

World Geography

Chapter 11

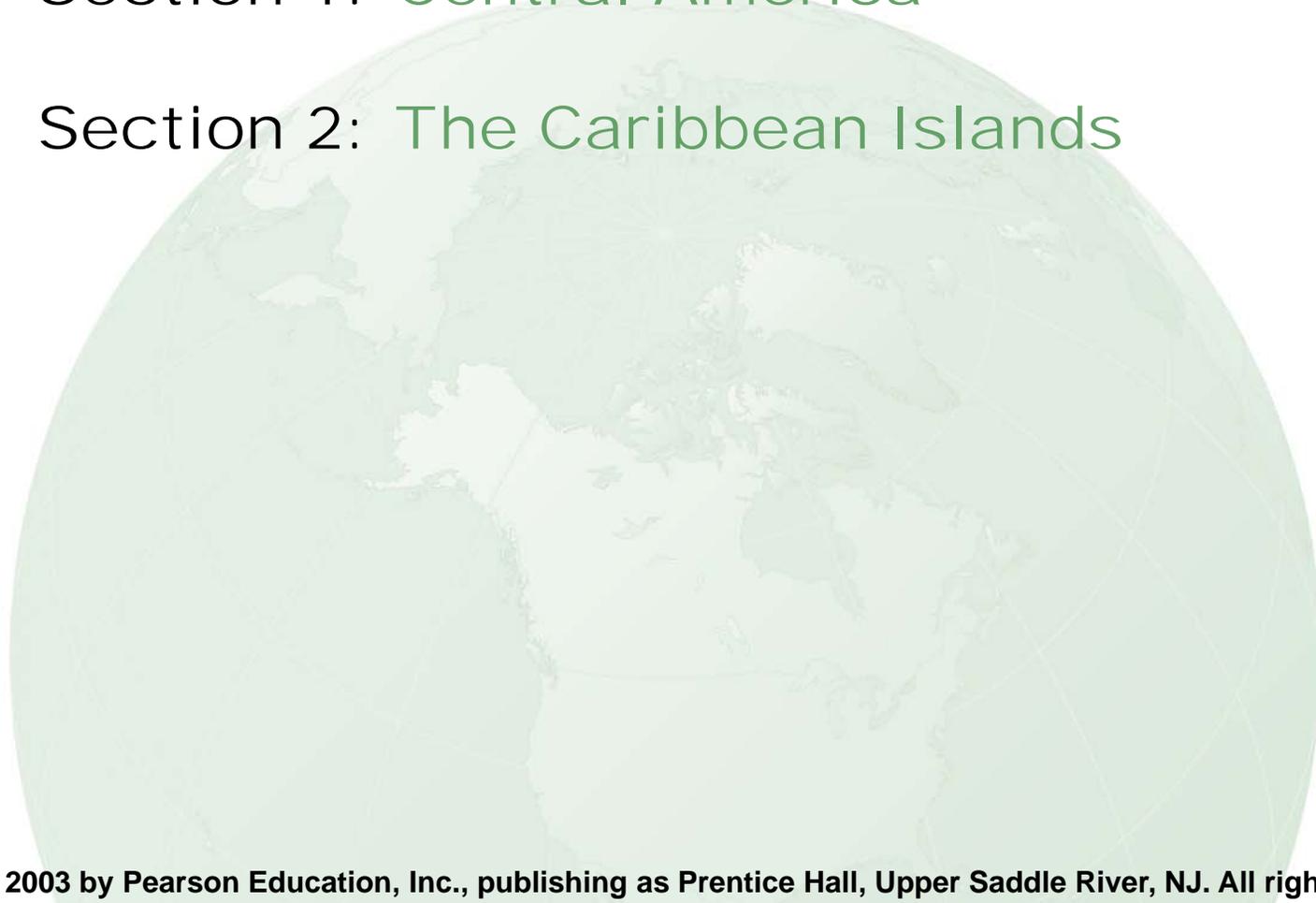
Central America and the Caribbean

World Geography

Chapter 11: Central America and the Caribbean

Section 1: Central America

Section 2: The Caribbean Islands



Central America



- **What are the major landforms and climates of Central America?**
- **What peoples and cultures are found in Central America?**
- **How have social and economic conditions sometimes led to political conflicts in the nations of Central America?**



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Landforms and Climates



- Central America is an **isthmus**, a narrow strip of land that connects two larger bodies of land.
- High, rugged mountainous core runs the length of Central America, with many active volcanoes.
- Two climate zones exist at high elevations.
- The Caribbean lowlands on the eastern side of Central America have a tropical wet climate and dense rain forest vegetation.
- The Pacific coastal plain has a tropical wet climate with savanna vegetation made fertile by lava flows and volcanic ash.
- Devastating tropical storms and hurricanes can strike in the summer and early fall.



