

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Spanish settlement shaped the history and culture of Venezuela.
2. Oil production plays a large role in Venezuela's economy and government today.
3. The Guianas have diverse cultures and plentiful resources.

The Big Idea

European settlement, immigration, and natural resources have greatly influenced the culture and economy of Venezuela and the Guianas.

Key Terms and Places

llaneros, p. 196

Lake Maracaibo, p. 196

Caracas, p. 197

strike, p. 198

referendum, p. 198

TAKING NOTES

As you read, use this chart to take notes on European settlement, immigration, and natural resources in Venezuela and the Guianas.

	Venezuela	Guianas
Settlement		
Immigration		
Natural Resources		

Venezuela and the Guianas

If YOU lived there...

You've come from your home in eastern Venezuela to visit the nearby country of Suriname. Your visit is full of surprises. As you walk along the streets of the country's capital, Paramaribo, people are not speaking Spanish, but Dutch, English, and some languages you don't even recognize. You see Hindu temples and Muslim mosques alongside Christian churches.

Why is Suriname so different from Venezuela?

BUILDING BACKGROUND Venezuela, like Colombia, was once a Spanish colony, but the Guianas were colonized by other nations—Great Britain, the Netherlands, and France. When these countries gained independence, British Guiana became Guyana and Dutch Guiana became Suriname.

History and Culture of Venezuela

Venezuela was originally the home of many small tribes of South American Indians. Those groups were conquered by the Spanish in the early 1500s. Though Venezuela became independent from Spain in the early 1800s, those three centuries of Spanish rule shaped the country's history and culture.

Spanish Settlement and Colonial Rule

The Spanish came to Venezuela hoping to find gold and pearls. They forced the native Indians to search for these treasures, but they finally realized there was little gold to be found. Then the Spanish turned to agriculture, once again forcing the Indians to do the work. They grew indigo (IN-di-goh), a plant used to make a deep blue dye. Because the work was very hard, many of the Indians died. Then the Spanish began bringing enslaved Africans to take the Indians' places. Eventually, some of the slaves escaped, settling in remote areas of the country.



Venezuela's Independence

Each year, Venezuelans celebrate Simon Bolívar's efforts in achieving Venezuela's independence. Independence Day is filled with parades and parties.

Independence and Self-Rule

Partly because the colony was so poor, some people in Venezuela revolted against Spain. Simon Bolívar helped lead the fight against Spanish rule. Bolívar is considered a hero in many South American countries because he led wars of independence throughout the region. Bolívar helped win Venezuelan independence from Spain by 1821. However, Venezuela did not officially become independent until 1830.

Throughout the 1800s Venezuelans suffered from dictatorships and civil wars. Venezuela's military leaders ran the country. After oil was discovered in the early 1900s, some leaders kept the country's oil money for themselves. As a result, the people of Venezuela did not benefit from their country's oil wealth.

People and Culture

The people of Venezuela are descended from native Indians, Europeans, and Africans. The majority of Venezuelans are of

BIOGRAPHY

Simon Bolívar

(1783–1830)

Known as the "George Washington of South America," Simon Bolívar was a revolutionary general. In the early 1800s he led the liberation of several South American countries from Spanish rule.

Beginning in 1811 Bolívar helped free his native Venezuela. He was president of Gran Colombia (present-day Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador) and then Peru. Because Bolívar also helped free Bolivia, the country was named in his honor. People across South America admire Bolívar for his determination in achieving independence for the former Spanish colonies. Today in both Venezuela and Bolivia, Bolívar's birthday is a national holiday.

Drawing Inferences Why do you think Bolívar is often compared to George Washington?



mixed Indian and European descent. Indians make up only about 2 percent of the population. People of European descent tend to live in the large cities. People of African descent tend to live along the coast. Most Venezuelans are Spanish-speaking Roman Catholics, but the country's Indians speak 25 different languages and follow the religious practices of their ancestors.

