

Top Themes – Latin America

1. The region stretching from Mexico through South America is called Latin America because the two primary languages, Spanish and Portuguese, are Latin-based languages. There are some exceptions like English speaking Belize and Dutch speaking Suriname.
2. Latin America has gone through very high levels of urbanization with huge amounts of people leaving the farmlands and moving to rapidly growing and already massive cities. Often times jobs aren't to be found and many end up living in shantytowns along the city outskirts.
3. Roman Catholicism is the major religion throughout Latin America (70%)
4. Latin America has tremendous wealth disparity. South America is often identified by geographers as the region with the sharpest division between affluence and poverty. Brazil is said to have the largest gap of any country.
5. Physical features have isolated many parts of Latin America. The Darien Gap separating Central America from South America has always been difficult to cross due to dense forest and swamplands. Cordilleras (parallel mountain ranges) have even separated parts of Colombia from one another. Furthermore, most cities of South America are located near the coast with far distances between each other.
6. Latin America is greatly impacted by the Ring of Fire. Middle America (Mexico + Central America) is the most dangerous region of the world in terms of natural disasters (prone to earthquakes, volcanoes, and hurricanes).
7. The political system is similar to the United States (presidential system as opposed to a European style Parliamentary system with a prime minister), but just a lot more unstable with problems of corruption, coups, and civil war.
8. The climate of the region tends to be either wet or dry tropical.
9. Latin America tends to be a **plural(istic) society**, a society in which two or more population groups, each practicing its own culture, live adjacent to one another without mixing much. The population is made up of: 36% mixed indigenous (white & Amerindian), 31% white, 8% mixed black, 7% black, 7% indigenous, 10% other