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People and Cultures



Central America is home to several ethnic groups.

Indians

Indian groups, each with its own separate and distinct culture, have lived the longest in Central America.

Europeans

The first Europeans arrived in the 1500s as conquerors and colonists.

Mestizos

Mestizos, or people of mixed European and Indian descent, make up a large part of the population.

Africans

People of African descent are descended either from enslaved Africans or from immigrants from the Caribbean islands.



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Wealth, Poverty, and Political Conflict



- **The wealthy are mostly plantation owners, are European or mestizo, and dominate government and politics in the region.**
- **The poor, mostly of Indian or African descent, include millions of farmers with little or no land and laborers on plantations or in factories.**
- **The shortage of farmland, made worse by the unequal distribution of usable land, has been a problem throughout the region.**
- **Governments serving mainly the interests of the wealthy have led opponents to organize **guerilla** movements, armed forces outside the regular army who often fight in small bands.**



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Section 1 Review



What kind of climate does the Pacific coastal plain have?

- a) tropical wet
- b) temperate wet
- c) mediterranean
- d) tropical wet and dry

Which ethnic group has lived longest in Central America?

- a) European
- b) African
- c) Mestizo
- d) Indian

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Section 1 Review



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The Caribbean Islands



- **What are the major physical characteristics of the Caribbean islands?**
- **What are the ethnic roots of Caribbean culture?**
- **What is the political and economic status of the Caribbean islands today?**
- **Why is migration so common among Caribbean islanders?**



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Physical Characteristics



- **Caribbean islands consist of three island groups: the Greater Antilles, the Lesser Antilles, and the Bahamas.**
- **Mountainous islands are the tops of volcanic mountains pushed up from the ocean floor.**
- **Flatter islands are coral islands, created by coral reefs formed from the the skeletons of coral polyps.**
- **Climate of the Caribbean is affected more by sea and wind than elevation.**
- **Temperatures average 80°F year-round, but humidity is high.**
- **Prevailing winds affect rainfall. On the windward sides of islands, facing the wind, heavy rainfall reaches up to 200 inches a year, but on the leeward sides, facing away from the wind, rainfall is much lighter at only 30 inches a year.**



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Ethnic Roots



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Ethnic Roots



- **European colonists arrived with Columbus.**
- **Indian population decreased dramatically during colonial era.**
- **Much of population of islands descended from enslaved Africans the colonists brought to work on their plantations to grow sugar cane.**
- **Caribbean culture was greatly influenced by its African roots.**
- **After slavery was abolished, many immigrants came from East Asia and South Asia.**



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Caribbean Islands Today



- **About 90 percent of Caribbean population today lives in independent countries.**
- **Many other islands are still linked to European countries or to the United States.**
- **Economies of many islands depend on agriculture.**
- **Many work as either farm laborers in industries related to agriculture or on the docks to load and ship exports across the globe.**
- **The natural beauty of the islands draws many tourists, but most profits go to foreign companies in the tourism industry.**



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Migration



- **Caribbean islanders most often migrate to find jobs.**
- **Most agricultural work is seasonal, idle workers often head to other islands, Central America, or the United States for work.**
- **Political unrest in Cuba and Haiti has sent many refugees to seek asylum in the United States.**
- **Caribbean islanders have benefited from emigrants sending money to people at home.**



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Section 2 Review



Some Caribbean islands are still politically linked with

- a) South American countries.**
- b) European countries and the United States.**
- c) European and South American countries.**
- d) European and African countries.**

How does migration benefit the Caribbean islands?

- a) Fewer workers compete for the same jobs.**
- b) Migrants take their money from island to island.**
- c) Emigrants train as soldiers and return to overthrow their governments.**
- d) Emigrants send money back to their families.**

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Section 2 Review



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