

# Brazil: The Land of Happiness

## **Purpose/Overview:**

This unit provides an introductory look at Brazil and its physical and human characteristics. The unique characteristics of Brazil will be explored from a geographic spatial perspective. In studying the cultural landscape, students will be asked to compare and contrast their life in the United States with teens living in Brazil. It will address the issues and concerns facing the people, especially the young people, of Brazil today. Activities will immerse the student in exploration of Brazil's places and people to formulate a mental map of "Where is it? Why is it there? And, Why do we care?" It is hoped the unit will open the door to understanding a unique culture characterized by its people who, in spite of poverty and oppression, display open-mindedness, optimism, friendliness, hospitality, caring attitude, fullness of life, easy-going nature, love of music, and don't miss a chance to celebrate with a festival and/or party! It is these characteristics that a visitor experiences and leaves Brazil with, having a sense that, indeed, it is the "Land of Happiness."

## **Performance goals:**

Students will:

- Understand how the physical environment affects people and their culture by researching Brazil's geographic characteristics and planning a trip through the five economic regions.
- Understand how location affects economic activities in the different regions.
- Gain an appreciation for the struggles of the people of a developing country and how they cope by analyzing their cultural characteristics.
- Analyze demographic data and compare and contrast the cultural landscape of Brazil and the United States from a teenager's perspective.

## **Requisite learning goals:**

Students will need to know:

- Basic understanding of the connection between land-economy-people.
- What are the characteristics of a developing or developed country?
- What is culture?

**Grade level:** 6-12

**Time:** 1 week

## **Geographic Skills:**

Acquiring Geographic Information  
Organizing Geographic Information  
Answering Geographic Questions  
Analyzing Geographic Information

**Geographic Question:**

How can geography help to understand the connections between the story, the places, and the people?

**Vocabulary:**

basin, escarpment, region

**Scenario:**

**You are a member of the United States Youth Ambassador Organization and you will be participating in an exchange program with young people from Brazil. Brazil's sheer mass and accompanying social and economic problems were the incentive behind the mission in order to investigate innovative solutions. This exchange will enhance mutual understanding between the youth of the United States and the youth of Brazil with the belief that "becoming aware of what we share makes us better equipped to meet our global challenges with common resolve."**

**You will spend time in the classroom learning some facts about the geography of Brazil and general tourist information before your trip. You will have to complete the following preparatory activities: mapping Brazil's physical geography, learning phrases in Portuguese, and deciding what you should take with you. It will also be helpful to read a novel on immigration, and study examples of urbanization and its effect on people, culture, and the environment.**

**After the trip you will participate in a teen summit in Brazil to work with political leaders to address the issues of children of Brazil, i.e., poverty, education, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, crime, violence, and drugs. Solutions will be discussed and findings will be reported to government leaders.**

# Activity 1: Introduction to Brazil—Where is it?

## Background:

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world. Most of Brazil lies within the tropics with only the southern region in temperate zones. The equator runs just north of the Amazon and the Tropic of Capricorn passes just to the north of the city of São Paulo. Brazil has basically two major physical land features: plains and plateaus. It also has the world's largest rain forest and a vast water basin with an extensive river system. The country is divided into five economic regions: North, Northeast, Southeast, South, and Central-West. Brazil is a country of cultural diversity with strong African, Indian, and Portuguese influence. Immigrants have settled in Brazil from Italy, Germany, Poland, Arab countries, and Brazil has the largest Japanese population in any country outside Japan.

## Objectives:

Students will:

- Use atlases and maps to identify absolute and relative locations of Brazil.
- Investigate landforms and rivers.
- Analyze the region's climate, vegetation, and wildlife.
- Identify some of the region's important resources.
- Develop a mental map from a spatial perspective of the physical/cultural points of interest in Brazil.

## Skills taught:

- Map reading: absolute location, relative location, acquiring data, use of mental mapping and analysis.

