

CHAPTER
9

Middle America and Spanish-Speaking South America

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FOCUS ON

Central America

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The Caribbean

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FOCUS ON

Venezuela and Colombia

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FOCUS ON

Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador

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FOCUS ON

The Southern Cone



ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How are the countries of this region working to strengthen their governments and economies?

CONNECT Geography & History



Use the map and the time line to answer the following questions.

1. What country connects Central and South America?
2. Who led the Cuban independence movement?



History

1804 Haiti is the first Caribbean Island to become independent. (Present-day Haitian flag) ▶

1800

History

1821 Central American countries gain independence from Spain.

History

1902 Cuba gains independence.



History

◀ **1895** José Martí leads Cuban revolution against Spanish rule.

Present-Day Middle America and Spanish-Speaking South America

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Culture

1911 Archaeologist Hiram Bingham locates the site of Machu Picchu. (Incan watchtower) ▼

Government

1959 Fidel Castro overthrows government of Fulgencio Batista. (Fulgencio Batista) ▶



Culture

1992 Rigoberta Menchú wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

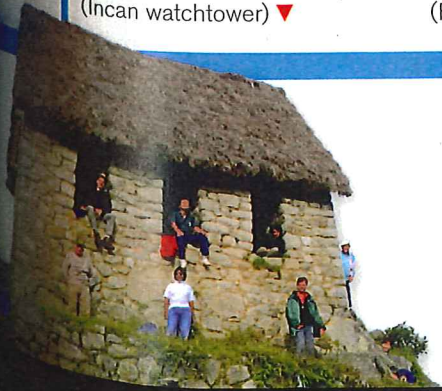
Today

History

1952 Puerto Rico becomes a U.S. commonwealth.

History

1990s Many Central American countries develop democracies.



SECTION
1

Reading for Understanding

▶ Key Ideas

BEFORE, YOU LEARNED

Mexico faces many challenges as it modernizes its economy.

NOW YOU WILL LEARN

Central American countries also face challenges as they develop democratic governments and improve their economies.

▶ Vocabulary

TERMS & NAMES

ecotourism travel to a natural habitat in a way that does not damage the habitat

dictator a person with complete control over a country's government

subsistence farming a kind of farming in which farmers grow only enough to feed their families

Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) trade agreement to promote trade between the United States and countries of Central America

service industry an industry that provides services rather than objects

artisan a worker skilled in making products or art with his or her hands

REVIEW

maquiladora factory in which materials are imported and assembled into products for export

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) agreement that reduced trade barriers among Mexico, Canada, and the United States

mestizo person with mixed European and Indian ancestry

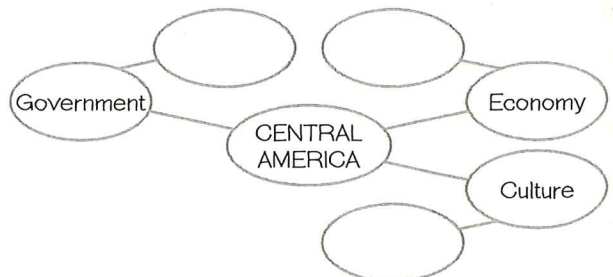
▶ Reading Strategy

Re-create the web diagram shown at right. As you read and respond to the **KEY QUESTIONS**, use the diagram to outline the major aspects of Central America's government, economy, and culture.



See Skillbuilder Handbook, page R7

CATEGORIZE



GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

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SECTION
1

FOCUS ON

Central America

Connecting to Your World

What is the most exotic animal you have ever seen? If you were to visit the rain forest in Costa Rica's Corcovado National Park, you would see many exotic animals, such as macaws, coatis, and anteaters. People's interest in visiting this and other natural habitats has led some countries in Central America to promote **ecotourism**, or travel to natural habitats in a way that does not damage the habitat. Ecotourism is just one way that Central American countries are expanding their economies.



