

## Social Studies

**Almanac Entries** provide brief facts and statistics about a topic.

### Text Feature

**Charts** organize information and make it easy to read and remember.

### Content Vocabulary

**commonwealth**    **dictators**  
**heritage**         **intersection**  
**hemisphere**

# Islands of the Caribbean

by Kaneesha Smith

On his first voyage to the New World in 1492, Christopher Columbus found sparkling blue water, warm sunshine, and a green tropical heaven. He had landed on the large Caribbean island he named Hispaniola. He described the island as “a land to be desired, and, once seen, never to be left.”

Columbus was the first of many explorers who came to the Caribbean islands looking for gold. Spanish, English, Dutch, and French adventurers came to make their fortunes. After the search for gold ended, settlers who followed the explorers began to farm the rich soil. Many of the islands became rich and important colonies of European countries. Later the people of many of these islands would rule themselves.



# Puerto Rico

During his second trip to the Americas, Columbus landed on the island of Puerto Rico, the fourth largest island in the Caribbean Sea. He claimed the land for Spain.

The name *Puerto Rico* means “rich port” in Spanish. Puerto Rico was once the name for San Juan, now Puerto Rico’s largest city and capital. Gradually, the name came to be used for the entire island.

Spain gave Puerto Rico to the United States in 1898 after losing the Spanish-American War. In 1917 people in the **commonwealth** of Puerto Rico became U.S. citizens. However, their Spanish **heritage** remains in their language and customs. Puerto Rico’s

pleasant climate, interesting sights, and beautiful mountains and beaches make it a popular vacation spot. Tourism has become an important business.

You can find more facts about the Caribbean Islands in an almanac. The chart below comes from an almanac entry about Puerto Rico.



## Reading a Chart

This chart provides information about Puerto Rico. The facts and statistics are organized in a way that makes them easy to read and remember.

### Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

|                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Population (2003):</b>  | 3,885,877           |
| <b>Official Languages:</b> | Spanish and English |
| <b>Total land area:</b>    | 3,425 square miles  |
| <b>Capital:</b>            | San Juan            |
| <b>National Flower:</b>    | Maga                |
| <b>National Bird:</b>      | Reinita             |
| <b>National Tree:</b>      | Ceiba               |
| <b>Climate:</b>            | mild                |



# Dominican Republic

Hispaniola is now two countries, Dominican Republic and Haiti. Dominican Republic covers two-thirds of the island. Santo Domingo, a busy port city, is the capital and largest city.

Dominican Republic was a colony of Spain. As a result its people speak Spanish and follow many of the customs of Spain.

Today most Dominicans live in cities and work in factories or for the government. However, some people farm, often on large sugar plantations.

African customs also have an important place in Dominican Republic. Dominicans particularly love music and dancing that mix the sounds of African instruments with those of Spain.



# Haiti

Haiti covers the western third of Hispaniola. The island was formed by the peaks of two undersea mountain chains. The name *Haiti* comes from an Indian word for “high ground.” Port-au-Prince is Haiti’s capital and largest city.

Haiti is the second oldest self-ruling nation in the Western **Hemisphere**, after the United States. It was a French colony until 1804, when it won its independence. Since then Haiti has been a republic, but at times it has been led by a series of **dictators**.

Haiti is one of the most densely populated countries in the Western

Hemisphere. Most of its people are descended from the Africans that were brought to Haiti as slaves, so there is a varied culture. Today its people speak French and Creole, a mix of French and African languages. Most of the people are sugarcane farmers.



# Cuba

Cuba is another large, mountainous island country. Cuba gained its independence in 1902. In 1959 Cuba became the only communist country in the Americas. The island lies at the **intersection** of major sea routes. This central location is one reason that Cuba was **an important Spanish colony**. Its people still speak Spanish and share many of the same customs you would find in Spain.

About three-quarters of Cuba's people live in cities. Havana is Cuba's

capital and largest city. Many city people work in small factories or for the government. Cubans who live in the country tend to be farmers. Sugarcane is Cuba's most important crop.

With its beauty, interesting people, and mix of farm and city life, the Caribbean Islands are truly "a land . . . never to be left."



## Connect and Compare



1. Look at the chart on page 223. What are the two official languages of Puerto Rico? **Reading a Chart**
2. Compare the countries you read about in this article. How are they alike? How are they different? **Analyze**
3. After reading *The Night of San Juan* and page 223 of "Islands of the Caribbean" what images of Puerto Rico do the two selections make you think of? **Reading/Writing Across Texts**



## Social Studies Activity

Choose another Caribbean country from the map on page 222. Look it up in an almanac. Using the information you find, create a brochure for tourists who might visit the country.



Find out more about the Caribbean islands at [www.macmillanmh.com](http://www.macmillanmh.com)



# Write to Persuade

## Writer's Craft

### Multiple Paragraphs

A **paragraph** starts with a topic sentence. The detail sentences work together to support the main idea. Transition words can help connect ideas between paragraphs. A strong conclusion sums up all the paragraphs.

## Rochester: A City for Families

by Maria L.

My paragraphs start with topic sentences. Details support the main ideas.

I used transition words to connect ideas between paragraphs.

Let me tell you about beautiful Rochester, New York. The city's attractions are so much fun, and there are so many cool places to visit.

You can spend hours at the Toy Hall of Fame in the Strong Museum. Its collection is huge and displays the best children's toys!

In addition, you can enjoy the outdoors in Rochester too. Our family loves to hike around Mendon Ponds Park and bike along the Erie Canal Heritage Trail. Of course, I shouldn't forget to mention lovely Ontario Beach Park!

No matter what you and your family enjoy, Rochester has it all. My friends and I know that you'll love New York's third largest city.

## Your Turn

Write an essay about your hometown. Tell why people should move there. Think about your audience. Choose ideas that will appeal to them. Include topic sentences and transition words. Use the writer's checklist to check your writing.



## Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Did I choose the best details to present to my audience?
- Organization:** Does each **paragraph** start with a topic sentence and include supporting details?
- Voice:** Do I sound sincere and believe what I say?
- Word Choice:** Did I choose words that are persuasive?
- Sentence Fluency:** Can the reader move smoothly from sentence to sentence?
- Conventions:** Did I check to be sure all of the plural nouns are spelled correctly? Did I make sure possessive nouns have apostrophes?