**IT MATTERS BECAUSE** The *countries of the Tropical North export products that are sought after and highly valued by the rest of the world.*

**Early History and Colonization**

**Guiding Question *How did Europeans colonize the Tropical North?***

The Tropical North’s indigenous peoples lived there for thousands of years before encountering Spanish explorers. These explorers invaded the region in the early 1500s. Less than 50 years later, the Spanish had conquered and colonized most of the region.

**Early Peoples of the Tropical North**

The Native Americans of the Tropical North included Carib, Arawak, and other hunter-gatherer peoples. They settled in villages along the Caribbean and Atlantic coasts.

To the west, the Cara and other peoples built fishing villages along the Pacific coast. Over time, groups like the Chibcha and Quitu moved inland to mountain valleys in the Andes. They created advanced societies that farmed, made cloth from cotton and ornaments of gold, and traded with the Inca, an advanced civilization that developed to the south. In the late 1400s, some of the groups were conquered by the Inca and became part of the Inca Empire.

**Arrival of the Europeans**

In the early 1500s, Spanish adventurers landed on the Caribbean and Atlantic coasts, seeking gold and enslaving Native peoples. When they met resistance and found no gold, they lost interest. The first Spanish settlements did not appear on the Caribbean coast—in Venezuela and Colombia—until 1523 and 1525. The Spanish made no effort to colonize east of Venezuela.

On the Pacific coast, the Spanish conquered the Inca in 1530 and seized their silver and gold. Driven by hunger for more wealth, they invaded Ecuador in 1534. By the mid-1500s, the conquest of the area that is now Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela was complete.

**Spanish Colonies**

To control their new colonies, the Spanish set up governments. Bogotá, which the Spanish founded in 1538, became the capital of Colombia in 1549. The Spanish placed Ecuador’s government at the native town of Quito in 1563. Caracas, which the Spanish founded in 1567, eventually became Venezuela’s capital. The Spanish located these cities where Native Americans already had settlements. Most were located inland, in the higher elevations where climates are milder than on the tropical coasts. For many years, Venezuela was ruled from Peru. In the 1700s, Spain placed Venezuela, Ecuador, and Colombia under a single government located at Bogotá.

Native American peoples suffered greatly under the Spanish. As in Brazil, thousands died from European diseases to which they had no natural immunity, or protection against illness. Others found themselves forced to work for the Spanish under a system called *encomienda*. This system allowed Spanish colonists to demand labor from the Native Americans who lived in a certain area.

The *encomienda* provided workers for Spanish mines and for the large estates, called haciendas, that developed in some rural areas. Native Americans in remote regions, such as Venezuela’s Llanos and the rain forests of eastern Ecuador and Colombia, came under the control of Roman Catholic missionaries who were trying to convert them to Christianity.

Most haciendas became plantations that grew coffee, tobacco, sugarcane, or other cash crops. Others, mostly on the Llanos, were cattle ranches. As the hacienda system grew, the Spanish brought in thousands of enslaved Africans to provide more labor. African slavery was most common in Venezuela.

**European Colonization**

The French, British, and Dutch fought over and colonized Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. The British and the Dutch established sugar plantations and brought the first enslaved Africans to the area. Control of these colonies changed hands several times in the 1600s and 1700s. Eventually, what is now Guyana became British Guiana. Suriname was called Dutch Guiana, and French Guiana became a colony of France.

**Skills Practice**

Work with a partner. Discuss today's lesson. Use social studies words in the discussion.

**Independence**

**Guiding Question *How did Spain’s colonies become independent countries?***

By the late 1700s, many Spanish colonists who were born in the Americas wanted independence from their Spanish rulers. Inspired by the French and American Revolutions, their chance came in 1808, when the French ruler Napoleon invaded and conquered Spain. Spain found it difficult to fight the French in Europe and to rule its colonies. Some of the colonists in the Americas took this opportunity to fight for independence from Spain.

**Overthrow of Colonial Rule**

Ecuadorans rose up against Spanish rule in 1809. Colombians and Venezuelans soon followed. A long war began, at first mainly between groups who remained loyal to Spain and those who favored independence. After the Spanish expelled the French from Spain in 1814, Spain’s king sent troops to South America to try to restore Spanish control. In the south, resistance to the Spanish was led by Argentine general José de San Martín. In the north, Venezuela’s Simón Bolívar led the revolt.

Spanish forces were not finally defeated until 1823. In 1819, however, Bolívar united Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador to form an independent republic called Gran Colombia. He became its first president.

**Independent Countries**

Gran Colombia broke apart after Bolívar’s death in 1830. Ecuador and Venezuela formed independent countries. Colombia and Panama remained united as one country. In the early 1900s, Panama separated from Colombia and became independent.