**Materials:** Handouts—Anticipation Guide, Brazil physical and political outline maps, “Traveling the World through Geography,” set of thematic maps for each group, Atlas or Textbook, Portuguese dictionary, colored pencils

## Suggested Procedure

### Opening Lesson:

- KWL chart: K—To uncover what students already perceive as knowledge, ask students what they already know about Brazil; W—What do they want to know (to be filled in during the unit as students work to learn about Brazil); L—To be completed at end of unit to assess what they have learned that they found interesting and/or important.
- Anticipation Guide

### Developing Lesson:

1. Direct Instruction: Locate Brazil on a map or globe and describe its absolute and relative location (point out how Brazil/South America is SE of Florida).

2. Students examine a physical map and point out the major physical features of the area (Brazilian Highlands, Amazon River, etc.). Have them label them on the outline physical map.
  - Ask them to speculate what the climate and vegetation of each area might be (possible answers: warm, humid, rain forest; cold, highland; shrubs and limited vegetation; temperate and mixed forest). Use symbols to identify them on the map.
  - What recreational activities might be available or not available to the residents?
  - Analyze climate factors and climate zones and how that affects vegetation.
3. Locate and use symbols to label the natural resources on the physical map.
4. Students will need to learn some Portuguese in order to communicate. Discuss what expressions they will need to know right away. Use an English to Portuguese dictionary or phrase book to find the translations of some of these expressions.
5. Review seasonal differences between the U.S. and Brazil and plan what to pack.

## Activity 2: Land of Contrast—What is it like there?

### Background Information:

The vast South American country of Brazil has varied climates and many different landforms. As a result, Brazil contains five separate economic regions, each with its own distinctive characteristics: North, Northeast, Southeast, South, and Central-West. Brazil's diverse economy includes agriculture, manufacturing, and service industries. Agriculture has been important in the country for centuries, and rapid industrial growth during this century has made Brazil the leading manufacturing nation in South America.

Brazil is a country of extremes... Huge in natural resources, but on the other hand extreme poverty exists. To help reduce poverty, Brazil has focused on developing new industries and encouraging settlement and development in the country's vast interior. Development has drawn many people to the cities and increased *favelas* (shantytowns). It has also caused great harm to the environment.

\*\*\*Note: This activity is two-fold—First, to acquire examples and construct a collage of the physical/cultural characteristics of Brazil and second, to determine the economic status of Brazil. (Economic geography is concerned with how people use the earth's resources, how they earn their living, and how products are distributed. Economic indicators are used to measure economic development. In this activity, students will collect data of these indicators that will help them to determine whether Brazil is a developed or developing country.)

### Objectives:

Students will:

- Analyze and predict use of artifacts.
- Identify and map on the political map the Five Economic Regions within Brazil (color each region a different color and complete a key).
- Obtain various thematic maps (including climate, natural resources, crops, population, economic activities, migration & settlement, etc.) and analyze how the geographic features led to the economic activities of each region.
- Collect and analyze data on economic indicators.

### Geographic Element:

Places and Regions

Environment and Society

### Skills taught:

Analyzing and predicting

**Materials:** Handouts—political outline map, project guide, assessment rubric; list of Web sites, thematic maps, magazines, travel guides, books, photos from Salvador and region, items from Brazil (see resources).

## Part 2A: Culture

### Opening Lesson:

- Students enter with music from Brazil playing. Room is decorated with items from Brazil (flag, cultural paintings, etc.).
- Displays are set up around the room for exploration during the week's study. They reflect the culture of Brazil (cuisine; musical instruments or photos of them with their sounds recorded on tape; products or photos, i.e., coffee, fruits, nuts, cacao, sugar cane, etc.; symbols; recreation; etc.).
- Divide into 5 groups.
- Distribute a paper bag with an artifact from Brazil to each group.
- Analyze the artifact using the handout.

