



Countries of South America

Curriculum Unit 82.05.05
by David Raccaro

Introduction

The objective of this unit will be to have the students identify geographic, political, social, economic and historical aspects of South America, while using this information to compare and contrast one country with another.

Map Work

The students will be asked first, use a map of South America to identify European claims to South America and then identify (using the handbook) any influences if any, these European nations have had on each country. Second, the students will be asked to locate on a map, different elevations in South America. For example, the Andes Mountains, Guiana Highlands and Brazilian Highlands. Third, each student will be asked to locate and identify the thirteen South American countries and their capitals. Lastly the students will be asked to identify the major rivers and lakes of South America.

Student Handbook

The handbook will be used by the students to compare, contrast and identify aspects of the South American countries. For example geographical aspects, such as, the size of each country and the topography of each are given. Secondly, political aspects, such as, the head of state and local divisions of each country. Third, social aspects such as ethnic groups, population, age distribution, languages spoken, life expectancy and the literacy rates. Fourth, economic aspects include industries, minerals, crops and the currency of each country. Lastly, a condensed history of each country is added to give each student an idea of the effects of past situations which led to the conditions which exist in each country today.

Suggested Activities

1. Essay: Using the information provided for each South American Country, decide which country you most want to live in. List five reasons to support your choice.
2. Quiz: The largest South American Country in terms of size?
The capital of Chile is?
The Amazon River empties into———?

Teachers should add to this list to meet the needs of their objectives.

Argentina

For more than a hundred years Argentina has been second only to the United States in the hopes of the landless and jobless for a piece of the pie. In search of a job or some land, millions of immigrants have come to fill Argentina's borders. The largest groups of immigrants consists of peoples from Italy and Spain, although other European countries have added to the total. (1977 est.) 26,660,000 Europeans 97%, Indians, Mestizos, Arabs 3%. Despite a physical environment more favorable than most and an enormous investment of money, talent, and energy, Argentina has not quite fulfilled the destiny hoped for it.

In the past thirty years especially in the 1960's and 1970's a number of economic and political problems have caused terrorist violence, strikes, riots, etc. The economic problems include inflation (the cost of living went up 60% between July 1971 and July 1972), huge deficits in trade and in state-controlled industries, lagging agricultural production and a lack of enough investment money. The most difficult problem in the political area consists of a deep division among the various parties concerning the form of government desired and basic policies and goals. The present day government consists of a Head of State, 22 provinces, formerly with elected legislatures and governors, now under military governors. In the opinion of Argentine leaders, no solution to the increasingly pressing economic problems will be found until the political problems are solved.

As a result of this continuing economic and political crisis, many among the young and skilled are unable to find good jobs or rise in the ranks of the industry. This talent is leaving the country. This problem is becoming so bad in Argentina that the government is trying to find ways to stop it, so far they have been unsuccessful. The newly arrived immigrants do not have the same skills.

Even though the average Argentine enjoys the second highest annual income in South America: about \$1,876 per year, as compared to \$2,357 in Venezuela and \$310 in Bolivia, nor does Argentina suffer from other problems that face other South American countries, such as a high rate of population growth (Argentina; 1.5 percent per year is one of the lowest anywhere) and a high rate of illiteracy (its 7 percent compares very favorably with Bolivia's 60 percent). In many ways the Argentinians have created a culture with a "European" flavor, in their architecture, their arts, their literature, their sports, their clothes, their food and drink and their search for and enjoyment of material well-being.

Nomadic Indians roamed the Pampas (flat fertile grasslands) when the Spaniards arrived about 1515-1516 led by Juan Diaz de Solis. Argentina was neglected by Spain during most of the colonial period; in fact until 1776, it was actually governed from Peru. Early expeditions sent from Spain to look into the wealth of the pampa found nothing to encourage colonization except the wish to provide buffers against Portuguese expansion. Northwestern Argentina appeared better to the Spanish. There, agricultural communities were set up to provide hides, food and work animals for mining centers in Bolivia and Peru. These small towns such as San Miguel de Tucuman and Salta prospered, while cities like Buenos Aires were disease ridden and neglected. In 1750 its population was 12,000.

