



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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The Geophysics and Cultural Aspects of the Greater Antilles

Guide for Curriculum Unit 85.04.04
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The goal of my unit is to teach the student that the geography of a region often dictates the evolution of a culture. To attain this goal I have picked a particular region, the Greater Antilles. The unit will show how the geophysical structure and location of the Greater Antilles has influenced the developing cultural patterns of the natives as well as the transplanted inhabitants with a different cultural background.

To achieve my goal I will build a three-dimensional map of the region. This area will be studied so the student will be able to develop a sense of space relationships, i.e. the location of the Greater Antilles as compared to the rest of the world. This special skill is often lacking in many students, and it is an important objective of the unit. The skill of understanding the location is an underlying factor to realizing the type of climate that is to be found in the region. Noting that the Greater Antilles is found close to the equator will lead to the study of longitude and latitude.

The skill of determining longitude and latitude will be studied not just as a technique for locating places, but also as a tool for discovering climate. Climate is not only affected by location but by the geographical structure of the region. Coastal plains, mountains, plains (high and low), valleys, all may vary in climate. Prevailing winds and sea currents may also affect climate. Once the climate of the land is established, the attention of the student is directed to the effect of the climate on the people living there.

The geography of the land creates an environment. It is against this environment that man is studied. It is here that this unit will have its greatest value. The unit at this point will attempt to show how people are influenced by the geography and how a set of living patterns develop. Hopefully the students will come to realize why people in different parts of the world behave differently. This unit will develop the concept of how a given set of geographic conditions can help mold and modify group behavior. These same conditions in turn are themselves modified by transplanted cultures and new technology.

(Recommended for Social Studies classes grades 6 through 8; and high school Geography classes)

Key Words

Greater Antilles Geography Effects Culture Lating America

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