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i Think: Geography

LATIN AMERICA



**by Sharon Coletti
and Kendra Corr**

** It is the goal of InspirEd Educators to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

Edited by Sharon Coletti

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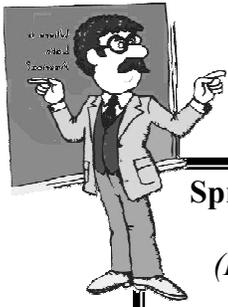
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Latin America 101

Springboard:

Students should complete “Come to Cancun!”

(Possible answers could include: Location -in Quintana Roo; Place - ...white sand beaches; Human-Environmental Interaction – cutting down forests, Hurricane Wilma, etc; Movement – the market, many tourists come and go; Region – hotel zone, market district, etc.)

Objective: The student will be able to describe the three main regions of Latin America.

Materials:

Come to Cancun! (Springboard handout)
The Western Hemisphere (handout or transparency)
South America Map, Central America and the Caribbean Map, Population Density Map, and Graphs (4 handouts)
The Regions Within (handout)
Latin American Geography (handout)

Terms to know:

tourism - travel for pleasure
peninsula - land surrounded by water on three sides
political map - shows man made divisions
physical map - shows natural features
population density - number of people in an area

Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that in this lesson the student(s) will focus on the theme of “region.”
- Display “The Western Hemisphere” and have student(s) offer their ideas as to what regions are included in a study of Latin America and why. *(Answers will vary but if not mentioned, point out that Latin America generally includes Central America, South America and the Caribbean Islands.)* Go on to explain that there are distinct cultural divisions between North America and Latin America. Have the students explain why. *(While North America’s language, history, and culture are closely linked to England, Latin American history and culture is closely linked to Spain and Portugal, the colonizing nations.)*
- Distribute the remaining maps and graphs and “The Regions Within.” Have the student(s) work independently or in pairs to study the maps and graphs and complete the graphic organizer with as much information as they can find in the maps and graphs.
- Have the student(s) share their conclusions and discuss the differences between the three regions of Latin America.
- **NOTE:** This lesson and the next four provide an introduction to each of the five themes of geography. Each will deepen student understanding of the geographic themes. Distribute “Latin American Geography” for use as a unit organizer to record examples after each lesson that fit the five themes. This should be used as a review resource in addition to the objectives sheet at the front of the unit.

Come to Cancun!



Hola! My name is Rosita and I want to tell you a little bit about my beautiful home. I live in Cancun, Mexico, which is in the state called Quintana Roo. Cancun is surrounded by the beautiful Gulf of Mexico. Our crystal clear water and white sand beaches are some of the most beautiful in the world. Many of the half-million people who live here descend from the Mayan Indians who once had a mighty civilization in this area. There are now ruins of their cities all over the Yucatan peninsula. One of the most famous is the Chichén Itzá, located about four hours from the city.

You probably have heard of Cancun because it is a popular place for tourists to visit. In fact much of our economy depends on tourism. We have many beautiful ocean-side resorts for visitors to stay. There are restaurants, golf courses, huge pools and many shops. The resorts are all located on what we call the “hotel zone” on Boulevard Kukulcan.

Other parts of the city are interesting as well. The market district is a favorite place to go to buy all kinds of things. There are booths that sell t-shirts and other clothing, jewelry, toys, souvenirs, and much more! The local women will even braid people’s hair.

The people of Cancun and surrounding areas, such as in Riviera Maya, have one great concern, though: our environment. Many forests and jungles in the area have been cut down to clear the way for more and more resorts. Some groups have been organized to fight against these activities and save the land. Another problem for us has been the many hurricanes that have hit our area in recent years. In fact, Hurricane Wilma (in 2005) destroyed almost 8 miles of our beach. The government, however, did a wonderful job of restoring the beach by bringing in sand from off-shore. It cost millions of dollars to do this, but it is very important for area tourism.

Give one example from the story of each of the following:

LOCATION describes where something is located; can be absolute (using an address or geographical coordinates) or relative (using landmarks).