In time, the cattle set free on the pampa shortly after the first Spanish arrived began to have commercial value. During the 1700's the gauchos (cowboys), set forth from Buenos Aires to roundup the wild herds. The gaucho returned with hides and meat (salted and dried). Both found markets in Europe, Brazil and the Caribbean. Quickly the wild cattle disappeared and large cattle ranches began to form.

In the early 1800's Argentina had no national unity. Fewer than half a million inhabitants, mostly Indian and

mestizo, occupied a vast region extending from Buenos Aires to Bolivia. The little port of Buenos Aires and its small hinterland faced Europe; the agriculture settlements of the Northwest, by then suffering an economic depression as a result of the exhaustion of the Andean silver mines and the disruption of trade with upper Peru (present day Bolivia) were virtually self-sufficient. Crude ox-cart roads connected the port with the northwest, and travel along them was slow, costly and subject to constant harassment by Nomadic bands of indians.

Argentina achieved independence from Spain by 1816. Even though independence had been won, there would be no degree of internal unity for about seventy years. The struggle during this period was basically between the port of Buenos Aires and the rest of the nation. The port wanted to use the nation's resources for export to Europe. To do this the leaders tried to centralize the national government under their control. The interior on the other hand (still with a Spanish colonial traditional society) led by the caudillos, bitterly resisted the growth of the economic power of Buenos Aires and sought a loose confederation of the provinces to permit greater local autonomy.

Buenos Aires did not gain total control until the 1880's. Civil and international wars constantly stole the promise of the nation. For much of the time leading up to the 1880's large parts of the nation were beyond the control of the national leaders. They were controlled by local gaucho leaders or indian tribes.

Large-scale Italian German, and Spanish immigration in the decades after 1880 spurred modernization, making Argentina the most prosperous, educated and industrialized of the major Latin American nations. Social reforms were enacted in the 1920's, but military coups prevailed between 1930 and 1946, until the election of General Juan Peron as president.

Peron, with his wife Eva Duarte, effected labor reforms, but also suppressed speech and press freedoms, closed religious schools, and ran the country into debt. In 1955 a coup exiled Peron, who was followed by a series of military and civilian regimes. Peron returned in 1973, and was once more elected president. He died ten months later and was succeeded by his wife, Isabel, who had been elected Vice President, and who became the first woman head of state in the western hemisphere. Terrorist violence of right and left, long a problem, worsened in the 1970's with 900 killed in 1975 alone; lucrative kidnappings netted tens of millions of dollars.

A military junta ousted Mrs. Peron in 1976 amid charges of corruption. Under a continuing state of siege, the army battled guerrillas and leftists, killed 2,000 to 5,000 and jailed and tortured others.

Today Argentina has about 26.8 million people, 97 percent of whom are of European ancestry, the other 3 percent are Indians. A large proportion of the people can be classified in the middle-level socioeconomic group, are urban dwellers, and make their living from industry and services: only 19 percent of the labor force is engaged in agriculture, compared with 32 percent in Venezuela and 72 percent in Bolivia. Buenos Aires, with a population of about 10 million in the metropolitan area, ranks among the world's fifteen largest cities. In addition there are two other cities (Rosario and Cordoba) with populations over 500,000 and five more cities between 250,000 and 500,000.

Bolivia

A study of the country of Bolivia will give the students an idea of the problems which exist in many countries through-out Central and South America. A number of Bolivian problems are a difficult environment consisting of high rugged mountains to almost flat plains; a shortage of energy; the lack of adequate transportation and

a chaotic political history. The objective of this paper will be to center our concerns on the latter.

The great ruins of Tiahuanacu on Lake Titicaca's shores show that an advanced, organized, and populous society existed around the area from about 600 to 900 A.D. The Incas conquered the highland indians from their Peruvian bases in about 1440 A.D. and established their own type of social organization and an autocracy.

The Incas had developed an empire of many tribes, numerous languages, and a system of splendid roads. Along these roads, many of which still exist, relays of runners carried messages to and from government officials.

In metalwork the Incas moved ahead of the Aztecs and earlier Mayas. But they had a fatal weakness. They were blindly obedient to the authority of their god-emperor. This allowed immediate transfer of control to the Spanish conquerors, once Pizarro had seized the Incas' supreme ruler.