### Developing Lesson:

1. Explain the connection of physical and cultural characteristics of a place.
2. Examine maps showing terrain, land use, population, and climate. Predict what the landscape will look like in different locations (students can sketch their perceptions). Then, examine a photograph taken from one of the locations.
3. Use ground photographs to help teach about landforms, climate, vegetation, land use, population amount and distribution, housing, water resources, and more. Discuss: What can you determine about the region from these photographs?  
How does the landscape change from region to region?  
Which is the closest to students' community?
4. Each group is assigned an economic region to research the physical and cultural characteristics of Brazil.
5. Display a large outline map of Brazil and another map of the same size cut into puzzle pieces of each region.
6. Provide students with magazines, Web sites, etc. to collect photos of the physical/cultural features representing their economic region.
7. Glue pictures on their puzzle piece like a collage.
8. Group shares their region's collage and assembles puzzle.
9. Engage class in a discussion on each region to summarize and help in developing mental maps of the physical/cultural connections.

### Extensions:

1. Use mental mapping to construct a tourist map that shows the spatial characteristics: various sights (physical and cultural) that tourists visit.
2. Collect artists' landscape/cultural paintings and categorize them into regions. Compare recent photographs to assess changes to the cultural landscape over time.
3. Create a travel guide for others visiting Brazil.
4. Design and construct a "shoebox" Carnival float of their region showing the physical and human characteristics.
5. Participate in a festival.
6. Construct choropleth map of each economic indicator.

## Part 2B: Quest for a Brighter Future

### Suggested Procedures

#### Opening the Lesson:

- Concept Attainment: Show photos from Brazil and the United States of people and places that are characteristic of a developed or developing country. Have students guess whether photo is an example of a developed or developing country.

#### Developing the Lesson:

1. Discussion on what is a developed/developing country.
2. Review the concepts of Gross National Product (GNP), Urbanization, Industrialization, Literacy Rate, Infrastructure (roads, communication, etc.).
3. Divide into groups and assign each group an economic region to explore. Each member in the group has the responsibility for a specific part of the research.
4. Distribute copies of student research project handout. Carefully explain the project. Economic Indicators can be organized in chart form. Provide students with adequate resources.

Include the following information in your research:

Economic Indicators:

- a. Names of major cities
  - b. Population
  - c. Educational System
  - d. Literacy Rate
  - e. Birth/Death Rate
  - f. Health Care
  - g. Occupations
  - h. Poverty and Unemployment
  - i. Types of Industries: exports and imports
  - j. Technology & Biotechnology
  - k. Telecommunications
5. Class time is given for research, as well as time outside of class to acquire data that includes specific information about their region. Special attention should be given to photos, charts, graphs, etc. that would enhance the group project.
  6. Develop and present products.

#### Assessment Projects could include: (choose one)

1. PowerPoint slide show/presentation: after you have collected all of your information, create a multimedia presentation with Microsoft PowerPoint. Your presentation is a summary of your research findings and will be shared with the class. All students record information on each presentation in chart form.
2. Poster of various graphs showing economic indicators
3. Prepare a news report or skit.

4. My favorite (this one is higher level and combines physical/cultural characteristics and economic growth): Summarize in essay form a journal entry describing a trip through the region.

*Example: A trip that begins in Rio and takes us to the city of Curitiba.*

*From Rio we rode a train down the coast to Morretes, where we helped to reforest the Mata Atlantica, visited the Volvo Factory where trucks and buses for South America are manufactured, and boarded the speedy biarticulados buses that are a benefit of Curitiba's urban planning system. Then we were off to visit the historical part of Curitiba. We visited an old slave church and an Italian immigration cultural center and a gorgeous mural of the city's progress. We were lucky enough to be granted a tour of the most modern futebol stadium in South America, the Atletico Paranaense Stadium. We also were able to see the Botanical Gardens, Ukrainian Memorial, Niemeyer Museum, and the famous Opera House.*

*Immigration has a strong influence shaping Curitiba. During the time we were visiting, we were able to see and experience how the four major immigration groups—Italian, German, Polish, and Japanese—contributed to the city's culture with their arts, food, dance, and literature. We enjoyed other cultural experiences such as walking in Hansel and Gretel's footsteps, and watching Polish folk dancing at the Italian restaurant Madalosso (the largest restaurant in the world). I painted an egg (pessankas) to take home as a cultural artifact.*

*One of the most meaningful experiences was planting trees in a reforestation project near the small coastal town of Morretes, where we learned about cultivation of seedlings, awareness of environmental preservation, and the effects of global warming.*

**Extensions:**

- Compare Brazil to the United States using the economic indicators.

