleum	 Food
Uruguay 	 Spanish	3,200,000 47 per sq. mi. 18 per sq. km	67,490 sq. mi. 174,799 sq. km	 Textiles	 Machinery
Venezuela 	 Spanish	23,300,000 68 per sq. mi. 26 per sq. km	340,560 sq. mi. 882,050 sq. km	 Petroleum	 Machinery
Virgin Islands (U.S.) 	 English	97,120 771 per sq. mi. 298 per sq. km	132 sq. mi. 342 sq. km	 Sugar	 Food



Ruins of the Maya civilization are seen today in the steamy lowland forests of southern Mexico and Guatemala.

Native Americans form a large part of the population in the Andes region of South America.



The Congress Building is one of many modern structures in Brasília, the capital of Brazil.



Religious festivals and processions are an important part of life for the largely Roman Catholic population of Latin America.

The Physical Geography of Latin America



CHAPTER FOCUS

Geographic Setting

Latin America is made up of Mexico, Central America, South America, and the island-countries in the Caribbean Sea.



Geographic Themes

Section 1 The Land

PLACE Towering mountain ranges, broad plateaus, and rolling plains are the dominant landforms of Latin America.

Section 2 The Climate and Vegetation

LOCATION Latin America's vast territorial expanse—from 33°N latitude to 56°S latitude—makes its climate and vegetation diverse.

▲ **Photograph:** Iguazú Falls, Brazil

SETTING THE SCENE

Read to Discover . . .

- the diverse landforms of Latin America.
- the abundant natural resources of Latin America.

Key Terms

- escarpment
- llanos
- Pampas
- hydroelectric power

Identify and Locate

Middle America, Central America, South America, Sierra Madre Occidental, Sierra Madre Oriental, Sierra Madre del Sur, Andes, Altiplano, Amazon River basin, Río de la Plata, Amazon River, Río Grande, Lake Maracaibo

Margarita Island, Venezuela
 ¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás?
 From the time we landed, the white sand beaches, warm ocean air, and blue water of Margarita welcomed us. This island off the coast of Venezuela has many small fishing villages along its coastline. Palm trees are everywhere. From most any high spot, there is a wonderful view of the nearby islands of Coche and Cubagua.
 Wish you were here!



Carla Martinez describes the tropical beauty of the Caribbean coastline of Venezuela, one of the many countries of Latin America. Most of the region was settled by people from Spain or Portugal. To this day, Spanish and Portuguese are the official languages of most countries. Because these languages are based on Latin, the region became known as Latin America.

REGION

The Americas and the Caribbean

Geographers often divide Latin America into three areas—Middle America, the Caribbean, and South America. Middle America consists of Mexico and the seven countries of Central America. Central America is the

narrow land link between North and South America. The islands of the Caribbean, also known as the West Indies, fall into three groups—the Bahamas, the Greater Antilles, and the Lesser Antilles.

The continent of South America is by far the largest land area of Latin America. Among South America's 13 countries, Brazil is the largest. More than half of all South American land and people are Brazilian.

PLACE

Mountains, Plateaus, and Hills

The physical geography of Latin America is diverse. Dominating all other physical features, however, are the vast rain forests of





Geographic Themes

Region: The Mexican Plateau

Mexico, the largest part of Middle America, consists of a large central plateau and surrounding mountains. *What plateaus are located in South America?*

the Amazon River basin and the towering mountain chain of the Andes.

Mountains

High mountain ranges cover much of Latin America. Many of the Caribbean islands are actually the exposed peaks of an underwater mountain range. In Central America, mountains thread through much of the interior. Two prominent mountain ranges in Mexico—the Sierra Madre Occidental and the Sierra Madre Oriental—meet near Mexico City to form the sharp-peaked Sierra Madre del Sur.

In South America mountains interrupt the Guiana Highlands—in the northeast—and the Brazilian Highlands of eastern Brazil. The eastern edge of the Brazilian Highlands drops

sharply to the Atlantic Ocean, forming an **escarpment**, a slope or long cliff between a higher and lower surface.

