

# Caribbean – A Mosaic of Cultures

## Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** 6-8

**Curriculum Focus:** North America

**Lesson Duration:** One to two class periods

### *Student Objectives*

- Learn about the geography and culture of the Caribbean.
- Learn about the importance of tourism to the region and create descriptive postcards.
- Use their descriptive postcards to share their knowledge of the different Caribbean nations and to discuss some of the issues the islands face.

### *Materials*

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Geography of the Caribbean*  
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Modern Caribbean Cultures: A Cultural Mosaic of Indigenous, African, and European Influences
  - Physical Features and Natural Processes of the Caribbean Islands: Climate and Resources
  - The Caribbean After Colonization: Diversity, Tourism, and Bounty
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- Pencils and erasers
  - Fine-point black pens (optional)
  - Crayons, colored pencils, or markers (optional)
  - Computer with Internet access (optional)
  - Geography texts and library resources
  - Travel magazines and brochures featuring the Caribbean
  - White construction paper (cut into half sheets)
  - Lined writing paper (cut into half sheets)
  - Glue and scissors

## Procedures

1. Introduce the lesson by discussing the environment, culture, and geography of the Caribbean. A good way to do this is to view portions of the TLC *Geography of the Caribbean* video. Talk about the importance of tourism to the Caribbean economy. Tell students to imagine that they have taken a vacation to the Caribbean. What did they see there? What was the climate like? What were the people like? What did they see in the culture that was different from their own culture? Did they see interesting animals?
2. Talk about some of the things that were shown in the video and make a list of the major islands located in the Caribbean region (list should include Turks and Caicos, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Trinidad, Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica).
3. Tell students they are going to make postcards for their imaginary Caribbean vacation. Students must make two postcards—each from a different Caribbean island on the class list. On one side of the postcard, they will create a collage using photos and illustrations found in the travel magazines and brochures. This collage should feature different aspects of the Caribbean, and can include images of people, art, animals, or the physical environment. Alternately, students can make their own illustrations that feature these same aspects.
4. Tell students that on the lined paper they will write letters to a relative or friend about their vacation experiences. (Once their collages are dry, they will attach their letters to the other (blank) side of the postcard.) Their letters should be creative and individual but must include these six criteria:
  - Name of the island nation they are “visiting”
  - Brief history of the country
  - Main industries
  - Cultural information (its music, art, customs, food, etc.)
  - Description of the country, including any unique geographical features
  - Issues the island faces (environmental, economic, political, or otherwise)
5. Give students time in class and as a homework assignment to create their collages and write their postcards. Allow room for creativity, but remind students to include the six criteria. Students may use travel magazines and brochures, geography texts, library resources, and the Internet to conduct their research and create their collages. These Web sites have good information on the Caribbean:
  - <http://www.caribbean-on-line.com/>
  - <http://www.caribbean.com/>
  - <http://www.caribbeandaily.com/>
  - <http://www.cep.unep.org/>
  - <http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/post/caribbean/nations.html>
6. Have students attach their finished letters to the blank side of the postcards once the collages are dry. Talk about the different nations that comprise the Caribbean, and allow students to

read some of their postcards aloud to the rest of the class. Discuss some of the issues the islands face and some possible ways to solve these problems.

### **Assessment**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students actively participated in class discussions; used books, magazines, and other resources wisely; made highly attractive postcards that included different Caribbean images; wrote informative, creative letters about the islands they “visited” that correctly included all six criteria.
- **2 points:** Students somewhat participated in class discussions; used books, magazines, and other resources to some degree; made presentable postcards; wrote somewhat informative letters that correctly included four of the six criteria.
- **1 point:** Students did not participate in class discussions; were unable to use resource materials without guidance; did not finish their postcard collages or included images of things not found in the Caribbean; wrote incomplete or incoherent letters that included two of the six criteria.

### **Vocabulary**

#### **coral polyp**

*Definition:* Small, invertebrate marine animals; coral polyps grow together to form coral reefs and coral islands.

*Context:* Made of coral polyps, the Bahamas are coral islands.

#### **Creole**

*Definition:* A language that originates from extended contact between two language communities, one of which is generally European; Creole incorporates features of both languages and is typically the mother tongue of a community.

*Context:* Creole is often spoken in Haitian homes.

#### **island**

*Definition:* An area of land surrounded entirely by water

*Context:* The Caribbean region is a cluster of islands in the Caribbean Sea.

#### **life expectancy**

*Definition:* The average life span of a person

*Context:* In Haiti life expectancy is just over 49 years.

#### **literacy**

*Definition:* The ability to read and write

*Context:* Literacy is uncommon in Haitian adults, where less than half of all Haitians over 15 are literate.

### **tropical**

*Definition:* A region or climate that is frost-free, with temperatures high enough to support a year-round growing season

*Context:* The Caribbean is a tropical region.

## **Academic Standards**

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit link:

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – The World in Spatial Terms: Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies; Environment and Society: Understands how physical systems affect human systems
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, Gathers and uses information for research purposes

### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- People, Places, and Environments
- Individual Development and Identity
- Global Connections

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## **Support Materials**

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