## Activity 3: The Children—Why do we care?

### **Background Information:**

Challenges for the youth of Brazil are poverty, lack of education (especially secondary), lack of employment, crime, violence, drugs, abuse, teenage sex/pregnancies, social development, and participation. Poverty is especially prevalent in the rural areas and in the slums of the larger cities. This has led to many problems and in recent years the reports of teen violence resulting in many deaths. It is a perplexing concern for Brazil's government leaders and NGO groups have led the way to provide opportunities for young people to get off the streets and obtain skills to be productive in society.

**Vocabulary:** favelas

**Materials:** Video “Black Orpheus,” hand out: Culture Bag, prepared PowerPoint of teens in all aspects of life, Web sites

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

- Compare culture of teenagers in U.S. to teens in Brazil.
- Summarize the issues for Brazilian youth.
- Identify what the Brazilian government is doing to change the plight for its children.
- Analyze data and describe in report form solutions to problems.

### **Suggested Procedure**

#### **Opening Lesson:**

1. Have students design a “Culture Bag” of things in their Teen Culture.
2. Discuss with students that the U.S. is a very diverse country with many different cultures, and that different people practice different customs and have different values.
3. Students compare their Culture Bag with other classmates.

#### **Developing Lesson:**

1. Make a list of the basic needs of teenagers around the world and rate them in order of importance.
2. View scenes from “Black Orpheus” of life in a *favela* and economic conditions, especially the scene where the boy in the *favela* holds his prize possession: his shoes.
3. Discuss the major issues affecting American teens today (problems, concerns, challenges & hopes for the future).
4. Show a PowerPoint presentation, without words, of teens in Brazil. (Use photos of typical teen activities and show a cross section of rural/urban, private/public education, rich/poor, etc.).

5. Work with a partner to research the culture of a Brazilian teenager (may use a prepared handout to guide their research on characteristics and address the challenges for young people).
6. Class discussion on the major issues affecting the youth and what are possible solutions.
7. Prepare a report for a Youth Ambassadors' Summit with young people from the U.S. and Brazil. (Students should show an understanding of the teenage culture in Brazil with a focus on the social conditions and the quality of life for children.)

**Assessment:**

1. Complete a comparison chart of a Brazilian teen and a teen from the United States, then construct a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the characteristics.
2. Students write an individual essay entitled, "A day in the life of a teenager in Brazil" (this essay should be written about the culture of Brazil and written from the Brazilian teenager's perspective).

Include the following information in your chart and essay:

- a. State if it is from a teen who lives in a village or urban setting
- b. Type of housing
- c. Lifestyle
- d. Family
- e. Occupations/salary
- f. Meals
- g. Education
- h. Customs
- i. Friends
- j. Music
- k. Dress
- l. Daily activity
- m. Issues affecting the teen (poverty, education, social, etc.)

**Extension Activities:**

1. Write a guide for students coming from Brazil to the United States to visit or study.
2. Write a letter to an organization telling the plight of the children in Brazil and elicit donations for the NGO organizations working to advance the quality of life for children.
3. Write "pen pal" letters to a Brazilian teenager.
4. Construct a "Dream Travel Box." Collect information & photos about Brazil that you find interesting in a special box to look through from time to time until the dream can come true and you can really go there some day. (This is a fun ongoing activity for the student.)
5. Research "Can Brazil feed itself?" Present a debate on the major issues: arable land and the importance of water, transportation infrastructure, technology as well as biotechnology, land ownership, imports/exports of food products, family planning, etc.

