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Introduction

A RETIRED COUPLE FROM OHIO taps 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 North Americans visit the islands each year as tourists, and persons of Caribbean origin make up one of the largest immigrant groups in the United States and Canada. 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 North 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, racial and political stereotypes often blur the images.

As a result, many North 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 cultures, which have enriched U.S. and Canadian societies through the migration of Caribbean people north.

Until recently, most secondary 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.

This book was prepared to enable schools to begin incor-

porating material on the Caribbean into existing curricula. It is not a substitute for developing a complete curriculum on the Caribbean, a project which remains to be done. It is hoped that it 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 first-person testimonies provide a people-centered view of Caribbean life. An example is the autobiographical narrative in Unit 5, in which an Antiguan man recounts his family's experience building a "free village" after the end of slavery.
- 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 may be controversial—for example in Unit 9, on gunboat diplomacy—we have aimed for a diversity of views. Students are asked to weigh the evidence, and perhaps to do further research, before drawing their own conclusions.

- To stimulate students' interest by creatively combining different types of materials, such as short stories, novel excerpts, non-fiction essays, interviews, newspaper articles, songs, poetry and drama. Unit 10 on the Cuban revolution, for instance, includes a non-fiction essay, autobiographical narratives by Cuban women, and poetry by Cuban poets.

- To ensure the authenticity and relevance of the material. We sought suggestions from Caribbean individuals and organizations in the Caribbean, the U.S. and Canada, and relied on an advisory council of 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 programs of study on the region.

▼ How to Use These Materials

This book is the first of six in the Caribbean Connections series. Books two through five are country profiles of Puerto

Rico, Jamaica, Haiti, and Trinidad & Tobago. The last book in the sequence focuses on migration and Caribbean communities in North America.

The present volume provides a foundation for the series. Beginning with the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, it spans the 450 years from colonization to the mid-twentieth century, when most Caribbean territories gained their independence. Recent developments of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s are dealt with in the country profiles, and so are merely touched on here. Instructors may wish to begin with this regional history, then proceed to one or more of the country-specific books.

The content 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.

Each unit in this book includes a teacher guide, an introduction providing background information, and one or more readings. The teacher guides include objectives, discussion questions and suggested activities. The introductions and the readings are intended as student

handouts.

Each teacher guide suggests resources related to the unit, and an appendix suggests sources for further study. Although varied in difficulty, these tend to be at a higher reading level than the texts included in this book. They will be particularly appropriate for assigning special research projects to individual students or small groups. Addresses for publishers and distributors are included in an appendix.

It is important to note that the Caribbean Connections series is not a curriculum, that is, a self-contained program of study. It does not attempt to provide a complete introduction to the Caribbean or to individual Caribbean countries. It presents, instead, materials which can supplement curricula in areas such as Social Studies, English, 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 opportu-

nities 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, the readings in Units 3 and 4 on slavery and resistance can provide useful comparisons to that era of U.S. history. Unit 9, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, addresses a pivotal period in U.S. foreign relations and Latin American history. Unit 1, *The Arawaks and the Caribs*, could be integrated into study of Native American history.

The Caribbean can illustrate many required social studies themes and issues. For example, the readings on the Cuban revolution can be used in studies of economic development. The book also lends itself to cross-disciplinary studies, such as social studies and art, or English and Spanish. Units 3, 8 and 10 include poems in the original Spanish, along with English translations.

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 instruc-

tors 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. Contact: Caribbean Connections, P.O. Box 43509, Washington, DC 20010 (202) 429-0137.

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