None of Latin America's mountains, however, compare with the 4,500-mile (7,250-km) stretch of the Andes, the world's longest mountain chain. Some peaks in the Andes rise more than 20,000 feet (6,096 m) above sea level, making the Andes the second-highest range in the world. Only the Himalayas of South Asia are higher.

Many people have settled in valleys near the mountains of Latin America because these areas are rich in mineral and soil resources. Mountain ranges often block communications, however, thus isolating regions and peoples.

Plateaus and Hills

Latin America is also a region of large plateaus, high flatlands often used for grazing and farming. For example, in Mexico, lodged between the Sierra Madre Oriental and Sierra Madre Occidental, is Anáhuac (uh•NAH•WAHK), the densely populated Mexican Plateau.

In Bolivia and Peru, nestled among the Andes, is the *Altiplano* (AHL•tih•PLAH•NOH)—



LATIN AMERICA: PHYSICAL-POLITICAL

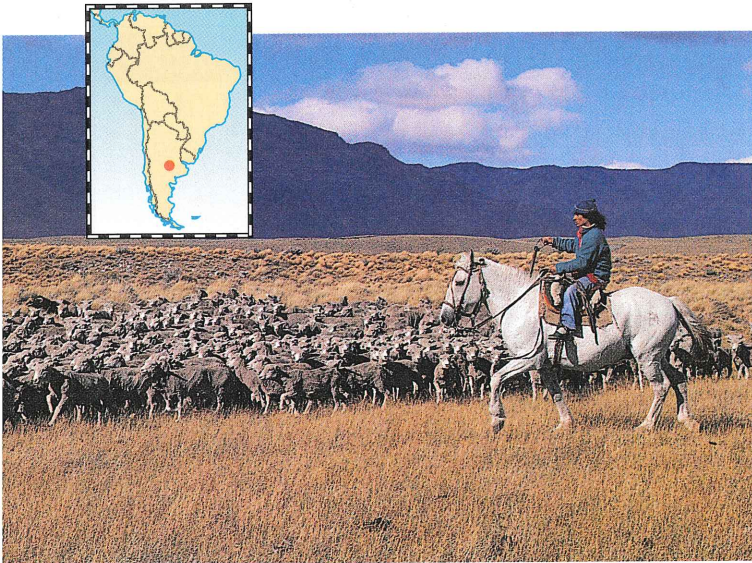


FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHIC THEMES



- Region:** What landform connects Central America and northern South America?
- Place:** What is the capital of Chile?
- Location:** What country lies east of Colombia?
- Region:** In what kind of physical environment is Brasília, Brazil, located?





Geographic Themes

Place: The Pampas, Argentina

Argentine cowhands known as *gauchos* ride the Pampas herding livestock, the major agricultural product of Argentina. *What prominent plains area is located in northern South America?*

which means “high plain.” Spreading over much of Brazil, across the southwest to Bolivia and Peru, is yet another plateau, Mato Grosso, a sparsely populated area of forests and grasslands. East of Mato Grosso lie the Brazilian Highlands, a plateau so vast that it spans several climate and vegetation zones. Farther south, in southern Argentina, hills and low flatlands form a plateau area known as Patagonia.

PLACE

Plains Areas

Narrow coastal plains stretch along the Gulf of Mexico. More plains lie along the Pacific coastline of South America and along the Atlantic coastline of northeastern South America.

People of Venezuela and Colombia have been raising cattle for hundreds of years on the large, fertile plains areas called *llanos* (LAH•nohz), which run along the Caribbean coast of South America. To the south of the llanos lies the Amazon River basin, the largest lowland area of South America. Just south of

the Amazon River basin is the Gran Chaco, a heavily forested lowland. In direct contrast are the grassy, treeless plains of Argentina and Uruguay, known as *Pampas*. The Pampas have the rainfall and fertile soils needed for producing grain and grazing cattle and sheep.

MOVEMENT

Rivers, Lakes, and Waterfalls

Latin America includes numerous water systems—extensive rivers and tributaries, large lakes, and spectacular waterfalls.