Venezuelan culture includes dancing and sports. Venezuela's national dance, the *joropo*, is a lively foot-stomping couples' dance. Large crowds of Venezuelans attend rodeo events. Baseball and soccer are also popular throughout Venezuela.

READING CHECK Summarizing How did the Spanish contribute to Venezuela's history?

FOCUS ON READING

In the paragraphs under Venezuela Today, what details support the main idea that oil production plays a large role in Venezuela's economy and government?

Venezuela Today

Many Venezuelans make a living by farming and ranching. However, most wealthy Venezuelans have made money in the country's oil industry. In addition, Venezuela's government has also benefited from oil wealth.

Agriculture and Ranching

Rural areas of Venezuela are dotted by farms and ranches. Northern Venezuela has some small family farms as well as large commercial farms. **Llaneros** (yah-NAY-rohs)—or Venezuelan cowboys—herd cattle on the many ranches of the Llanos region. However, some small communities of Indians practice traditional agriculture.

Economy and Natural Resources

In the 1960s Venezuela began earning huge sums of money from oil production. This wealth allowed part of the population

to buy luxuries. However, the vast majority of the population still lived in poverty. Many of Venezuela's poor people moved to the cities to try to find work. Some settled on the outskirts in communities of shacks. They had no running water, sewers, or electricity.

Venezuela's wealth attracted many immigrants from Europe and other South American countries. These immigrants, like most other Venezuelans, suffered in the 1980s when the price of oil dropped sharply. Without the money provided by high oil prices, the economy couldn't support the people. Oil prices recovered in the 1990s, and the Venezuelan economy continues to be based on oil production.

As you can see on the map on the next page, the Orinoco River basin and **Lake Maracaibo** (mah-rah-KY-boh) are rich in oil. Venezuela is the only South American member of the Organization of Petroleum

FOCUS ON CULTURE

The Feast of Corpus Christi

One day each summer, men dressed as devils dance in the streets of the Venezuelan town of San Francisco de Yare. On this day, people here honor the Roman Catholic feast day of Corpus Christi. Spanish settlers brought the tradition of dressing up as devils to Venezuela. This tradition includes the making of elaborate, colorful masks that the dancers wear. These masks usually resemble pigs or jaguars. Dancing through the town's streets to the beat of drums, the dancers shake musical instruments called maracas. They believe their dancing, music, and scary masks will keep evil away from their town.

Summarizing How do some Venezuelans celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi?





Venezuela's Major Resources

THE WORLD ALMANAC Facts about the World World's Top Oil Exporters

	Country	Oil Exports (million barrels per day)
1	Saudi Arabia	7.92
2	Russia	7.00
3	Norway	3.47
4	Iran	2.50
4	United Arab Emirates	2.50
5	Venezuela	2.10



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Geography Skills

Human-Environment Interaction Oil, gold, and coal are Venezuela's major resources.

1. **Locate** What resource is located near the Orinoco River?
2. **Draw Conclusions** What resource do you think is the most difficult to transport to port cities?

Exporting Countries (OPEC). The member countries in this organization attempt to control world oil production and keep oil prices from falling too low.

The Guiana Highlands in the south-east are rich in other minerals, such as iron ore for making steel. Gold is also mined in remote areas of the highlands. Dams on tributaries of the Orinoco River produce hydroelectricity.

Caracas (kah-RAH-kahs) is Venezuela's capital and the economic and cultural center of the country. It is a large city with a modern subway system, busy expressways, and tall office buildings. Still, neither Caracas nor Venezuela has escaped poverty.

Caracas is encircled by slums, and many Venezuelans living in the rural areas of the country are also poor.

Government

After years of suffering under military dictatorships, the people of Venezuela elected their first president in 1959. Since then, Venezuela's government has dealt with economic turmoil and political protests.

In 2002 Venezuela's president, Hugo Chavez, started to distribute the country's oil income equally among all Venezuelans. Before Chavez's presidency, only a small percentage of wealthy Venezuelans benefited from the country's oil income.

