

UNIT: Core Regions and Distinctive Landscapes as an Alternative to Country by Country Descriptions

Arizona State Standards

SECONDARY: Proficiency (grades 9-12)

A) Social Studies

History: ISS-P2: PO1

Geography: 3SS-P1: PO1, PO2
3SS-P2: PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4
3SS-P3: PO7
3SS-P4: PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4, PO5
3SS-P5: PO2, PO3

B) Writing and Literature

Reading: R-P1: PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4, PO5
R-P4: PO1, PO2, PO3

Writing: W-P1: PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4, PO5
W-P2: PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4
W-PO4: PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4

Listening and Speaking: all benchmarks apply.

Viewing and Presenting: all benchmarks apply.

We include the Standards for Language Arts because of the crossdisciplinary opportunities in the coverage of this topic. Other cross-disciplinary suggestions include:

Art: design maps that truly reflect the division of the American continent into regions. In the map, try to illustrate the interaction between region and the living of a people. You can do a three dimensional design, an interactive illustration to access on the Web, or a drawing.

Science: how do natural characteristics parallell region characteristics? how will this affect distribution of species? if the borders of region and nation do not coincide, what consequences could this have for the policies of protecting wildlife for instance? How do climate dynamics play into the formation of regions?

Foreign Language (Spanish): good topic for a research project. What are the implications of looking at regions when studying culture and language?

Core Regions and Distinctive Landscapes

Goals & Objectives: Student gain an understanding of using core regions and distinctive landscapes as an alternative to country by country descriptions.

Length of Lesson: 3 class periods of 55 minutes each

Materials & Preparation: Handout 3.1

Vocabulary:

Core Region: regions that dominate trade, control the most advanced technologies, and have high levels of productivity within diversified economies

Distinctive Region/Landscape: a region defined by particular ecological characteristics, histories, and economic relations to the world system

1. Introduce students to the concept of a region. Illustrate this by asking them to look at a map of the U.S. and explain how they would divide it up. By states? By geographic regions? Explain how political borders (i.e., U.S. states) are not the only way in which to study a region. Ask students to divide the United States into regions without using political borders. Ask them why they chose the regions they did (what characteristics make it coherent) – was it geographical, social, cultural, etc? Do regions necessarily fit into nations? (ex., Sonora region?)
2. Introduce, define and discuss the following Core Regions and Distinctive Regions/Landscapes:
 - **Core Regions:** Central Mexico, Southeastern Brazil, U.S-Mexico Border Region, Central Chile
 - **Distinctive Regions/Landscapes:** Amazon Basin, Andes, Caribbean Islands, Central America
3. Students research a core region or distinctive region/landscape (An introduction is provided in handout 3.1) They need to explore where the region is located, who lives there, what are geographical features of this region, economy, politics, culture, agriculture, etc. In particular, have students address: What makes this a coherent region? What defines it culturally and physically?
4. Students locate their region on the map and report to others what its features are and what makes it a coherent region.

Student project: using the information they have gathered on their region, students design a virtual field trip through a particular region in Latin America. The field trip will last 7 days. Students need to address where they will go, what they will see and how long they will stay in each particular place. The field trip should give a sense of the place including important cultural, economic, political, social or agricultural aspects of life in the region. The students need to have a reason why they have chosen certain stops on the field trip and how that will contribute to a larger understanding of the area as a coherent region or landscape.

Core Regions of Latin American and the Caribbean

The core regions and key cities of contemporary Latin America and the Caribbean have been centers of production and political power since the colonial period and have emerged to become important players in the new global economy. The most important regions are those with high concentrations of population, industry, and services and the agricultural heartlands produce for domestic and global markets. They include **Central Mexico** with Mexico City, **Southeastern Brazil**, including the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the **U.S.-Mexico border region**, and **Central Chile**.