Keel-billed Toucan

This bird makes its home in the treetops of the rain forests.

Government and Economy

KEY QUESTION What steps have Central American countries taken to improve their economies?

Central America today faces major challenges. In most countries, a wide gap exists between the small number of wealthy people and the large number of poor people. A large percentage of the population is unemployed. In many areas, people lack basic services, such as running water and electricity. In recent years, Central American countries have been working to improve their economies and to develop democratic governments.

Ecotourism The people shown here are standing on a bridge, looking down over a rain forest in Costa Rica.



Path Toward Democracy Since gaining independence from Spain in 1821, most Central American countries have struggled to develop democratic governments. As in Mexico, the wealthy in Central America controlled most aspects of government. Most of the population remained poor, with no say in how they were governed.

Costa Rica is the only country in the region that has been a democracy since the early 1900s. Nearly all the other Central American countries have been under the rule of **dictators**, or leaders with complete control over their governments. Starting in the 1950s, civil wars fought for equal rights led to years of suffering in countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua (NIHK•uh•RAH•gwuh). Since the 1990s, however, many Central American nations have developed democracies in which more people participate in government.

Developing the Economy During the colonial period, Spain set up large plantations that focused on growing one kind of crop. Today, agriculture is the main economic activity in Central America. Large plantations still produce crops, mainly bananas, sugar cane, and coffee, for export. Cattle are raised on large ranches in the drier western parts of Central America. But most agriculture consists of **subsistence farming**, in which poor farmers grow a variety of crops, such as corn and vegetables, on small plots to feed their own families.



COMPARING Human-Made Waterways



	PANAMA CANAL	ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY
Location	Central America	North America
Length	50 miles	2,340 miles
Tonnage	279 million tons	48 million tons
Average time to cross	8 hours	8 days
Average ships per year	14,000	4,000

◀ Cargo ships passing through the locks of the Panama Canal

CRITICAL THINKING

Compare and Contrast How do the two waterways compare in terms of the number of ships that pass through them every year?

As the map indicates, timber is an important economic activity in forested areas, such as in Costa Rica. Tourism, and in particular ecotourism, has become a major industry in Costa Rica and Guatemala. **Maquiladoras** in Guatemala and Honduras produce goods such as clothing for export. In recent years, Central American countries have begun to develop technology and telecommunications industries to help expand their economies.

Promoting International Trade As you have learned, the Panama Canal is important to world trade. It is a crossroads for goods that travel between the western and eastern hemispheres. The economies of many Central American countries depend on the canal for shipping and receiving goods.

Today, Central American nations are trying to increase trade with other countries of the world. The United States, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua have signed the **Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA)**. Like **NAFTA**, this trade agreement will lower tariffs and make trade easier among member nations. The five Central American nations hope the flow of money into Central America from CAFTA will help to develop more jobs and strengthen their economies.

▲ **EVALUATE** Discuss the steps Central American countries have taken to strengthen their economies.

People and Culture

KEY QUESTION How is the present-day culture of Central America a blend of several cultures?

The cultures of Central American countries are a blend of Spanish, Indian, and African cultures. Two-thirds of Central Americans are **mestizos**. Most Central Americans are Roman Catholics. Spanish is the official language of all the Central American countries except Belize, where English is the official language. Many people also speak Indian languages.

Rural and Urban Life Half of Central America's population is urban. Many people in rural areas live in small villages built on mountainsides. Because they plant small fields for food, they grow barely enough to feed their families.

Most Central American nations require children to attend school for nine years. However, rural schools are poorly equipped, and it is difficult to hire teachers to work in these areas. Children often do not attend school because they are needed to work on family farms.

Generally, Central American countries have one large capital city, where factories and service industries are located. **Service industries** provide services, such as banking, rather than objects. Open-air markets, where people buy and sell products, are found in large cities as well as in small villages throughout Central America. Market days are a time for people to shop and to socialize.