Rivers

Most of the major rivers of the region are in South America. The most extensive river system is the Amazon, which drains much of Brazil and other nearby lands. The Amazon is the longest river in the Western Hemisphere. A little more than one-half of its length—from the east coast of Brazil to the city of Iquitos in Peru—is navigable.

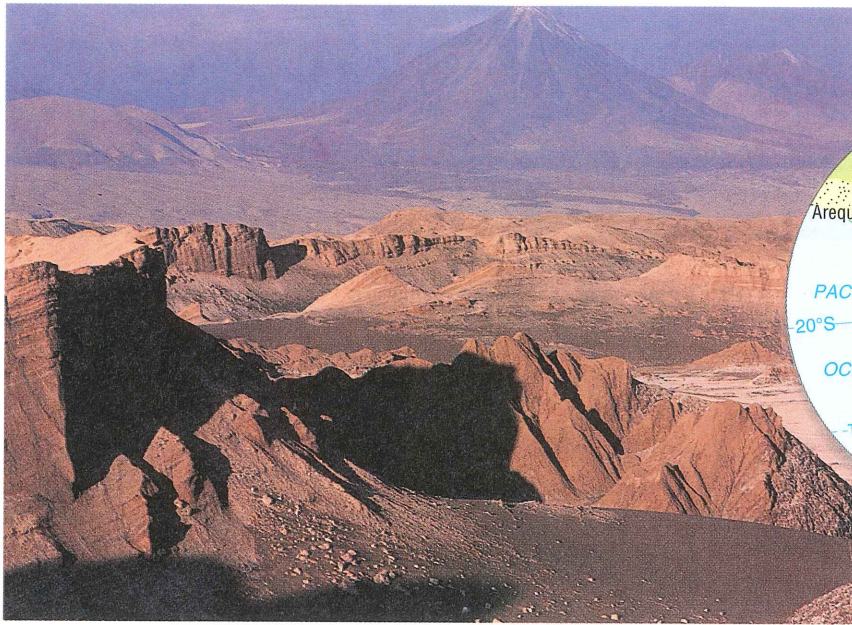
The Paraná, Paraguay, and Uruguay rivers form the second-largest river system in South America and its most important commercial highway. Near the Argentine city of Buenos Aires, the Paraguay and Uruguay rivers join to become the Río de la Plata, which means “river of silver.”

Lakes and Waterfalls

Latin America does not have many large lakes. The region includes, however, the world’s highest large navigable lake, Lake Titicaca (TIHT•ih•KAHK•uh). The region’s largest lake—Lake Maracaibo (MAR•uh•KY•BOH)—covers 5,217 square miles (13,512 sq. km) and contains the most important oil fields in Venezuela. The largest lake in Central America is Lake Nicaragua, which lies on the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

Waterfalls grace the region, especially in South America. Angel Falls, in Venezuela, drops 3,212 feet (979 m), making it the world’s highest uninterrupted waterfall.





Geographic Themes

Place: Atacama Desert, Chile

Chile's Atacama Desert, formed by dry westerly winds, is one of the driest and most barren spots on the earth.

What mineral resource is found in the Atacama Desert?

REGION

Natural Resources

Latin America has significant natural resources, some not yet utilized.

Energy Resources

Latin American countries are among the world's leading producers of oil and natural gas. The oil fields along the Gulf of Mexico, for example, have helped make Mexico the world's fifth-largest oil producer. Venezuela also produces large quantities of oil.

Natural gas is extracted in many of the same areas that produce oil. Coal is found in varying quantities in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Honduras. Deposits of uranium are located in Brazil and Argentina. Rivers and waterfalls give many countries the capacity for **hydroelectric power**, the energy of water generating electricity.

Mineral Resources

In addition to energy resources, Latin America is rich in a number of mineral re-

sources. Bauxite, used to make aluminum, is mined in Jamaica and Guyana. The Atacama Desert in Chile contains deposits of copper. Bolivia and Brazil have reserves of tin. Peru and Mexico are known for silver.

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

- 1. Define** escarpment, llanos, Pampas, hydroelectric power.
- 2. Locating Places** What are the three geographic areas of Latin America?
- 3. Region** What is the largest mountain range in Latin America?
- 4. Region** What are two major river systems of Latin America?

