

LATIN AMERICA**Human-Environment Interaction**

In this section, you will learn about the impact humans have had on the environment in Latin America.

All questions require at least
THREE sentences on own paper.

PLACES & TERMS

slash-and-burn technique of cutting and burning trees, brush, and grasses to clear fields for planting

terraced farming ancient technique of cutting step-like fields for growing crops on hillsides or mountain slopes

push factors factors that push people to leave rural areas

pull factors factors that pull people to the cities

infrastructure things that contribute to making a place livable, such as sewers, roads, electricity, and housing

Agriculture Reshapes the Environment

Native peoples in the Western Hemisphere changed their environment to grow food. They changed the course of streams to irrigate their crops. They built raised fields in swampy areas.

Native peoples in Latin America cleared fields to grow crops. They used the **slash-and-burn** technique. That means they cut trees, brush, and grasses, and burned them to clear a field to plant. This method was particularly effective in humid and tropical areas.

Today, farmers practice the same method in the Amazon River basin in Brazil. They clear land for farming in the rain forest. But the people use destructive farming practices. After a few years, they find that the soil is exhausted—all the nutrients have been drained from the land. When that happens, they move on and clear a new patch to farm.

Terraced farming is an ancient technique for growing crops on hillsides or mountain slopes. Terraces are like wide steps cut into hillsides or slopes. Each wide step creates a flat area where crops can grow. Terraced farming allows steep land to be *cultivated*. Farmers and workers living in the mountainous areas of Latin America create these terraces. The technique also reduces soil erosion. The Inca of Peru practiced this technique hundreds of years ago.

1. How can farmers plant crops in mountainous areas?

Answer in at least **THREE SENTENCES** on own paper.

Urbanization: The Move to the Cities

Throughout Latin America, people are moving from

rural areas into the cities. People leave farms and villages in search of jobs and a better life. Cities have grown rapidly.

Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay are the most highly urban countries in South America. More than 85 percent of the people live in cities.

Many people in rural areas struggle to make a living. They grow barely enough to keep themselves and their families alive.

Both push and pull factors are at work. **Push factors** are factors that “push” people to leave rural areas, such as poor medical care, poor education, and low-paying jobs. **Pull factors** are factors that “pull” people toward cities, such as higher paying jobs, better schools, and better medical care.

Six cities in South America rank among the region’s largest. These include São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, Buenos Aires in Argentina, Lima in Peru, Bogotá in Colombia, and Santiago in Chile. But the biggest city in Latin America is Mexico City.

Similar problems *afflict* cities throughout the region. Slums spread over larger and larger areas. Often, unemployment and crime increase. In addition, there are many environmental problems. These include high levels of air pollution. Some cities have shortages of drinkable water.

Local governments cannot afford facilities—also called the **infrastructure** (including sewers, transportation, electricity, and housing)—to handle the population increase.

2. What problems are created by rapid urbanization?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.

Tourism: Positive and Negative Impacts

Tourism is a growth industry for Latin America. Every year, millions of tourists visit the resorts of Latin America. They spend money and help create jobs. New hotels, restaurants, boutiques, and other businesses have sprung up on Caribbean islands and in Mexico. Local people are hired to staff the ships, hotels, and restaurants. They profit from the visitors.

In this way, tourism can play a part in reducing the income gap between rich and poor. Jobs in hotels, restaurants, and resorts raise incomes and give people a stake in society.

Though tourism brings income and jobs to Latin America, it causes problems as well. Resorts may be built in previously unspoiled settings. Congestion and pollution begin to increase. Also, the gap between rich tourists and less well-off local residents can produce resentment and hostility.

More important, local governments can run up large public debts. They borrow money to build tourist facilities. Airports and harbors must be constructed. Hotels and resorts must be built. Sewage systems and shopping areas must be expanded.

Often, the profits go to the country of the owners and investors. These absentee owners often make decisions that are not in the tourist country’s best interest. They may also influence such things as local politics, elections, and business decisions.

3. What has created resentment in some tourist areas?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.