General World Cultures

Chapter 10- The Caribbean

**archipelago**- a chain of islands

**inhabited**- having people living on the land

**coral**- the stony outside skeletons of tiny sea animals, billions of such skeletons pileup to form underground ridges called coral reefs

**trade wind**- a tropical wind that blows from the northeast and southeast towards the equator

**commonwealth**- a self-governing political unit that is part of a nation or states; a group of self-governing states

**communism**- an economic system in which the government owns all property and businesses

**ally**- a close partner

**embargo**- an order that forbids trade with a certain country

**The Caribbean Islands**

\* The Caribbean Sea lies east of Central America, and in this sea are hundreds of **islands**. Islands are pieces of land surrounded by water on all sides. Most are part of one **archipelago** called the Antilles. This chain stretches from Mexico to South America in a 2,000-mile arc. These islands were formed by volcanoes. The largest islands are Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico. East of Puerto Rico are many smaller islands, including the Virgin Islands, Martinique, Barbados, Grenada, and Trinidad.

\* The Bahamas are a group of islands north of Antilles. Some of the 700 islands are not even **inhabited** by humans. The Bahamas were created from **coral**. As these creatures die, their skeletons build up and form islands such as the Bahamas.

\* The climate of the Caribbean Islands is **tropical**. A tropical climate is a climate where the weather is very hot and humid. There tends to be an abundance of rainfall, and in some seasons there are thunderstorms everyday.  
The islands are warm, not hot, because **trade winds** cool them down. These trade winds pick up water as they cross the ocean. This can cause large storms between July and October. These can also bring hurricanes with winds greater than 75 miles per hour. Fine beaches and a pleasant climate account for the main industry in the Caribbean**- tourism**, a place of interest for vacationers.

\* Some native ways live on in this region. The Arawak and the Caribs, for example, brought cassava from South America. Along with yams and corn, this starchy root was their main source of food. These foods are still widely grown and eaten in the Caribbean.

**Explorers, Pirates, and Settlers**

\* After Christopher Columbus landed in the Americas, many Spanish explorers followed in search of gold. Most of the gold was on the mainland, but before the Spaniards could explore, they needed to get ready. What would you do to prepare if you were going on a long journey by boat? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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They needed a good deal of rest for their journey. They set up bases on the Caribbean Islands, and from these bases, they attacked the people of the mainland.

\* Soon Spanish ships were hauling heavy loads of gold back to Europe. Pirates began to hide in the islands, attacking the Spanish ships and stealing their gold. The pirates are gown now, but **smugglers** have replaced them. Smugglers are drug dealers who move illegal drugs from South America through these islands to the U.S.

\* Like the Spaniards, all other colonies that were set up enslave Africans to worker on their sugar cane fields. Sugar farming was hard work, and the enslave people were mistreated. Slaves outnumbered colonists on the islands, so **rebellions** were common. A rebellion is violent or open resistance to a government or ruler.

\* In the 1880s, it became illegal to import enslaved workers. After that, paid workers came from India, China, and other parts of Asia.

**Puerto Rico**

The island of Puerto Rico started out as a Spanish colony. In 1898, Spain lost the Spanish-American War to the United States. As a result, Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory. Despite U.S. control, the culture of the island has been and remains Hispanic.

\* In 1952, Puerto Rico was given **commonwealth** status. This means that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens who have limited rights. For example, the have no voting representatives in Congress. On the other hand, Puerto Ricans pay no U.S. taxes and can elect their own government. They can also migrate freely to the U.S. mainland. Many Puerto Ricans travel back and forth from the mainland to the island. This is because their extended families still live in Puerto Rico.

\* Today people do not have to leave Puerto Rico to find jobs. The Puerto Rican economy is booming. In the 1950s, the governor started a program to improve the economy. Companies from the mainland built hotels and started industries there. Puerto Rican factories now make medicine, clothes, electronic items, and many other goods.

**Cuba**

\* Cuba’s history has been a stormy one. After winning independence from Spain in the Spanish-American War, Cuba came under U.S. control, which lasted until 1934. A military dictator named Fulgencio Batista took over and opened up Cuba to U.S. businesses. Batista was especially friendly to a crime organization called the Mafia. Pleanty of money flowed into Cuba through the Mafia. Havana became a city of nightclubs and gambling. A few Cubans grew rich. However, most of the people remained very poor.

\* After 25 years in power, Batista was overthrown in a rebellion by a young lawyer named Fidel Castro. In 1959, Castro became the leader of Cuba. Castro turned Cuba into a Communist country. His government took control of all land and businesses. It began to provide free services, such as buses, health care, schools and housing. Castro’s government also clamped down on people’s rights. The government decided where and how people could work and live. No one was permitted to speak against the government. According to <http://www.ducksters.com/history/cold_war/communism.php>

Communism is defined as:

**History of Communism**

Karl Marx is considered the Father of Communism. Marx was a German philosopher and economist who wrote about his ideas in a book called the Communist Manifesto in 1848. His communist theories have also become known as Marxism.

Marx described ten important aspects of a communist government:

* No private property
* A single central bank
* High income tax that would rise significantly as you made more
* All property rights would be confiscated
* No inheritance rights
* The government would own and control all communication and transportation
* The government would own and control all education
* The government would own and control factories and agriculture
* Farming and regional planning would be run by the government
* The government would tightly control labor

\* Many people fled Cuba in the 1960s. Some left because they were rich and wanted to keep their money. Others left because they hated **communism**. Soon, communities of Cuban immigrants sprang up in the United States- the largest one in Miami, Florida. Geographically, why would it be set up there?

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\* Before long, Castro’s Cuba became an **ally** of the Soviet Union. This alliance mad the U.S. government nervous. The Soviet Union and the U.S. were bitter enemies at the time. With Castro as an ally, the Soviet Union had a base of operations less than 90 miles from Florida. Why might this make the United States nervous? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* In 1961, the Soviet Union began moving nuclear missiles onto the island. These missiles were capable of reaching cities in the United States. U.S. President John F. Kennedy demanded that the Soviet Union withdrew their missiles or else he would stop their ships. The Soviet Union agreed to remove the missiles. This event, which almost led to a nuclear war, was known as the Cuban Missile Crisis.

\* The United States government later tried to weaken Cuba with a trade **embargo**. That is, it asked that no one buy sugar- Cuba’s main crop. The embargo could have led to Castro’s downfall, but the Soviet Union agreed to buy Cuba’s sugar crop every year. In 1991, however, the Soviet Union fell apart. Since then, Cuba’s economy has suffered. Many Cubans are now dissatisfied with Castro. After more than 40 years, they want change- and some want to see better relations with the United States.

**Haiti and the Dominican Republic**

\* Haiti is on the western third of the island of Hispaniola. It was the first nation in the Americas to be governed by people of African descent. It began a French colony, but in 1804, the enslaved people there rebelled against the French power and took control. Today, nearly everyone in Haiti is of African descent. Most people speak French or Creole patois, which is a language that formed when French was mixed with various West African languages.

\* At one time, Haiti had a booming tourist trade, but its racial tension and political trouble now keep tourists away. Even Haitians are leaving, trying to get away from the poverty and political problems. Some try to sail in small, leaky boats. Tragically, many of them do not make it.

\* The official religion in Haiti is Catholicism. Most Haitians also practice a form of spirit worship called Voodoo. They believe that all objects, whether alive or not, have a spirit.