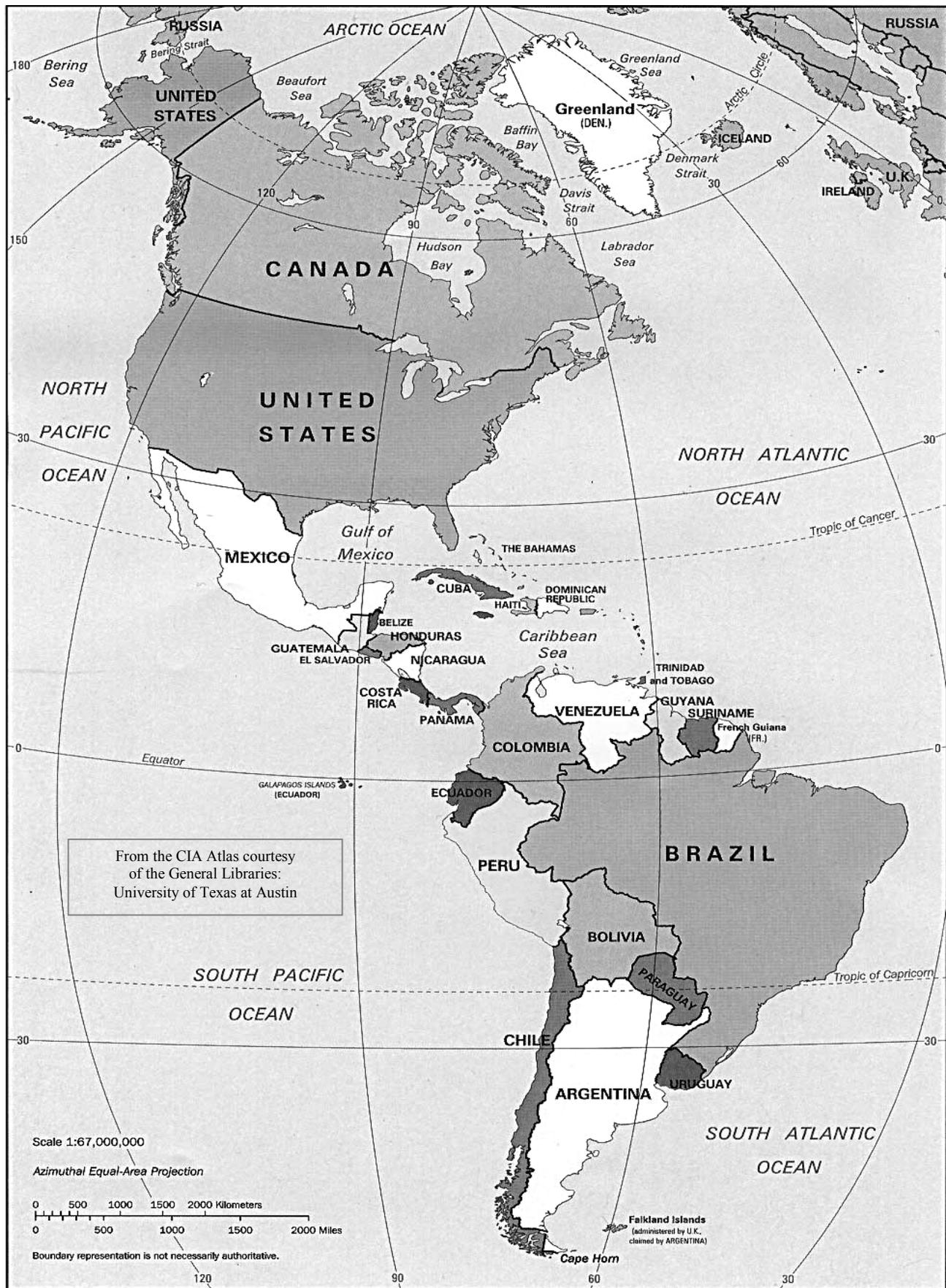
PLACE refers to the physical and human characteristics of a country or area.

HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION describes how humans and the environment affect each other.