When the Spanish took over in 1532, they turned the Bolivian economy into a feudal agrarian, mineral-exploitation and export-based system. This system started in 1532 and continued until 1952. The Spaniards divided up the lands and Indians into large *encomiendas* (a royal grant to an individual settler), thus giving the Spanish officers the right to Indian labor, and the duty to oversee the Indians well-being, but holding land ownership for the crown. Silver was discovered in the fabulous Potosi lode in 1545. It was exploited by use of the *Mita*, which was a system of forced Indian labor and exported to Europe.

In order to keep these systems operating smoothly, transportation routes were built to the Pacific coast and cities. All of Bolivia's large cities today had been established by 1610 (Sucre, Potosi, La Pas, Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, Tarija). Different crops and animals produced important changes in agriculture. Barley, wheat, rice, sugar cane, coffee, citrus and other fruits, cattle, sheep, horses, hogs, and poultry were all introduced by the Spanish.

Another major change brought about by the conquest, was the great reduction in total Indian population. No one knows for certain how many people existed in pre-Columbian Bolivia, but estimates go as high as 10 million. This figure was probably reduced by 80 percent in the early years of the Spanish. It has been said that the Spanish killed more Indians with their diseases than with their guns.

Spanish missionaries found that Roman Catholicism mixed well with the native religions, but the Spanish language was taken up by only a small number of the Indians, and Indian ideas and systems continued. Thus a dual society was born. The dominant whites enjoyed political, economic, and social mastery from the cities, while the larger part of Indians lacked education, economic security, a political voice and little input into the national system. People of mixed blood (*cholos*), made up the middle class, usually living in cities as artisans, small-scale businessmen and laborers. The *cholos* had some upward social mobility, but they were generally looked down on by both the whites and Indians. These patterns continued up to the revolution of 1952.

Independence in 1825, due chiefly to the armies of Antonio Jose' de Sucre and Simon Bolivar (for whom Bolivia was named), freed the Bolivian elite from Spanish dominance and formalized their economic, political, and social control. But the only noticeable effect on the lives of the Indians who made up 70 percent of the population, was to eliminate what little protection the crown had offered them. By 1950 92 percent of the farm land was in holdings averaging 2,470 acres each, and this was owned by 6 percent of the landowners. Material poverty, social and political privileges taken away and hopelessness were the sad facts of social problems for the great majority of Bolivians. Compounding these social problems was a harsh physical environment, on the

one hand offering great potential sources of wealth, and on the other posing problems that slowed the realization of this wealth.

In a series of wars, Bolivia lost its pacific coast to Chile, the oil-bearing Chaco to Paraguay and the rubber growing areas to Brazil. All this took place in a period from 1879 to 1935. Unfortunately for Bolivia, independence was achieved in 1825 without clearly defined international boundaries, and the national territory, which once encompassed some 850,000 square miles, is now only about 424,000 square miles. The most devastating of the above stated wars was the "War of the Pacific", 1879-1882 where-by Bolivia lost its Pacific coast, thereby becoming the only landlocked nation in Latin America.

The 1940's saw two movements develop which helped to bring about a united democratic movement. In 1941 the "National Revolutionary Movement" was formed and later in the 40's the "Party of the left Revolutionaries" started. The former claimed to be a nationalistic movement with a socialist background aimed at affirming and defending the Bolivian nation. The latter was composed of radical students which sought power and change from the poor majority.

Much unrest in Bolivia preceded the presidential election of 1951, and when a general uprising took place in 1952, it was Juan Lechin and the armed miners who turned the tide, defeating the regular military and placing the "National Revolutionary Movement" candidate Victor Paz Estenssoro in power.

Paz's program, aimed at restructuring Bolivian society, consisted of the following five principal points:

1. Universal suffrage, accomplished by removing the literacy and property ownership restrictions.
2. Nationalization of the three large mining companies carried out October 31, 1952.
3. Dissolution of the army and establishment of popular militia, accomplished by arming the miners and small farmers.
4. Agrarian reform by confiscation of large farms, accomplished by law on August 2, 1953.
5. Establishment of the principle of worker participation in the management of national enterprises, enforced by the formation of 28 to 30 unions, ranging from teachers to small farmers organizations.