Critical Thinking

- 5. Drawing Conclusions** Why does much of Latin America have the potential to produce hydroelectric power?



The Climate and Vegetation

SETTING THE SCENE

Read to Discover . . .

- the climate regions of Latin America.
- the kinds of vegetation found in Latin America.

Key Terms

- *tierra caliente*
- *tierra templada*
- *tierra fría*
- canopy

Identify and Locate

Atacama Desert, Climate regions: Mediterranean, marine west coast, tropical rain forest, tropical savanna, humid subtropical, desert, steppe, highland.

Latin America has a wide range of climates and vegetation, the two being closely linked. Traveling the region, a person can go from desert to tropical rain forest, from subtropical plain to grassy plateau to barren, cold steppe. Other smaller climate regions, such as in central Chile where the climate is Mediterranean, or on the lower slopes of the Chilean Andes, where a marine west coast climate brings constant rain and winds, exist throughout the region.

REGION

Climate Regions

Much of Latin America lies in the low latitudes—between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. As a result, most of the region has some form of tropical climate.

Tropical Climates

Southern Mexico, eastern Central America, the eastern shores of some Caribbean Islands, and large parts of South America—especially the Amazon River basin—have a tropical rain forest climate. In these areas, hot temperatures and abundant rainfall occur year-round.

Most of Central America and the Caribbean Islands, however, have a tropical sa-

vanna climate. These areas are hot and very wet, but not all year round. During certain times of the year, they tend to be cooler and drier than the tropical rain forest regions. Parts of Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay also have a tropical savanna climate.

Humid Subtropical Climate

A humid subtropical climate prevails in much of southeastern South America, stretching from the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro to the Pampas of northern Argentina. In these places winters are short and mild, and summers are long and humid. Sometimes the summer brings a short dry period, but at other times there is no dry period at all.

Desert Climate

Climatic conditions are almost the opposite in parts of northern Mexico and southern and northwestern Argentina. In these areas a hot and dry climate prevails most of the time. Here, as in Pacific coastal areas of Peru and Chile, a desert climate affects large areas. The Atacama Desert, which runs south from Chile's northern border with Peru, is one of the driest places in the world. In some parts of this desert area, no rainfall has ever been recorded.



Steppe Climate

Some parts of Latin America receive little rainfall but do not have a desert climate. Instead, they have a steppe climate—hot summers, cold winters, light rainfall. Areas with this kind of climate include northern Mexico, highland areas in South America near the Andes, and coastal areas of South America along the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

Highland Climates

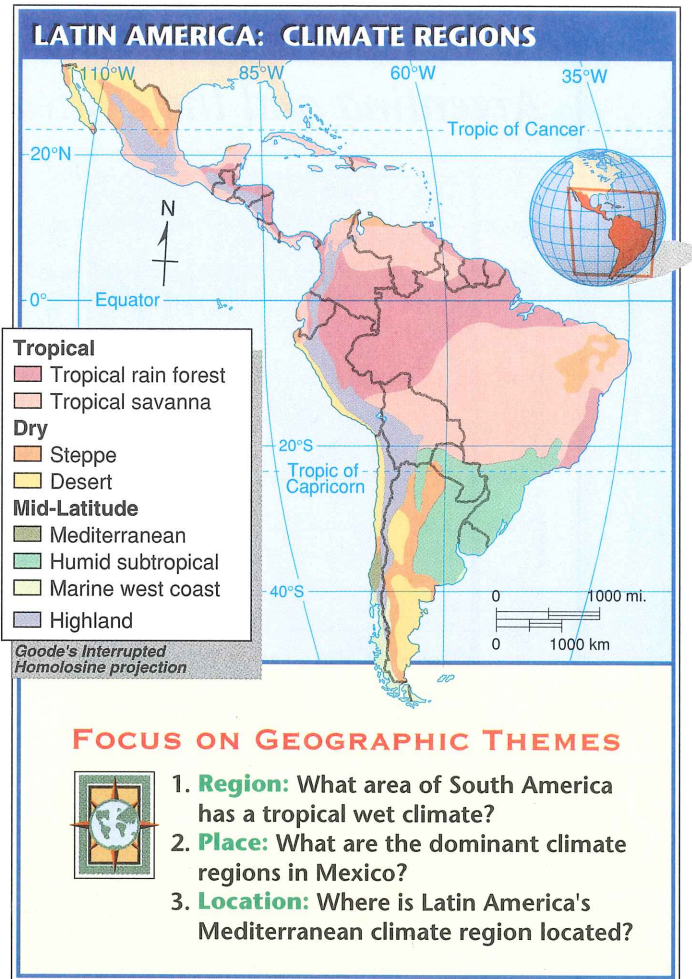
In Mexico along the Sierra Mountains and along the Andes in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile, highland climates dominate. How warm, cool, or cold an area is depends on latitude and elevation. The farther from the Equator and the higher the elevation, the colder it is.

