



The Caribbean Islands

Chapter 11 Section Three



Columbus in the Caribbean

- ★ 1492-Christopher Columbus landed on an island in the Southern Bahamas
- ★ Columbus thought he had reached the Indies, a group of islands that stands off the coast of Asia
- ★ Columbus was wrong but the name West Indies stuck.
- ★ Spain sponsored Columbus' voyage to the Caribbean so the first wave of explorers to the region was from Spain
- ★ The Spanish fanned out across the Greater Antilles looking for gold.
- ★ The Spanish brought bananas, citrus fruit, rice, sugar cane, and farm animals to the islands



Slavery and the sugar industry



- ★ The Spanish didn't find much gold and lost interest in the smaller islands.
- ★ Britain, the French and the Dutch competed for control of those islands and then set up sugar plantations on them
- ★ Spain developed sugar plantations on Cuba
- ★ To get workers for the plantations the Europeans brought millions of enslaved Africans to the region
- ★ Slavery ended in the region in the 1800's



After slavery...



- ★ After slavery ended former slaves were given the opportunity to buy available land
- ★ Some slaves remained on the plantations as paid workers. Others left the islands to immigrate to Central America and the United States.
- ★ Plantation owners brought workers in from South and East Asia to work on the plantations.



Independence comes to the Caribbean Islands



★ Haiti gained independence from France in 1804



★ Dominican Republic gained independence from Spain in mid 1800's



★ The U.S. took Cuba and Puerto Rico from Spain during the Spanish-American war in 1898 and gave Cuba independence in 1902

★ Other Caribbean islands gained independence during the last half of the 1900's



Puerto Rico

- ★ Puerto Rico remains a commonwealth of the United States
- ★ A commonwealth is a self-governing territory associated with another nation
- ★ Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States
- ★ Puerto Rico has non voting representation in the U.S. Congress.
- ★ Puerto Rico has easy access to American markets, low taxes, and specialized training programs for workers because of their connection with the United States.





Ethnic make up of the Caribbean

- ★ The population of the Caribbean Islands is largely descended from the Europeans and Africans who arrived during the colonial period
- ★ Most of the people are mulatto
- ★ 40% of Cubans are of European descent
- ★ Haiti and Jamaica have the largest African populations in the region
- ★ In Trinidad and Tobago 1/3 of the population is East Indian
- ★ Jamaica and other islands have small portions in their population that are Lebanese and Chinese
- ★ The few remaining indigenous people in the region live in Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenadines, Aruba





Creole

- ★ The official language in each Caribbean country depends on which European country colonized it or controls it now.
- ★ In most places the main language is Spanish, English, French or Dutch
- ★ Creole is an official language in Haiti
- ★ Creole is a blend of European, African, or Caribbean Indian languages.
- ★ There are differing creole blends on different islands
- ★ In Aruba and the Netherland Antilles the creole blend is called Papiamentu- a blend of Spanish, Dutch and Portuguese



Religion in the Caribbean

- ★ On the Spanish and French speaking Islands most people are Roman Catholic
- ★ On the Dutch and English Speaking islands people are generally protestant
- ★ African traditions strongly influence religion on some of the islands
- ★ On Haiti voodoo is important-voodoo is the Haitian version of traditional African religious beliefs blended with elements of Christianity
- ★ Followers of voodoo believe that good and bad spirits play an important role in everyday life
- ★ Santeria is practiced on Cuba-like voodoo it is a blend of African traditions and Christianity
- ★ In the 1800's Asian workers brought Hinduism and Islam to the Islands.





Demographic numbers

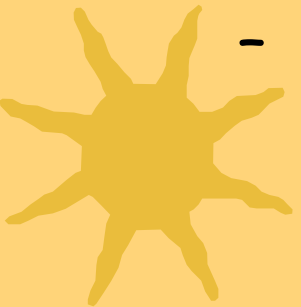
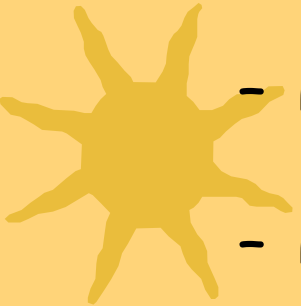
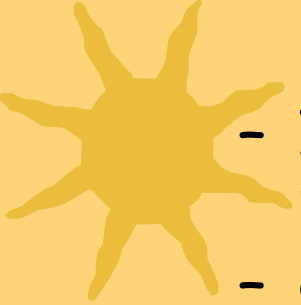


- ★ The population of the Caribbean islands has more than doubled since the 1960's
- ★ 36 million people lived in the region in 2000
- ★ 70% of the population lives in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic
- ★ 3.5 million people live in Santo Domingo- the capital of the Dominican Republic



Economics in the Region

- Haiti remains one of the world's poorest nations which has contributed to the nation's political instability
- In 2004 armed rebels forced the country's president to resign
- Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico have all developed important mining industries
- Puerto Rico has the region's most industrialized economy
- Population growth has created problems for the region
- Unemployment and underemployment are serious problems





Etc...

- Unemployment and underemployment are serious problems
- More than 1/2 of the population of the region live in towns and cities
- Except for Cuba most of the countries have market economies and businesses and farms are privately owned
- To promote industry and trade countries in the region have formed Caricom-the Caribbean Community and Common Market
- The region remains largely agricultural with sugar, bananas, cacao citrus fruits and spices as the main exports





Cuba

- ★ Cuba is not a member of Caricom
- ★ 1959- Fidel Castro came to power and set up a Communist dictatorship
- ★ Since then the U.S. has banned trade with Castro's Cuba and restricted travel to the island
- ★ In 2000 the U.S. government eased the ban and allowed Cuba to purchase American agricultural products
- ★ The Soviet Union used to purchase Cuba's sugar crop but since the breakup of the Soviet Union Cuba has had to focus on the manufacture of farm machinery, cement, steel, clothing, food products and consumer goods





Tourism



- ★ Many island leaders see tourism as a great hope for the economic future of the Caribbean
- ★ Tourism does create some problems however-
 - Golf courses, condos, and resorts occupy land that could be used for farming and industry
 - Jobs in the tourist industry are seasonal and pay is low
 - Tourists often raise the cost of living on an island
 - Companies from foreign countries own and operate most of the tourist facilities and the profits go to those companies
- ★ Tourism does bring needed income and reduces unemployment