6. Determine how Brazil is connected to and dependent upon the rest of the world.  
Construct maps showing world trade routes.
7. Study the effects of eco-tourism on the environment and why it matters.
8. Explore the issues of the Amazon Rainforest.

**Resources:**

**Web sites:**

Outline Map of Brazil: <http://abcteach.com/Maps/brazil.html>

Photo Library: [www.confluence.org](http://www.confluence.org)

U.S. Road Trip: [www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/features/onTheRoad/home/index.shtml](http://www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/features/onTheRoad/home/index.shtml)

Links to Articles, Images, Maps, etc: [www.earthguide.ucsd.edu](http://www.earthguide.ucsd.edu)

CIA World Factbook, Brazil: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/br.html>

Embassy of Brazil: <http://www.brasilemb.org/>

**Videos:**

Black Orpheus

**Trunk:**

Available from Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies-University of Texas at Austin, Outreach Office, 512/471-5551.

**Academic Standards:**

This unit may be used to address the academic standards listed below. These standards are drawn from the National Geographic Standards and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

**National Geography Element:**

World in Spatial Terms

- Knows how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Places and Regions

- Knows the physical characteristics of places (e.g., land, climate, natural vegetation and the natural resources).
- Knows the human characteristics of places (e.g., cultural characteristics such as religion, language, family structure, population characteristics, politics, land uses, level of development).

Human Systems

- Knows how to interpret spatial (geographic) characteristics of human systems, including interactions of cultures and economic activities.
- Knows ways in which communities reflect the cultural background of inhabitants (e.g. distinctive building styles, etc.).

## Environment and Society

- Knows how humans and physical environments interact.

### **Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for World Cultures:**

(3) Geography. The student uses maps, globes, graphs, charts, models, and databases to answer geographic questions. The student is expected to: (A) create thematic maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases depicting various aspects of world regions and countries such as population, disease, and economic activities; (C) compare selected world regions and countries using data from maps, graphs, charts, databases, and models.

(4) Geography. The student understands the characteristics and relative locations of major historical and contemporary societies. The student is expected to: (D) identify and explain the geographic factors responsible for the location of economic activities in places and regions.

(5) Geography. The student understands how geographic factors influence the economic development, political relationships, and policies of societies. The student is expected to: (A) explain factors such as location, physical features, transportation corridors and barriers, and distribution of natural resources that influence the economic development and foreign policies of societies; and (B) identify geographic factors that influence a society's ability to control territory and that shape the domestic and foreign policies of the society.

(17) Culture. The student understands relationships that exist among world cultures. The student is expected to: (A) explain aspects that link or separate cultures and societies.

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology. The student is expected to: (A) differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; and artifacts to acquire information about selected world cultures; (B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions; (C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps; (E) identify the elements of frame of reference that influenced participants in an event.

### **Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for World Geography:**

(8) Geography. The student understands how people, places, and environments are connected and interdependent. The student is expected to: (A) explain the interrelationships among physical and human processes that shape the geographic characteristics of places such as connections among economic development, urbanization, population growth, and environmental change; (B) compare ways that humans depend on, adapt to, and modify the physical environment using local, state,

national, and international human activities in a variety of cultural and technological contexts; (D) analyze statistical and other data to infer the effects of physical and human processes on patterns of settlement, population distribution, economic and political conditions, and resource distribution.

(11) Economics. The student understands the reasons for the location of economic activities (primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary) in different economic systems. The student is expected to: (A) map the locations of different types of economic activities; (B) identify factors affecting the location of different types of economic activities.

(16) Culture. The student understands how the components of culture affect the way people live and shape the characteristics of regions. The student is expected to: (B) give examples of ways various groups of people view cultures, places, and regions differently; and (C) compare life in a variety of cities and nations in the world to evaluate the relationships involved in political, economic, social, and environmental changes.

(18) Culture. The student understands the ways in which cultures change and maintain continuity. The student is expected to: (C) analyze examples of cultures that maintain traditional ways.