Highland climates are commonly arranged vertically by altitude into three major zones. Lands at the lowest altitudes—sea level to 3,000 feet (914 m) above sea level at or near the Equator—fall in the zone called *tierra caliente*, which means “hot country.” Lands from 3,000 to 6,000 feet (914 to 1,829 m) above sea level are considered *tierra templada*, which means “temperate country.” Lands at the highest altitudes—6,000 to 10,000 feet (1,829 to 3,048 m)—are said to be *tierra fría*, meaning “cold country.” Although frost may occur in some areas of *tierra fría*, average temperatures usually do not fall much below 45° F (7.2° C), because most of the lands lie in the tropics.

REGION

Vegetation

The natural vegetation of Latin America mainly consists of rain forests and grasslands. Like the climate, the vegetation varies from one place to another throughout the region.



Tropical Rain Forests

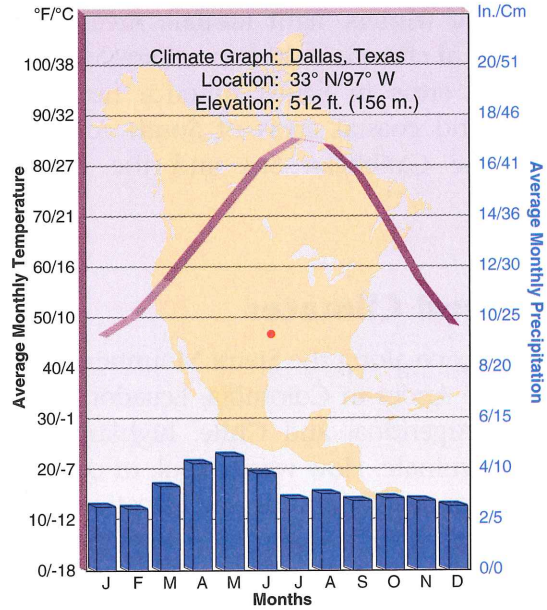
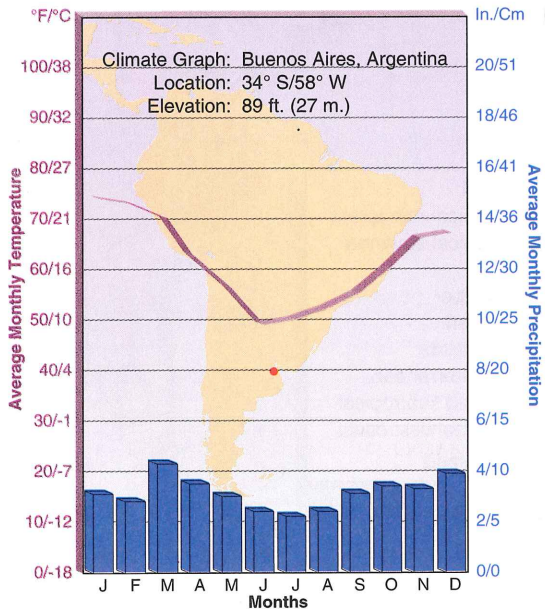
A number of tropical rain forests are scattered across Latin America, mostly in the warm, humid regions near the Equator. The countries of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Peru, and Brazil contain rain forests. The largest rain forest is in Brazil in the Amazon River basin. This rain forest covers about one-third of the South American continent.