Open-Air Market

Markets such as this one take place throughout Central America. **What kinds of activities are taking place in this market?**

Daily Life The family is important in Central American life. A Central American family includes grandparents, parents, children, aunts, and uncles, who often live in houses built near one another. Family members frequently gather to celebrate family events and holidays.

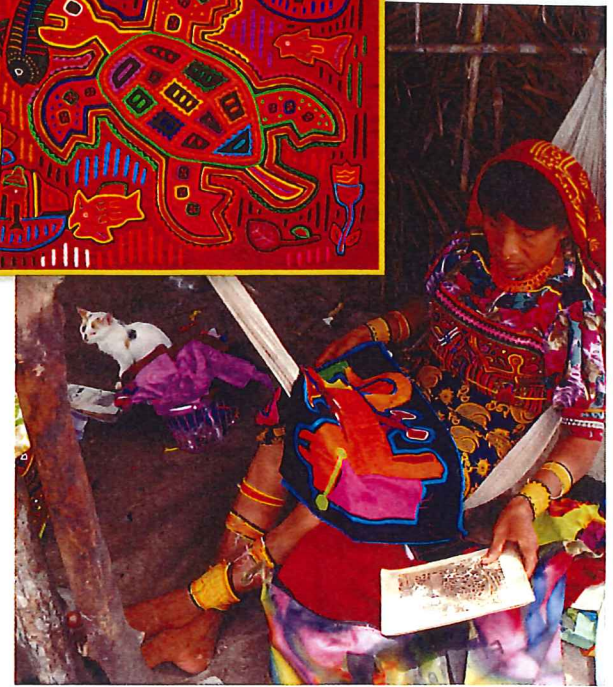


Corn is the main ingredient in many Central American foods, such as tortillas. Meals include beans and vegetables such as chili peppers and avocados, and fruits such as guavas and mangoes.

The Arts Central American countries are known for the work of their **artisans**, people skilled in making things with their hands. The works include Panamanian molas, Nicaraguan painted gourds, and Honduran baskets.

Popular music includes calypso, salsa, and punta rock, a type of music created by Central Americans. It combines traditional rhythms with modern instruments. A popular instrument is the marimba, a kind of xylophone played throughout the region.

Famous Central American writers include Rigoberta Menchú, an Indian Guatemalan woman. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her work for the rights of Indians in Central America.



Making a Mola This Panamanian woman is making a mola, a cloth panel used for decorating such things as clothing.

SUMMARIZE Explain how the culture of Central America is a blend of several cultures.

ONLINE QUIZ
For test practice, go to
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Section 1 Assessment

TERMS & NAMES

1. Explain the importance of

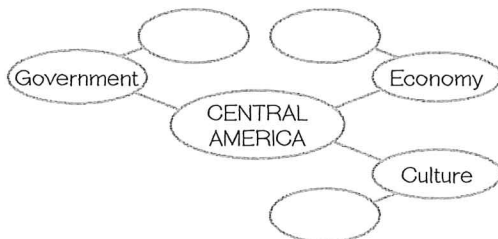
- ecotourism
- dictator
- CAFTA
- artisan

USE YOUR READING NOTES

2. Categorize

 Use your completed diagram to answer the following question:

What kinds of music are popular in Central American countries today?



KEY IDEAS

3. What is the main economic activity in Central America?
4. What five Central American countries signed CAFTA?
5. What kinds of crafts do Central American artisans create?

CRITICAL THINKING

6. **Draw Conclusions** How did the civil wars in Central American countries affect attempts to establish strong governments?
7. **Identify Problems and Solutions** What problems do people in the rural areas of Central America face?
8. **CONNECT to Today** Many ecotourists visit the various natural habitats in Central America. Why do you think ecotourism has become so popular?
9. **TECHNOLOGY** **Make a Multimedia Presentation** Choose a Central American country and research its art, music, and other traditions. In a small group, prepare a multimedia presentation of your findings.