Central Mexico: The landscape of central Mexico is an elevated plateau dotted with volcanoes and well-watered basins where agriculture benefits from seasonal rainfall and cooler temperatures. The architecture and land use reflect the succession and merging of indigenous, Spanish colonial, and global culture with Aztec pyramids adjacent to colonial cathedrals and high-rise corporate headquarters. Central Mexico is the contemporary cultural and economic core of Mexico. More than a quarter of Mexico's population lives in this region, which is also a destination for tourists and international business.

Mexico City is the heart of the dynamic agricultural and industrial zone of central Mexico located in the highland basins of the Mesa Central. Mexico City is the economic, cultural, and political center of Mexico and is one of the largest urban complexes in the world. The city contains almost 20% of the country's population, hosts most government functions, and produces 40% of the gross national product.

Southeastern Brazil: The triangle that encompasses the cities of Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, and São Paulo is the powerhouse of a Brazilian industrial economy that ranks as the eighth largest in the world, the location of a dynamic global business and cultural center, and the home of more than 30 million people. This important core region had its origins in the founding of a major Portuguese colonial port at Rio de Janeiro, the discovery of gold and silver in the 18th century, and the development of coffee production around São Paulo in the 19th century.

São Paulo now employs more than 2 million manufacturing workers and produces 30% of Brazil's gross national product, having moved from a commercial center to a manufacturing hub to a service and information core for the global economy. Located on a high plateau about 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the Atlantic, the city of São Paulo has wide avenues and many skyscrapers around the central business district. It has also become a major financial center for Brazilian and international banks and has recently developed a large telecommunications and information sector.

Rio de Janeiro is the cultural and media center of Brazil. Rio was the capital of Brazil from 1822-1960, and the urban structure includes an older city center with a wealthier residential zone and beaches such as Copacabana toward the south and a poorer more industrial zone to the north. The magnificent landscape of Rio's harbor and beaches draws worldwide attention during the festival of Carnival, a major tourist destination where the influence of African traditions emerges in music and dance. The commercial harbor is now a center for shipbuilding and for agricultural exports from the southeast of Brazil, including soybeans and orange juice in specially constructed tankers.

U.S.-Mexico Border Region: Northern Mexico, especially the cities that border the United States, has become an increasingly important economic zone that is often used

to exemplify the impacts of free trade and foreign investment in Latin America. American tourists used to cross the border south into Mexico expecting a landscape of underdevelopment, subsistence agriculture, exotic food, and culture. Now, northern Mexico looks more and more similar to parts of U.S. border cities like San Diego and El Paso, with modern factories, hotels, fast-food restaurants, and video arcades.

Central Chile is one of the most important agricultural export zones in Latin America and is increasingly compared to California because they share a moderate Mediterranean climate of warm, wet winters, and moderate summer temperatures. Wheat became an important export after independence but the major boost to exports came in the 20th century with the development of refrigerated transport and shipment by air. This allowed Chile to take advantage of the hemispheric contrast in season, selling fruit and vegetables grown in the Chilean summer (November to March) to North American winter markets.

Source: *World Regions in Global Context: Peoples, Places and Environments - 1st Edition*
By: Marston, Knox & Liverman

Distinctive Regions and Landscapes of Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean have many distinctive regions and landscapes, defined by particular ecological characteristics, histories, and economic relations to the world system. Four major regions: the **Amazon basin**, the **Andes**, the **Caribbean islands**, and **Central America** will be covered.

The *Amazon basin* and the *Andes* are distinctive for their vast forests and lofty mountains, with indigenous cultures who adapted to the challenges of the humid Tropics and the thin, cool air of the altiplano. In the 20th century, the Amazon basin and the Andes developed reputations as regions of conflict associated with deforestation or drugs and insurgency and thus drew international political and environmental attention.

The Caribbean Islands and *Central America* share the legacy of exploitation and transformation by European colonial powers, especially plantation economies and slavery. Yet within these two regions, politics and economics have diverged to the point where they contain some of the richest and poorest countries and places in Latin America and the Caribbean and a wide range of social conditions. Latin America and the Caribbean is so vast that these four regions provide only a sample of the richness and diversity of landscapes.

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