MOVEMENT describes how people, goods, and ideas move around the Earth and the affects of those movements.

REGION is how a place is organized into areas of study. Geographers usually divide areas into regions based on at least one unifying characteristic.

THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE:



SOUTH AMERICA:



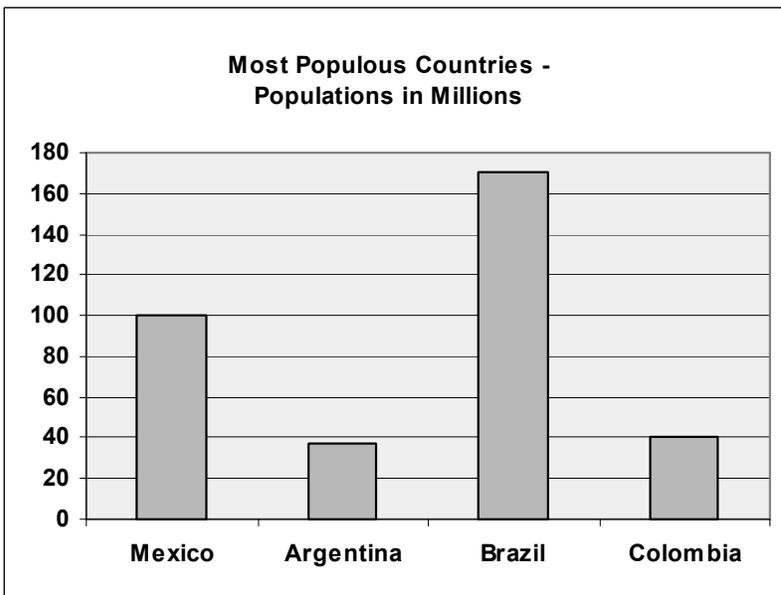
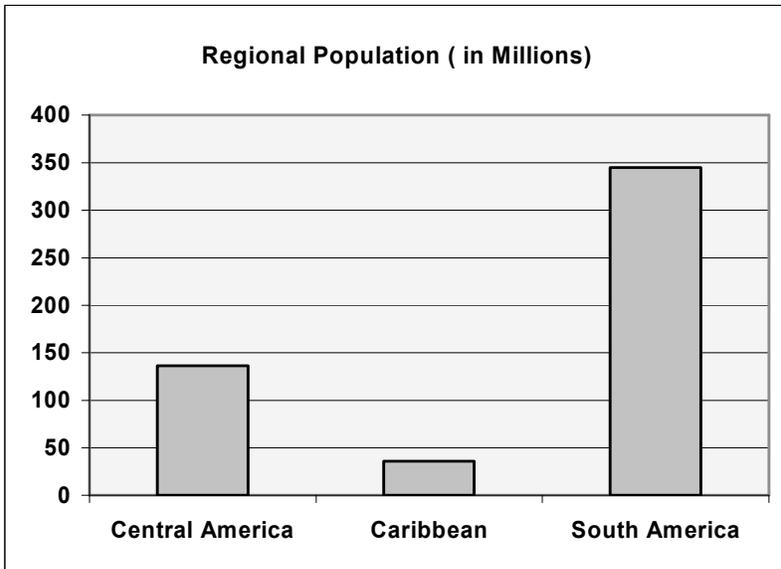
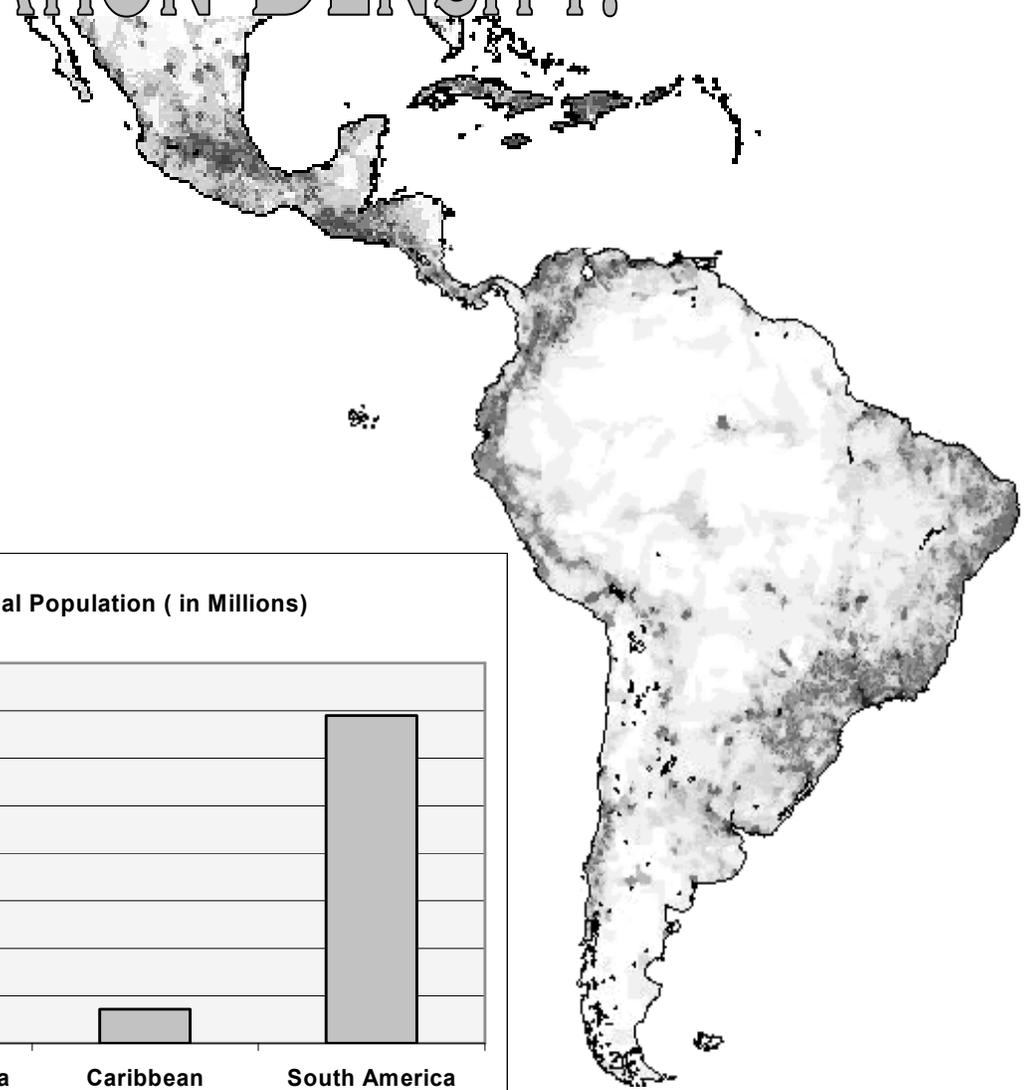
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CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:

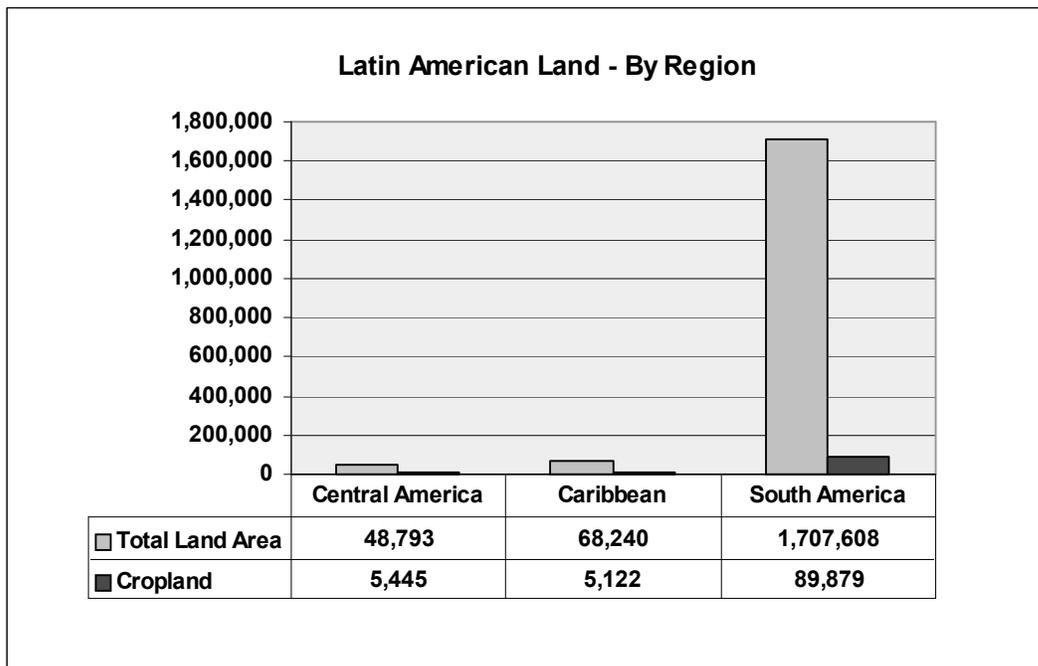
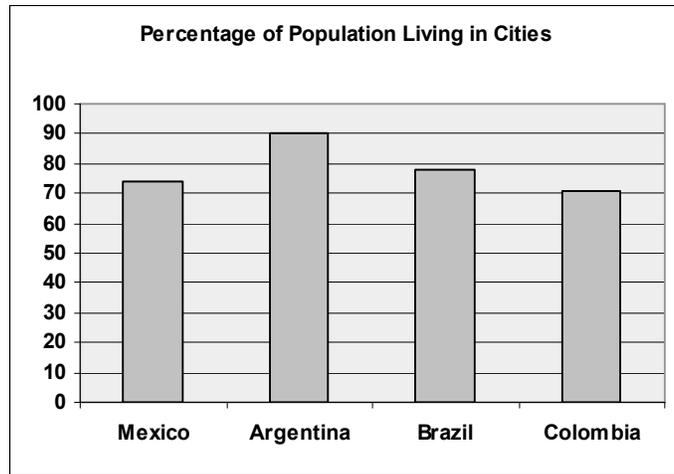
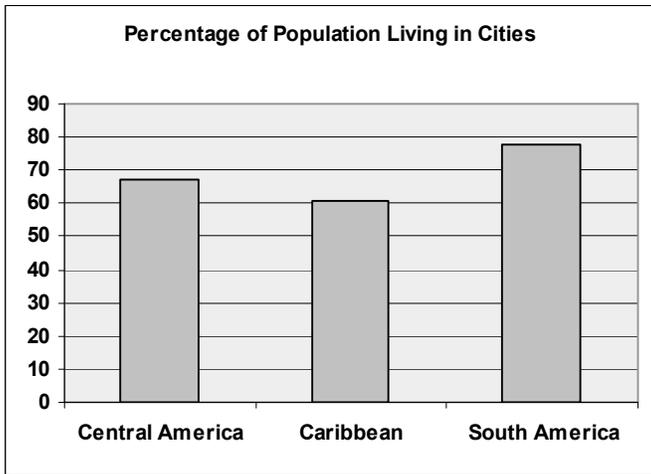
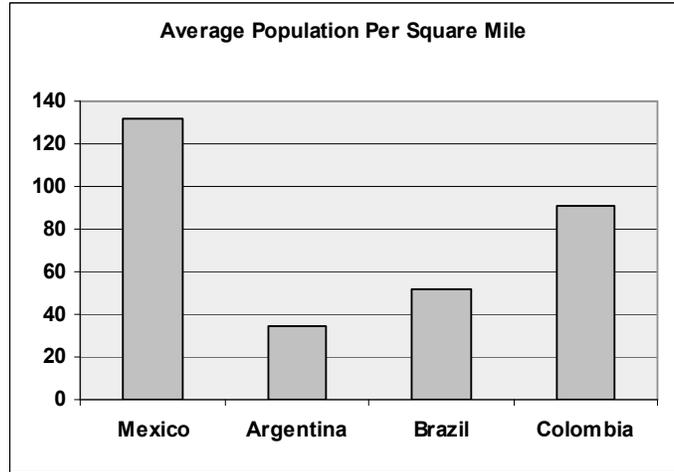
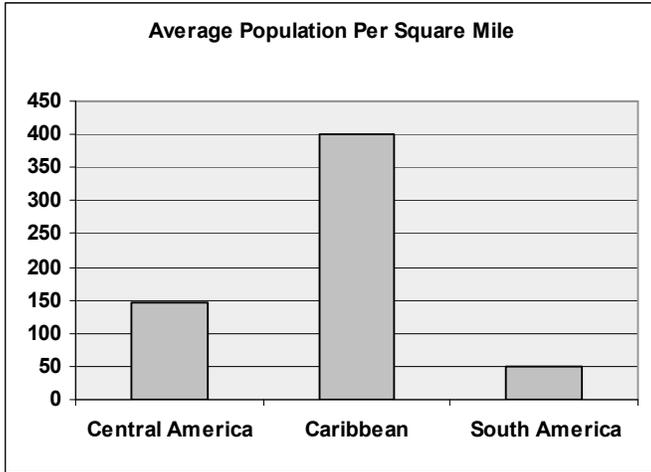