Caracas, Venezuela

With a population of more than 4 million, Venezuela's capital city, Caracas, is the country's financial and cultural center.

ANALYZING VISUALS Why do you think Caracas is located in this mountain valley?



Millions of Venezuelans went on strike to protest the president's actions as well as a failing economy. A **strike** is a group of workers stopping work until their demands are met. Some of Venezuela's workers went on strike for about two months. They wanted President Chavez to resign, but he refused. As a result of the strike, the Venezuelan economy suffered and the country's oil exports fell dramatically.

Many Venezuelans opposed to President Chavez called for a **referendum**, or **recall vote**. In 2004 Venezuelans voted for whether Chavez would remain in office or not. About 58 percent of Venezuelans voted for Chavez. Many of these voters believed he should use the country's oil wealth to help them. In his second term in office, Chavez adopted new **policies** to help end poverty, illiteracy, and hunger.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

policy rule, course of action

READING CHECK Identifying Cause and Effect What effect did the workers' strike have on Venezuela's economy?

The Guianas

The countries of Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana are together known as the Guianas (gee-AH-nuhz). Dense tropical rain forests cover much of this region, which lies east of Venezuela.

Guyana

Guyana (gy-AH-nuh) comes from a South American Indian word that means "land of waters." About one-third of the country's population lives in Georgetown, the capital. Nearly all of Guyana's agricultural lands are located on the flat, fertile plains along the coast. Guyana's most important agricultural products are rice and sugar.

Guyana's population is diverse. About half of its people are descended from people who migrated to Guyana from India. These immigrants came to Guyana to work on the country's sugar plantations. Most Guyanese today farm small plots of land or run small businesses. About one-third of the population is descended from

former African slaves. These people operate large businesses and hold most of the government positions.

Suriname

The resources and economy of Suriname (soohr-uh-NAHM) are similar to those of Guyana. Like Guyana, Suriname has a diverse population. The country's population includes South Asians, Africans, Chinese, Indonesians, and Creoles—people of mixed heritage. The capital, Paramaribo (pah-rah-MAH-ree-boh), is home to nearly half of the country's people.



Creole women carry gifts to a party in downtown Paramaribo. About 30 percent of Suriname's population is Creole.

French Guiana

French Guiana (gee-A-nuh) is a territory of France and sends representatives to the government in Paris. French Guiana's roughly 200,000 people live mostly in coastal areas. About two-thirds of the people are of African descent. Other groups include Europeans, Asians, and South American Indians. The country depends heavily on imports for its food and energy.

READING CHECK **Contrasting** How is French Guiana different from the rest of the Guianas?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW In this section, you learned that Venezuela's history was largely shaped by Spanish settlement. Today Venezuela's economy is based on oil. You also learned that to the east, the Guianas are home to a diverse population. In the next chapter, you will learn about the history and people of Atlantic South America.

Section 3 Assessment

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Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SJ7 HP8

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- a. Recall** What did Spanish settlers hope to find in Venezuela?

b. Explain Who led Venezuela's revolt against Spain?
- a. Describe** What does the landscape of **Caracas** include?

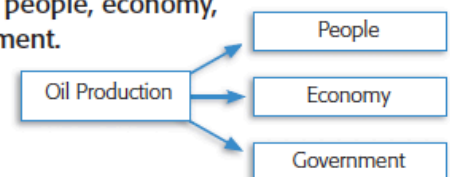
b. Explain How is oil important to Venezuela's economy?

c. Elaborate Why did some Venezuelans go on strike?
- a. Describe** What are Guyana's agricultural lands and products like?

b. Contrast How is population of the Guianas different from that of Colombia and Venezuela?

Critical Thinking

- Identifying Cause and Effect** Using your notes on Venezuela's natural resources and this diagram, list the effects of oil production on Venezuela's people, economy, and government.



FOCUS ON WRITING

- Writing about Venezuela and the Guianas** Collect details about Venezuela and the Guianas for your letter. What is interesting about these cultures?