In Latin America's tropical rain forests, broad-leaved and needle-leaved evergreen trees grow tall and lush. Their tops come together to form a dense **canopy**, or covering, that keeps the sun from reaching the forest floor. As a result not many small ground plants survive. More kinds of trees and more species of animals live in these forests than in



COMPARING CLIMATE REGIONS

Argentina and the United States



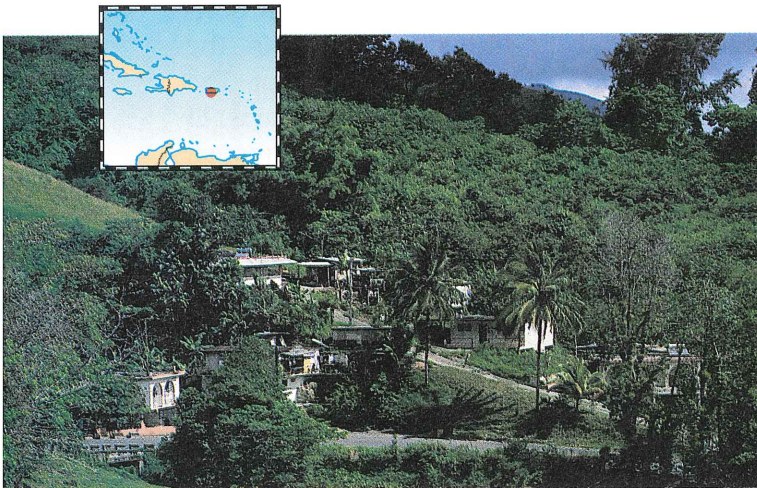
Source: World Weather Guide, 1990

*lines measure temperature/bars measure precipitation



GRAPH STUDY

The climate graphs above show the average monthly temperature and the average monthly precipitation in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Dallas, Texas. *What is the average September temperature and precipitation in each city?*



Geographic Themes

Place: Puerto Rico's Highlands

A tropical climate characterizes this village in the foothills of Puerto Rico's interior mountains. *What kind of vegetation thrives at this elevation?*

any other area of the world. A writer painted this picture of rain forest activity:

— — — — —

— — — — —

With imperious gaze, an endangered Guiana crested eagle searches for prey. A harpy eagle, also endangered, homes in for a landing. The [bird of prey's] perch wins in the incessant competition for sunlight. Poking above the dense canopy of its neighbors, the tree gets a boost in its propagation when winds scatter its seeds. Birds such as the lemon-throated barbet and the channel-billed toucan help other trees by dispersing seeds . . .

as they fly.

— — — — —

— — — — —

Grasslands and Deserts

In areas with a humid subtropical climate, such as parts of Paraguay and Uruguay and parts of the Pampas of northern Argentina, prairie-like grasses grow. The grasses tend to be short and to grow in clumps that leave the soil between them exposed.

Because of their rainy seasons, some of these grassland areas, such as the llanos of northern South America, are covered with scattered trees. As a result, geographers often consider them as transition regions between grasslands and forests. In the Pampas of Argentina and the grasslands of Paraguay, the cooler climate enables only short grasses to thrive, depending on the amount of rainfall.

In desert areas such as those of northern Mexico, southern Chile, and the coasts of Peru, very few plants grow. The plant life that does thrive usually consists of prickly cacti and small bushes with thick leaves that store water. In some of the deserts, seeds lying within the soil may sprout and suddenly burst into bloom after a heavy rain, only to die and disappear quickly.

Vertical Climate Zones

In tropical highland and mountain areas, the vegetation, like the climate, varies with elevation. Because air cools as it rises in altitude, a variety of vegetation thrives on Latin America's mountainsides. Thus, the foot of a mountain may be dry and have scattered grasses, while farther up the mountain, abundant rainfall produces many different trees and plants. In the hot, wet *tierra caliente*, the lush vegetation of the tropical rain forest flourishes. Crops such as rice, sugarcane, and cacao (which has seeds used in making chocolate) are grown in this area. A little higher, in the *tierra templada*, where most people have chosen to settle, coffee is the chief crop. Sugarcane, fruits, and vegetables are also cultivated. The broad-leaved evergreen trees that grow at the lower levels of this zone, where it is moister and hotter, give way to needle-leaved cone-bearing evergreens as the elevation rises. Higher still, in the *tierra fría*, hardy crops such as potatoes and barley are grown.



FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHIC THEMES



- 1. Human/Environment Interaction:** What type of vegetation is suitable for raising livestock?
- 2. Location:** Where is desert vegetation predominant?
- 3. Place:** What type of vegetation is found in Cuba?

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

- 1. Define** *tierra caliente*, *tierra templada*, *tierra fría*, canopy.
- 2. Locating Places** What kind of climate does Cuba have?
- 3. Place** What areas in Latin America have a humid subtropical climate?
- 4. Place** Why is it difficult for small ground plants to survive in Latin America's tropical rain forests?

Critical Thinking

- 5. Determining Cause and Effect** How are climate and vegetation in Latin America affected by elevation above sea level?

MAP & GRAPH SKILLS

Reading a Relief Map

Suppose you must draw a map of a country. The country you are mapping is not flat. It contains hills, valleys, perhaps even mountains. How can you show these three-dimensional features on a two-dimensional piece of paper?

REVIEWING THE SKILL

Variation in the height, or elevation, of land areas is called *relief*. In a relief map, colors or shadings identify areas of different elevation. Green often indicates the lowest elevations (closest to sea level), while yellows, oranges, browns, and reds identify higher elevations. Sometimes the highest areas, such as mountain peaks, are white. Specialized relief maps, called contour maps, use curved lines to show the shapes of land features.

Elevation determines many factors of an area's physical and cultural geography. Elevation directly affects climate. Higher elevations are cooler than lower elevations. Mountains affect rainfall patterns by creating wet and dry sides. By determining climate, elevation affects vegetation and agriculture. In tropical Latin America, for example, climates are arranged into zones by altitude. This

arrangement results from the cooling of the air as it rises in elevation. Air temperature decreases with altitude at a rate of about 3.6°F (1.7°C) per 1,000 feet (304.8 m) of height. The three major vertical climatic zones in tropical Latin America are the *tierra caliente* (hot country), the *tierra templada* (cool country), and the *tierra fría* (cold country).

Elevation also influences land use and settlement patterns. Both farming and transportation are easier in low-lying, relatively flat regions than in mountainous areas. Elevation also affects the development of a region. Although mountains provide natural defenses against enemies, they may also hamper trade and communication.

Because elevation affects many aspects of geography, relief maps are an important source of geographic information. To read a relief map:

- Read the map title to identify the land area shown on the map.
- Use the map key to determine what elevations are shown in the map.
- Identify the areas of highest and lowest elevation on the map.



PRACTICING THE SKILL

Use the relief map to answer the following questions:

1. What country is highlighted on the map?
2. What is the elevation of the green areas on the map?
3. What elevation on the map does the color orange represent?
4. What color is used to show the highest elevations on the map? How many feet high are these areas? How many meters?

For additional practice in reading a relief map, see Practicing Skills on page 172 of the Chapter 8 Assessment.



The **Glencoe Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook, Level 2** provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.

1

SECTION

The Land

KEY TERMS

escarpment (p. 162)
llanos (p. 164)
Pampas (p. 164)
 hydroelectric power
 (p. 165)

SUMMARY

- Latin America is made up of Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean Islands.
- Huge mountain ranges, the largest of which is the Andes, dominate much of Latin America, often blocking communications.
- Large plateaus, used for grazing and farming, dot the Latin American landscape.
- Plains areas of Latin America have provided significant land areas for pastureland, farmland, and forestland.
- Most of the major river systems of Latin America, including the Amazon and the Río de la Plata, are in South America.