Independence and self-government did not bring democracy and peace. Wealthy landholders competed with wealthy city businesspeople for control of the government. Conflict over the Catholic Church’s role in society added to the unrest. The tensions resulted in civil wars in Colombia and Venezuela. Throughout the history of Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela, military or civilian leaders often ruled as dictators.

**Labor and Immigration**

While Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela struggled with self-government, British, Dutch, and French Guiana remained colonies. The British ended slavery in their colony in 1838. The French and the Dutch followed in 1863.

To replace the once-enslaved workers, British and Dutch plantation owners recruited laborers from India and China. The Dutch also imported workers from their colony in the East Indies, now Indonesia. The immigrants had to work on their colony’s sugar, rice, coffee, or cacao plantations for a required length of time. At the end of their contract, they were free. Many stayed in the colony and, like the formerly enslaved people they replaced, founded towns along the coast.

In 1852 France began sending convicted criminals to its colony. More than 70,000 convict laborers arrived between 1852 and 1939. The worst convicts were imprisoned off the coast on notorious Devil’s Island.

**Challenges and Change**

**Guiding Question *What challenges do the countries of the Tropical North face?***

The political and social problems that plagued Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela after independence continued through most of the twentieth century. Venezuela, for example, did not achieve a peaceful transfer of power between opposing groups until 1969. Meanwhile, the region’s other countries, which gained independence in the twentieth century, experienced similar issues and challenges.

**Gaining Independence**

Independence came slowly for Guyana and Suriname. The British granted their colony limited self-government in 1891. In 1953 all colonists were given the right to vote and allowed to elect a legislature. Guyana finally gained independence in 1966.

Colonists in Dutch Guiana obtained the right to vote in 1948 and self-government in 1953. The colony became the independent country of Suriname in 1975.

The people of French Guiana became French citizens and gained the right to vote in 1848. In 1946 French Guiana’s status changed from a colony to an overseas department, or district, of the country of France. French Guiana remains part of France and has representatives in France’s national legislature.

**Revolutions and Borders**

The Tropical North’s lack of strong, stable governments has resulted in major unrest in its countries, as well as conflicts between them. In Colombia, assassinations and other violence between feuding political groups took as many as 200,000 lives between 1946 and 1964. In the 1960s and 1970s, small rebel groups began making attacks throughout the country in hopes of overthrowing the government.

Ecuador’s government has not maintained control over its remote region, which lies in the Amazon Basin, to the east of the Andes. In the 1940s, Peru seized some of this land. The two countries often clashed, until a settlement was finally reached in 1968. In 2008 tensions between Ecuador and Colombia were strained after Colombian forces attacked a Colombian rebel camp in Ecuador’s territory. In 2010 Colombia accused Venezuela of allowing Colombian rebels to live in its territory. War was narrowly avoided.

Guyana’s independence renewed an old border dispute with Venezuela that arose when Guyana was a British colony. The dispute was not settled until 2007. Another dispute arose on Guyana’s eastern border after Suriname gained independence in 1975. Several clashes took place before that boundary was settled in 2007. Guyana also experienced years of social and political unrest as its African and South Asian populations competed for power.

Like Guyana, Suriname has faced internal unrest since independence. The military removed civilian leaders in 1980 and again in 1990. Meanwhile, rebel groups of Maroons, the descendants of escaped enslaved workers, disrupted the country’s bauxite mining in an effort to overthrow the government. The army responded by killing thousands of Maroon civilians. Thousands more fled to safety in French Guiana.

**LESSON 2 REVIEW**

**Reviewing Vocabulary**

**TEKS:** 22A

**1. *Determine Word Meanings*** How were the *encomienda* and the *hacienda* related?



**Answering the Guiding Questions**

**TEKS:** 5B, 21B

**2. *Summarizing*** What geographic factors made the Spanish more interested in colonizing Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela than Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana?



**TEKS:** 21B

**3. *Identifying Cause and Effect*** How did the plantation system affect the human and physical geography in the Tropical North?



**TEKS:** 1A, 1B

**4. *Identifying*** What factors led to Spain’s colonies gaining their independence and the unrest that followed?



**TEKS:** 1A, 21B

**5. *Sequencing*** Use the following dates to write a summary of historical events in the Tropical North: 1808, 1809, 1814, 1819, 1823. Use sequencing words, such as *first, next,* and *last*. Then, analyze the sequence of events and write down the major idea the events present.



**TEKS:** 1A, 1B, 21B

**6. *Identifying Cause and Effect*** Why do the nations of the Tropical North have a history of tense relations and internal unrest?



**TEKS:** 21B

**7. *Contrasting*** What characteristic sets French Guiana apart from the other countries in the Tropical North?



**TEKS:** 21E

**8. *Argument Writing*** Take the position of either Simón Bolívar or José de San Martín. Write a two-paragraph letter of encouragement to the other leader, urging him to continue in the struggle for freedom from Spain. Remind him why you are fighting. Include evidence from the text to support your leader’s argument.