

SS6G3 The student will explain the impact of location, climate, distribution of natural resources, and population distribution on Latin America and the Caribbean.

- a. Compare how the location, climate, and natural resources of Mexico and Venezuela affect where people live and how they trade.

LOCATION, CLIMATE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF MEXICO

Location of Mexico

Mexico is the second-largest country by size and population in Latin America. It is the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. The country is located south of the United States. On the west is the Pacific Ocean, and on the east are the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

Mexico's location between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea allows it the opportunity to trade. There are seven major seaports in Mexico. Oil and other materials from Mexico can be easily shipped around the world to ports along the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Another advantage of Mexico's location is that it is close to the United States. Because the two countries share a border, trade is easier. Railroads and trucks can be used to ship goods. Mexico's main trading partner is the United States.

Climate of Mexico

Mexico has the Sierra Madre Mountains, deserts in the north, tropical beaches, plains, and plateaus. The climate varies according to the location, with some tropical areas receiving more than 40 inches of rain a year. Desert areas in the north remain dry most of the year.

Most people live on the Central Plateau of Mexico in the central part of the country. Mexico City, one of the world's largest cities, is in this region. There is **arable** (farmable) land in this region, and there is usually enough rain to grow a variety of crops. The region has many manufacturing centers, which provide jobs. Over 75 percent of the people in Mexico live in **urban** (city) areas. This allows them to have jobs in manufacturing or service industries. About 25 percent of Mexico's workers are farmers. However, fewer people are choosing to work on farms because of the challenges of little rainfall and unproductive soil as well as little money for modern farm equipment and fertilizers.

Natural Resources of Mexico

The people of Mexico are able to use their **natural resources** (gifts of nature) to trade with other countries. Oil is one of the most important **exports** (goods sold to other countries). Mexico is the tenth-largest oil exporter in the world. It exports about 1.7 million barrels of oil a day. Money from the sale of oil provides about a third of the Mexican government's budget. Mexico is also one of the world's largest exporters of silver. Silver mines in Mexico produce about 15 percent of the silver sold in the world each year. Other exports include fruits, vegetables, coffee, and cotton. The economy is boosted by tourism, too. The country is very close to the United States, so most of the tourists are American. In fact, three-fourths of Mexico's trade with other countries comes from the United States.

LOCATION, CLIMATE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF VENEZUELA

Location of Venezuela

Venezuela is a much smaller Latin American country than Mexico. To the north are the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The country shares borders with Guyana on the east, Brazil on the south, and Colombia on the west.

Venezuela's coastline gives it easy access to trade with other countries. There are four major ports in the country. Oil can be loaded onto tankers and shipped to ports in the United States and Europe. The nearby Panama Canal provides a shortcut to the Pacific Ocean and trade with Asian countries.

Climate of Venezuela

Venezuela lies in the tropics and is just north of the equator. This means that it has a hot, tropical climate all year. Only in high elevations such as the Andes will temperatures fall to the freezing point. Most rain falls from May to October. Along the coast, it is relatively dry with about 16 inches of rain each year. In higher elevations, annual rainfall is over 100 inches a year.

About 88 percent of the people in Venezuela live in urban areas along the coast in the northern part of the country. Although there is a lot of poverty, many professionals live in these urban areas, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, and government employees. These people give the country a large middle class. About 75 percent of Venezuelans make their living in service jobs such as education, health care, and hotel, transportation, and trade businesses. **Service jobs** are those that involve providing services to people rather than products.

Natural Resources of Venezuela

Other Venezuelans make their living fishing in Lake Maracaibo, South America's largest lake, and along the coast of the Caribbean Sea. There is little arable land, so farming provides jobs for only 10 percent of the population.

The oil industry provides other jobs. Venezuela is the sixth-largest oil exporter in the world. It produces 2.8 million barrels of oil a day. Its location on the ocean gives it easy access to trade with countries around the world. About 90 percent of the money the government makes on trade with other countries comes from the oil business. In fact, half of the government's money comes from the oil business. The government has used this money to improve health care and education services, especially in poor communities. It has also used the money to make improvements in roads and telephone networks.

Venezuela and Mexico have common problems. For instance, millions of their citizens live in poor conditions. They have little or no health care, and their children do not have an opportunity for a good education. In addition, both countries depend on oil production for a large part of their trade. When the price of oil goes down, it is difficult for the government to pay its bills and help its people. The environmental cost of the production of oil is a problem, too. Pollution caused by oil will affect the land and air in these countries for many years to come.