From the CIA Atlas courtesy of the General Libraries: University of Texas at Austin

POPULATION DENSITY:



Miscellaneous:



Graphs based on information from the Latin American Information Network (LANIC): University of Texas at Austin and the Population Reference Bureau @ www.prb.org.



The Regions Within



Based on the maps and graphs, what can you conclude about ...

Central America?

The Caribbean?

South America?



The Regions Within • Suggestions for Answers



Based on the maps and graphs, what can you conclude about ...

Central America?

- *Countries include: Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico.*
- *Sometimes considered part of North America..*
- *Pacific Ocean borders the west with the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea on the east..*
- *Land is mountainous, particularly on the west coast, and has coastal plains along the east coast.*
- *Population is around 140 million people, with Mexico having the largest.*
- *Average of about 68% of people in Central America live in cities.*
- *Average population per square mile of 150; around 10% of land used for crops.*
- *Central America may have land that is not favorable for human habitation; conclusion based upon the fact that more than 2/3 of people live in cities. Most of the remaining 1/3 seem to live on the 10% of the land that is farmed. The population density map shows white areas with sparse populations in Mexico, Honduras, and Nicaragua.*

The Caribbean?

- *Island countries in the Caribbean Sea include: The Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, the Virgin Islands, and others.*
- *Land appears to be generally hilly with some mountains.*
- *Around 40 million people live on islands, which are densely populated, as seen on the population density map.*
- *More than 60% of people live in cities, and less than 10% of the land is farmed.*
- *Though densely populated, Caribbean countries have fewer people than some of the more populous countries in Latin America.*
- *One conclusion could be that many people live in small rural villages, since more than half of the people live in cities, but less than 10% of the land is farmed.*
- *People in these small villages likely earn their living either as small farmers working on larger farms, or as craftsmen of some kind. This conclusion is based on the fact that small villages probably have few industries, with the possible exception of tourism.*

South America?

- *Countries of South America include Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador.*
- *The Equator crosses through Ecuador, Colombia, and Brazil, and the Tropic of Capricorn through Brazil, Paraguay, northern Argentina, and Chile.*
- *Bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west and the Atlantic on the east.*
- *Andes Mountains extend the length of continent in the west, with a few other smaller ranges in the east and north.*
- *Amazon River Basin drains a vast area along the Equator in Brazil, northern Peru, and southern Colombia.*
- *Several large rivers feed into the Amazon, with others flowing directly into the Atlantic.*
- *Most people live in cities (almost 80%) along the coasts, with heavy concentrations in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela.*
- *Though a large land area, only a small percentage of land (5%) is farmed.*
- *People probably do not live inland because the land is dense jungle or otherwise unsuitable for farming.*