

Notes for Unit Quiz

Ethnic groups

- Latin American culture has been heavily influenced by European culture as a result of colonization by European countries, especially by Spain and Portugal. Throughout Latin America, European cultures have influenced things such as language, religion, and architecture.
- In Mexico, the mestizo and indigenous people are the two largest ethnic groups today.
 - The indigenous people of Mexico are the descendants of the pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Americas. They include descendants of the Aztec Empire, which once ruled Mexico. The Aztecs were a Mesoamerican culture.
 - The **mestizo** of Mexico are a product of mixed marriages between Europeans and the indigenous peoples. This is the largest ethnic group in Mexico
 - In the Caribbean, **Africans** make up one of the largest ethnic groups. This is because many Africans were brought to the Caribbean (and some to Latin America) to work as slaves. In the Caribbean, the heavy African influence on culture can still be seen in the food, dance, music, and traditions.

Other characteristics

- Most Latin Americans speak **Spanish** or **Portuguese**. This is because Spain and Portugal controlled most of the territory in Latin America. Spanish is the language spoken in Mexico and other areas that Spain settled, while Portuguese is mainly spoken in Brazil.
- **Roman Catholicism** is the religion most commonly followed by the people of Latin American countries. This is due to the heavy Spanish and Portuguese influence in the region.

Physical Features

- **Amazon River** - Starting in the Andes Mountains in Peru, the Amazon River flows east across South America through Brazil to the Atlantic Ocean. The world's largest tropical rain forest is located in the Amazon River Basin.
- **Andes Mountains** - The Andes Mountains are the longest mountain range in South America. Located in the western part of the continent,

- the mountains extend through the countries of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina.
- **Atacama Desert** - The Atacama Desert is located between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains in northern Chile. It is the driest part of South America.
 - **Panama Canal** - Located on the Isthmus of Panama, the Panama Canal links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Mexico and Central America are considered part of Latin America. These areas are found on the continent of **North America**, north of the Equator and between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Many countries in the **Caribbean Sea** are also considered part of Latin America.

- **Sierra Madre Mountains** - The Sierra Madre Mountains is the name given to three mountain ranges in Mexico. They include the Sierra Madre Oriental in the eastern part of Mexico, the Sierra Madre Occidental in the western part of Mexico, and the Sierra Madre del Sur in the southern part of Mexico.
- **Gulf of Mexico** - Part of the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico is bordered by the United States, Mexico, and Cuba.
- **Caribbean Sea** - Located to the north of South America and to the east of Central America, the Caribbean Sea is part of the Atlantic Ocean and contains the islands of the West Indies.
- **Pacific Ocean** - The world's largest ocean, the Pacific Ocean is located to the west of North and South America.