Paz's programs succeeded in shaking the Bolivian system to its foundations. The traditional power structure, comprised of landowners and the military, was effectively eliminated in favor of labor, small farmers, and a small group of intellectuals. Unfortunately for the latter Paz's government was overthrown by a military junta. A series of coups and counter coups continued until 1971, the the present regime ousted the leftist regime of General Juan José Torres.

In 1974, many of the reforms instituted by the Paz government were done away with. Civilians were dismissed from the cabinet and political parties and labor unions were barred. A new rightist coup followed a disputed 1978 election.

Today Bolivia's population is about 6 million. While ethnic lines are not distinct, it is estimated that at least 55 percent are Indian 25 to 30 percent Cholo, and 5 to 15 percent white. Even within these groups there are differences. The Indian element is composed of Quechua and Aymara and a scattering of isolated groups of the eastern sections of the country.

About 65 percent of the population is considered rural. Estimates indicate that about 60 percent of the people are illiterate, and that only 48 percent of the children attend school. Only 3.5 percent of the G.N.P. is spent on education. The age structure of the population is also typical of a less-developed economy. Some 41.9 percent are between the ages of 0-14; 52.7 percent are 15-59 and only 5.4 percent are age 60 plus. The population is growing at a rate of about 2.4 percent annually, but like most South American countries, Bolivia is not densely populated, at least by Asian standards. Life expectancy for men is about 46 years, whereas females live to be about the age of 48.

The objective of this lesson will be to have the student research and identify aspects of other South American countries. The information will then be used to compare and contrast aspects of each country.

(figure available in print form)

The teacher may find it necessary to add topics to the topic sheet to meet their classes needs.

The objective of this lesson is to have the students identify (using the handbook of South America or any other resource) the effects European nations have had on these areas.

(figure available in print form)

Fact Sheet

This unit may be used in many ways. Some examples:

1. Students will be expected to research and fill in the fact sheet.
2. The total fact sheet can be presented and used to compare and contrast the three countries listed.
3. Each student will be given a different South American country to research. Students will give and take facts found.

These are some of the ways this fact sheet can be used. Whichever way you use it, the main objective should be to compare and contrast the countries of South America with each other or with the United States.

(figure available in print form)

The objective of this lesson will be to have the students locate and identify countries and capitals of South America. The students will be provided with a map and should identify and color in each area.

The objective of this lesson will be to have the students identify the major rivers and lakes of South America.

SOUTHAMERICA

(figure available in print form)

South America

(figure available in print form)

The equator cuts across the northern part of South America. The Tropic of Capricorn cuts just below the middle of South America. The southern tip is within several hundred miles of the Antarctic Circle. There is also a wide range of altitudes in South America. The result is a wide variety of climates. The main rivers indicated on this map are:

- Orinoco
- Amazon
- Tocantins
- Sao Francisco
- Paraguay
- Parana
- Uruguay

This map also shows the following major lakes:

- Mar Chiquita Lake
- Lake Titicaca
- Lake Poopo

The Island de Marajo is separated from the rest of South America by the cutting of the Amazon and Tocantins rivers and their tributaries. The island of Trinidad is off the northern coast of South America. The Falkland Islands are to the northeast of the Strait of Magellan.

THE CONTINENTS—SOUTH AMERICA

(figure available in print form)

The objective of this lesson will be to have the students locate and identify different elevations in Central and South America. As the lesson is introduced students will understand that the difference between a plateau and mountain is not height but roughness.

Mountain : a mass of land rising steeply to a great height above the surrounding country.

Plateau : an area of flat land raised above the surrounding land.

Sea Level : the mean* level of the surface of the sea, especially halfway between mean high and low water. Land elevations and sea depths are measured as so many feet above or below sea level.

Using an Atlas for exact locations and altitudes and mountain ranges and peaks.

SOUTH AMERICA : Andes Mountains, Guiana Highlands, Brazilian Highlands, Patagonia, Aconcagua.

* a point, state, or course of action that is halfway between two extremes.

(figure available in print form)

Teacher' s Bibliography

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