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Introduction

A RETIRED COUPLE FROM OHIO tap their meager savings for a three-day cruise to the Bahamas. Shirts sold in a Dallas department store carry labels saying “Made in the Dominican Republic.” Grocery stores a mile from the White House stock hard-dough bread, coconut tarts and ginger beer for the community of 30,000 Jamaicans living in and around Washington, DC.

The Caribbean, along with Mexico, is the Third World region closest to the United States. Its history is intertwined with ours in a multitude of ways. Thousands of Americans visit the islands each year as tourists. Persons of Caribbean origin make up one of the largest immigrant groups in the United States and Canada, and their number is growing. Extensive aid, trade and investment link the U.S. to the Caribbean economically. And the United States has intervened repeatedly in the region to influence political change.

Despite these close links, most Americans know little about Caribbean societies. The region is often depicted as a vacation playground—a paradise of “sun, sea and sand” for the enjoyment of tourists, but not a place where real people live and work. Political and cultural developments in the region often go

unreported in the U.S. media. When the Caribbean is discussed, racist and anti-communist stereotypes often blur the images.

As a result, many Americans have missed the opportunity to know the proud history and rich cultural traditions of this neighboring region. Caribbean people have overcome many obstacles and realized outstanding achievements in political, economic and cultural life. The mingling of diverse peoples has produced vibrant and creative cultures, which have enriched U.S. and Canadian societies through the migration of Caribbean people north.

Until recently, most school curricula in the United States included little information on the Caribbean. Textbooks often mention the region in passing during discussion of Latin America. There are few secondary-level resources widely available in the U.S. which are up-to-date, historically and culturally accurate, and which view Caribbean realities through Caribbean eyes.

These books were prepared to enable schools to begin incorporating material on the Caribbean into existing curricula. They are not a substitute for developing curriculum units on

the Caribbean, a project which remains to be done. It is hoped that they will help spark interest in teaching and learning about the Caribbean, which will lead to the development of more comprehensive teaching resources.

▼ Objectives and Methods

Four aims guided the editors in their selection and presentation of materials:

- To show Caribbean history and contemporary realities through the eyes of ordinary people, both real and fictional. Oral histories, interviews and other forms of first-person testimony provide a people-centered view of Caribbean life. An example is the autobiographical essay by Leonard Barrett, “African Roots of My Jamaican Heritage” [Unit 2], in which the author recalls the traditions of the community in which he was raised.
- To promote critical thinking rather than simply the memorization of information. All writing contains a point of view, which may be stated or implied. If students examine values and unstated assumptions in whatever they read, they become active participants in their own learning. Where a topic is controversial, we have attempted to include several

viewpoints. The student is asked to weigh the evidence, and perhaps to do further research, before drawing his or her own conclusions.

- To stimulate students' interest by creatively combining different types of materials, such as short stories, novel excerpts, non-fiction essays, interviews, newspaper clippings, song lyrics, poetry and drama. Unit 3, for instance, includes an excerpt from a speech by Marcus Garvey, personal testimonies by Jamaicans and Americans who remember Garvey's movement, and a passage from a novel showing the impact of Garvey's movement on Jamaican life.

- To ensure the authenticity and relevance of the material. We sought suggestions from Caribbean people and organizations in the Caribbean, the U.S. and Canada, and relied on an advisory council of Caribbean scholars for ongoing review. There are hundreds of Caribbean civic organizations, and many academics and teachers of Caribbean origin, in North America; they can serve as a primary resource for developing a program of study on the region.

▼ How to Use These Materials

This book is one of six in the Caribbean Connections series. It is aimed principally at grades nine through twelve, but may be adapted for use at higher and lower levels. The readings, discussion questions and

suggested activities are intentionally varied in their level of difficulty. The instructor is encouraged to select those parts for which the content and level are compatible with curricula in use.

The collection begins with a brief history of Jamaica, which provides a framework for the seven units which follow. Each unit includes a lesson plan, an introduction, and one or more readings. The lesson plans are for the instructor's use; they include objectives, discussion questions and suggested activities. The introductions set the context for the readings; they may be handed out to students, or the instructor may present the information orally. The readings are intended as student handouts.

Each unit also suggests resources for further study. Although varied in difficulty, these tend to be at a higher reading level than the readings included here. They will be particularly appropriate for assigning special research projects to individual students or small groups. Publishers' addresses are included in an appendix.

It is important to note that these materials are not a curriculum, that is, a self-contained program of study. They do not attempt to provide a complete introduction to the Caribbean or to individual Caribbean countries. They present, instead, materials which can be used to supplement curricula in areas such as Social Studies, English

or Third World literature, African-American or Latin American history, Spanish, Multicultural Studies or Global Education. If an instructor wants to devote a full unit of study to the Caribbean or to a certain country, we recommend that s/he use the books in conjunction with other materials.

The secondary social studies curriculum of most school districts does not devote significant time directly to the Caribbean. However, this should not discourage teachers from using these materials. There are many opportunities to address the region within the scope and sequence of traditional social studies and language arts curricula.

The major ways of integrating the Caribbean are through the study of (a) United States history, (b) social studies themes, (c) current events, and (d) language arts. Many of the lessons could be introduced as students are studying the history of the United States or the Western Hemisphere. For example, Unit 3, *The Marcus Garvey Movement*, links the history of the Caribbean and the United States through a study of this historic figure.

The Caribbean can illustrate many required social studies themes and issues. For example, Unit 5, *In the Country*, can be used in studies of economic development; Units 5 and 7 address women's role in the economy and society; and Units 4 and 6 provide examples of the

relationship between art/literature and social change.

This collection also lends itself to cross-disciplinary studies, such as social studies and music, or English and art. Unit 6, *From Rasta to Reggae*, uses popular music as a window on Jamaican social history. In Unit 1, *Anansi, Brer Rabbit, and the Folk Tradition*, students examine connections between the African, Jamaican, and Afro-American folk traditions, and they are encouraged to write and illustrate their own folk tales.

Through some of the suggested activities students can share elements of the history and culture of Jamaica with the rest of the school. For Unit 2, *Our Jamaican Heritage*, students can create for the school halls or main office. After studying Unit 3, on Marcus Garvey, students could create a play about his life to be presented at school assemblies. As a wrap-up activity, students could work in small groups to develop presentations on one or more of the topics studied. A memo could then be circulated to other social studies and language arts teachers offering these presentations during specified class periods. Time should be allowed during each of these presentations for questions and answers. This discussion will motivate the presenting group to do more research and perhaps to learn about additional countries in the Caribbean.

The present series of books is a first edition and will be revised based on feedback received. The editors would be pleased to hear from instructors and students who have used the materials. We want to know how the materials are being used, which parts have proved most effective in the classroom and which need improvement.