LOCATION, CLIMATE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF BRAZIL

Location of Brazil

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America in both population and land area. Brazil is located on the eastern side of South America along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Brazil shares a border with nearly every other country in South America. The Amazon River and other large rivers stretch across most of Brazil.

Brazil's location on the Atlantic Ocean and its closeness to the Panama Canal greatly influence its trade with other countries. Brazil's exports can be shipped through any of the seven major seaports on the coast. Cars and other transportation equipment are traded to other countries. Exports also include iron ore and shoes. The United States is Brazil's most important trading partner. China, Argentina, Germany, and the Netherlands also buy goods from Brazil.

Tourism is a growing industry in Brazil. The Amazon rain forest draws many visitors. Its animals, plants, and other natural wonders cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Brazil's sandy beaches and warm climate are another attraction. Cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have attractions and festivals that bring visitors from around the world.

Climate of Brazil

The country's location on the equator gives it the climate needed to support one of the world's largest regions of tropical rain forest. The climate is mostly hot and tropical. In the south, further from the equator, the climate is temperate (mild).

Most Brazilians live along the eastern, coastal areas of their country. Good roads do not extend into the vast Amazon rain forest region of the interior of the country. As a result, 80 percent of the people live within 200 miles of the ocean. Brazil's cities are clustered in this area too. About 30 percent of the people work in health care, education, or government jobs. Another 30 percent work in businesses such as transportation, communication, and trade. Nearly 12 percent of the workers find jobs in manufacturing. Because these jobs tend to be found in urban areas, nearly 85 percent of Brazilians live in urban environments.

Natural Resources of Brazil

Only 7 percent of the land in Brazil is arable, but Brazil makes the most of this resource. Twenty percent of the workers in Brazil are farmers. They produce one-third of the world's coffee, and they lead the world in the production of oranges, papayas, and sugar cane. Soybeans and soybean products are important products for trade with other countries. Only the United States exports more farm products than Brazil.

LOCATION, CLIMATE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF CUBA

Location of Cuba

Cuba is an island nation 90 miles south of the state of Florida. It is bounded by the Gulf of Mexico on the northwest, the Atlantic Ocean on the northeast, and the Caribbean Sea to the south. The island is a little more than 700 miles long, and it ranges from 135 miles at its widest point to only 20 miles at the narrowest point. Cuba is the largest island in the West Indies.

Most Cubans (76 percent) live in urban areas. Twenty percent of them live in the capital and largest city, Havana. Many workers in the urban areas have jobs in manufacturing. A large number have jobs in service professions such as education, health care, government, and tourism. Cuba's location on ocean trading routes has been an important influence on its history and current economy.

Climate of Cuba

Cuba's climate is tropical but moderated by tradewinds. There is a rainy season from May to October, and there is a dry season from November to April. The tropical climate means that Cuba is warm to hot all year long. Winds help move the air and provide relief from the heat.

Cuba's location and climate also make it a target for hurricanes. The warm tropical waters provide energy for the storms, which begin on the coast of Africa. As the storms move west, they often move across islands in the Caribbean, including Cuba. Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30.

Natural Resources of Cuba

Twenty-eight percent of Cuba's land is arable. Cuba makes good use of this land by growing not only crops for its own people but also crops to sell to other countries. For centuries, sugar cane plantations have been a major source of income for Cuba. This is true today, with sugar being the most important export of the country. Coffee, fish, fruits, and tobacco products are traded to other countries as well. Cuba is known for its cigars. This tobacco product is highly prized by many people and provides a good income to the country. Cuba's location on the ocean gives it easy access to rich fishing waters. Fishing provides food for Cubans, and it gives the country another product to export.

One of the fastest-growing industries is tourism. Cuba has a beautiful, natural landscape and wonderful beaches. Tourists from Canada, Europe, and Latin America bring money to the island and provide jobs for the people. Hotels are being built or renovated to attract even more tourists.

Cuba is a **communist** country. That means the government owns or controls most farms and businesses. The communist government of the Soviet Union helped to support Cuba for many years. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Cuba faced difficult times. Cuba's trade with other countries does not bring in enough money to meet the needs of its people. Today, Venezuela sells oil to Cuba at a reduced price, but Cuba cannot sell enough goods to buy everything its people need. In order to save energy, the government sometimes orders businesses and factories to close. The government also orders **blackouts**, or times when all electricity to a region is cut off.