

Summary: Building Economies and Cultures

Geography and Trade in South America

The physical geography of South America creates transportation barriers and corridors. Transportation barriers, such as the Amazon rain forest and the Andes Mountains, make it difficult to move goods and people. Transportation corridors, such as the Amazon River, are easy to move through. They can help the economy by increasing the movement of people and goods.

South America has many natural resources, including minerals and fertile land. It also has some of the largest farms in the world. Large farms produce products for export, such as beef, grain, sugar, wool, bananas, and coffee. However, most of the South American farms are small. These farmers struggle to grow food for their families.

Brazil is one of the world's most industrialized countries. It manufactures cars, computers, and airplanes.

Many countries in South America cooperate to develop their economies. At the Summit of the Americas in 1994, countries agreed to create a free-trade zone. In a free-trade zone, people and goods move across borders without being taxed.

Economic cooperation can be hard if some economies are strong and others are weak. Economic indicators can show how a country's economy is doing. Literacy rates and life expectancy are two kinds of economic indicators.

Daily Life in South America

South America has urban and rural areas. In urban areas, many people are wealthy. Millions more are very poor. Urbanization has brought many people from the country to the cities. Most have come to get jobs and a chance for a better life. Houses cannot be built quickly enough to keep up with the growing number of people, though. Slum areas surround the cities and living conditions are overcrowded. Urbanization has also helped musicians to combine traditional music styles with rock and other European and North American types of music.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

free-trade zone *noun*, an area in which people and goods can move across borders without being taxed

economic indicator *noun*, a measurement that shows how a country's economy is doing

urbanization *noun*, the movement of many people from the countryside to the cities



After You Read

REVIEW How do South America's small farms and large farms differ? Draw one line under the sentence that describes large farms in South America. Draw two lines under the sentence that describes small farms.

REVIEW How has urbanization affected South American music? Draw a box around the explanation of how urban musicians are developing new forms of music.