

# **Read and Respond: Location, Climate, and Natural Resources of Mexico and Venezuela**

## **Location of Mexico**

Mexico is the second-largest country by size and population in Latin America. It is the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. The country is located south of the United States. On the west is the Pacific Ocean, and on the east are the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

Mexico's location between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea allows it the opportunity to trade. There are seven major seaports in Mexico. Oil and other materials from Mexico can be easily shipped around the world to ports along the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Another advantage of Mexico's location is that it is close to the United States. Because the two countries share a border, trade is easier. Railroads and trucks can be used to ship goods. Mexico's main trading partner is the United States.

## **Climate of Mexico**

Mexico has the Sierra Madre Mountains, deserts in the north, tropical beaches, plains, and plateaus. The climate varies according to the location, with some tropical areas receiving more than 40 inches of rain a year. Desert areas in the north remain dry most of the year.

Most people live on the Central Plateau of Mexico in the central part of the country. Mexico City, one of the world's largest cities, is in this region. There is arable (farmable) land in this region, and there is usually enough rain to grow a variety of crops. The region has many manufacturing centers, which provide jobs. Over 75 percent of the people in Mexico live in urban (city) areas. This allows them to have jobs in manufacturing or service industries. About 25 percent of Mexico's workers are farmers. However, fewer people are choosing to work on farms because of the challenges of little rainfall and unproductive soil as well as little money for modern farm equipment and fertilizers.

## **Natural Resources of Mexico**

The people of Mexico are able to use their natural resources (gifts of nature) to trade with other countries. Oil is one of the most important exports (goods sold to other countries). Mexico is the tenth-largest oil exporter in the world. It exports about 1.7 million barrels of oil a day. Money from the sale of oil provides about a third of the Mexican government's budget. Mexico is also one of the world's largest exporters of silver. Silver mines in Mexico produce about 15 percent of the silver sold in the world each year. Other exports include fruits, vegetables, coffee, and cotton. The economy is boosted by tourism, too. The country is very close to the United States, so most of the tourists are American. In fact, three-fourths of Mexico's trade with other countries comes from the United States.

## **Location of Venezuela**

Venezuela is a much smaller Latin American country than Mexico. To the north are the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The country shares borders with Guyana on the east, Brazil on the south, and Colombia on the west.

Venezuela's coastline gives it easy access to trade with other countries. There are four major ports in the country. Oil can be loaded onto tankers and shipped to ports in the United States and Europe. The nearby Panama Canal provides a shortcut to the Pacific Ocean and trade with Asian countries.

## **Climate of Venezuela**

Venezuela lies in the tropics and is just north of the equator. This means that it has a hot, tropical climate all year. Only in high elevations such as the Andes will temperatures fall to the freezing point. Most rain falls from May to October. Along the coast, it is relatively dry with about 16 inches of rain each year. In higher elevations, annual rainfall is over 100 inches a year.

About 88 percent of the people in Venezuela live in urban areas along the coast in the northern part of the country. Although there is a lot of poverty, many professionals live in these urban areas, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, and government employees. These people give the country a large middle class. About 75 percent of Venezuelans make their living in service jobs such as education, health care, and hotel, transportation, and trade businesses. Service jobs are those that involve providing services to people rather than products.

## **Natural Resources of Venezuela**

Other Venezuelans make their living fishing in Lake Maracaibo, South America's largest lake, and along the coast of the Caribbean Sea. There is little arable land, so farming provides jobs for only 10 percent of the population.

The oil industry provides other jobs. Venezuela is the sixth-largest oil exporter in the world. It produces 2.8 million barrels of oil a day. Its location on the ocean gives it easy access to trade with countries around the world. About 90 percent of the money the government makes on trade with other countries comes from the oil business. In fact, half of the government's money comes from the oil business. The government has used this money to improve health care and education services, especially in poor communities. It has also used the money to make improvements in roads and telephone networks.

Venezuela and Mexico have common problems. For instance, millions of their citizens live in poor conditions. They have little or no health care, and their children do not have an opportunity for a good education. In addition, both countries depend on oil production for a large part of their trade. When the price of oil goes down, it is difficult for the government to pay its bills and help its people. The environmental cost of the production of oil is a problem, too. Pollution caused by oil will affect the land and air in these countries for many years to come.

## **Directions:**

1. Create a Double Bubble Thinking Map to compare Mexico and Venezuela using details from the reading to complete your thinking map on your own paper.
2. Create a frame to your thinking map answering the questions, "So What" What is this thinking map about? "So why" Why is it important to study location, climate, and natural resources of countries?