Gauchos riding the Pampas of Argentina

2

SECTION

The Climate and Vegetation

KEY TERMS

tierra caliente (p. 167)
tierra templada
 (p. 167)
tierra fría (p. 167)
 canyons (p. 167)

SUMMARY

- Tropical climates such as tropical rain forest and tropical savanna are the most common climates in Latin America.
- While a subtropical climate brings mild winters, hot summers, and a short dry season to grassland areas, other areas have a desert climate or a steppe climate.
- One of the most significant features of Latin America's climate and vegetation are three highland zones based on elevation.
- The natural vegetation of Latin America varies according to climate and ranges from lush tropical rain forest evergreens to desert cacti.
- Among the major natural resources of Latin America are oil, natural gas, bauxite, tin, copper, gold, silver, and valuable gems.



Village in the central highlands of Puerto Rico



Reviewing Key Terms

Choose the vocabulary term that best completes each of the sentences below. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- escarpment (p. 162)
- llanos (p. 164)
- Pampas (p. 164)
- hydroelectric power (p. 165)
- tierra caliente (p. 167)
- tierra templada (p. 167)
- tierra fría (p. 167)
- canopy (p. 167)

SECTION 1

1. The fertile plains in Argentina and Uruguay are called _____.
2. _____ results from the use of water to produce electricity.
3. The fertile plains in Colombia and Venezuela are called _____.
4. In the Brazilian Highlands, low mountain ranges drop sharply to the sea to form an _____.

SECTION 2

5. Lands from 3,000 to 6,000 feet (914 to 1,829 m) above sea level are in the zone called _____.
6. Lands at sea level to 3,000 feet (914 m) above sea level at or near the Equator fall in the zone called _____.
7. Tops of trees in a rain forest form a _____.
8. Lands at 6,000 to 10,000 feet (1,829 to 3,048 m) above sea level are in the _____.

Reviewing Facts

SECTION 1

9. Into what three groups is the West Indies divided?
10. Why are settlers attracted to the mountain areas of Latin America?
11. What is the largest lowland area of South America?

SECTION 2

12. What are the eight climate regions of Latin America?
13. Where are the rain forests of Latin America found?
14. What kind of vegetation and crops grow in the *tierra caliente*?

Critical Thinking

15. **Drawing Conclusions** Why is the Amazon River an important water system to Latin America?
16. **Making Generalizations** What generalization can be made about the types of climate and vegetation found in Latin America?



Geographic Themes

17. **Place** What two Latin American nations are leading producers of oil and natural gas?
18. **Region** Why is a tropical climate dominant in much of Latin America?



Practicing Skills

Reading a Relief Map

Refer to the relief map on page 170.

19. In what direction do Peru's mountains run?
20. How might Peru's elevation affect its trade patterns?

Using the Unit Atlas

Refer to the physical geography section of the Unit Atlas on pages 154–155.

21. What river makes up two-thirds of the boundary between Mexico and the United States?
22. How can the landscape of the Pampas be described?

Projects

Individual Activity

Select a physical feature of Latin America to research, such as the Andes or the Amazon River basin. Write a brief report explaining why the feature is significant to the region.

Cooperative Learning Activity

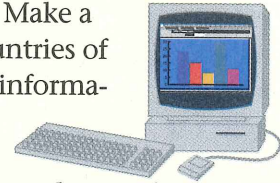
Work in a group of eight to learn more about the climates and vegetation of Latin America. Each group member will select a different type of climate and research it using encyclopedias, atlases, and other sources. Determine what causes the particular type of climate, in what areas of Latin America it is found, and what vegetation grows in each climate area. As a group, prepare a written report, poster, or map of the group's findings.

Writing About Geography

Description Imagine that you are visiting the rain forest of the Amazon River basin. Use your journal, textbook, and other resources to learn about the area's physical features and climate. Then write a poem describing the forest environment.

Technology Activity

Building a Database Make a fact sheet about the countries of Latin America. Include information such as natural resources, capital(s), language(s), population, and type of government. Put this information into a database, with separate fields for each heading.



Locating Places

LATIN AMERICA: PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Match the letters on the map with the places and physical features of Latin America. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Gulf of Mexico
2. Pampas
3. Lake Maracaibo
4. Rio Grande
5. Mexican Plateau
6. Orinoco River
7. Lake Titicaca
8. Hispaniola
9. Caribbean Sea
10. Amazon River

