

CATEGORY: BRAZIL: 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

CONCEPTS: AGRICULTURE, economics, interdependence, land reform, work, urbanization

ACTIVITY: WHAT IS A COFFEE FAZENDA? This unit summarizes the history of coffee, how it is cultivated, and the importance of this product in the economic life of Brazil.

OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of this unit, the student will have a general background on the production of coffee. In addition, the student will be able to describe a coffee FAZENDA: what it looks like and how it works. A general notion of the importance of coffee in Brazil's economy and the amount of trade with the U.S. will also be known to the student. Identification of terms related to the coffee industry will also be accomplished.

MATERIALS: Reproductions of the following article and the word puzzle.

PROCEDURE: Distribute reproductions of the article to students. Read with them, taking occasional pauses to analyze the content of the article and explain any ideas unclear to the students. After the reading is completed a general discussion of the article might clarify any doubts. Complete the exercise with the attached word game.

VOCABULARY: Kaffa, fazenda, fazendeiro, arroba (25 lbs.), São Paulo, Santos

RESOURCES: Rollie Poppino, Brazil: Land and People, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968. Celso Furtado, The Economic Growth of Brazil: A Survey from Colonial to Modern Times, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.

**LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES**

Source: Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades*. Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985. 1989.

## WHAT IS A FAZENDA DE CAFE?

"O BRASIL É CAFÉ!" "Brazil is Coffee" was the expression used to describe Brazil at a time when coffee dominated not only the economy, but also the politics and social life of the nation. From 1830 to 1964, coffee was Brazil's principal export. In 1924 it provided 3/4 (75%) of the country's export earnings. Coffee still occupies a very important place in the Brazilian economy. In 1980, coffee exports earned Brazil \$2,772 million (U.S.), about 14% of Brazil's total export earnings.

Coffee originated on the plains of Ethiopia. In the southwest part of that country, where the coffee bush grows wild, there is a village called KAFFA. The name of this village gave the coffee fruit its name. Coffee was taken from Ethiopia to Arabia at some time in the distant past, and from there was spread throughout the Mediterranean. The Islamic countries prohibited alcoholic beverages and so coffee (which is a stimulant) became very popular. This drink was then passed to Europe where it became a favorite drink of the rich and intellectuals. The French introduced coffee into the New World. At the beginning of the 18th century they began to grow it on the island of Martinique. Soon after, the Dutch began large scale cultivation in Suriname.

In 1727, the Governor General of the State of Maranhão in Brazil sent an expedition to Martinique. Upon return, the expedition secretly brought several coffee seeds, which were planted. Coffee grew very well in Brazil and was cultivated on a large scale before long. In 1731, the first shipment of coffee was exported to Portugal. This first shipment was 7 ARROBAS (1 arroba = 25 pounds). By 1750, the amount of coffee exported had grown to 4,835 arrobas a year. Soon, more and more FAZENDEIROS (plantation owners) turned their FAZENDAS (plantations) to coffee production. Today, Southeast Brazil looks like a single enormous coffee plantation and this region is known as "coffee land."

The city of São Paulo is the capital of coffee land, and Santos is its port. Outside São Paulo, large coffee fazendas are located. Miles and miles of land are covered with coffee bushes, which are from 8 to 15 feet high. We can imagine we are driving through the São Paulo countryside. After a few miles, we enter a beautiful gateway which opens on what looks like a park. We soon realize we have entered a large fazenda.

The word "fazenda" means in Portuguese "place of labor." Fazendas are large plantations, generally of coffee, cotton or sugarcane. A fazenda usually contains hundreds of workers cottages, a church, a hospital, a store, and a school. The most beautiful building is always the home of the fazenda owner. Often, the homes contain as many as six reception rooms and twenty bedrooms for the owner's family and guests, and are usually quite old. The walls, generally made of adobe and stones that were pounded into place by slaves, are about 36 inches thick and provide excellent insulation in all temperatures. In contrast, the homes of the farmworkers are small huts made of mixed mud and grass, with thatched roofs and earth floors.

Laborers work on the plantation from dawn to dusk. They take care of the coffee bushes and pick the berries in season. Coffee picking season lasts from about May to September in Brazil. Remember that September is late winter in the Southern Hemisphere.

When coffee bushes are about four years old, white flowers appear on their branches. Then come the cherry-like berries, which contain two beans each. A single tree may have ripe, red berries, green berries and flowers all at the same time. Workers pick the ripe berries, separate the leaves and dirt and then take them to warehouses, where they are washed in large vats. The berries are then spread out on the floor to dry. After some time, a machine strips off the thin outer skin of the berries to get to the two seeds which are the coffee beans.

The coffee beans are now separated according to quality. The best are large, plump, rounded beans with a fine aroma. Professional tasters seated at revolving tables test the brew. They can rate or grade up to two dozen cups of coffee in one minute, relying mostly on aroma. Finally, the beans are packed into bags and sent to the nearest seaport: Santos.

Santos is the world's greatest coffee port. Its large harbor has over 5 kilometers (3 miles) of concrete docks. Over 200 million sacks of beans are shipped yearly from Brazil (1 sack = 132 pounds). Coffee is exported to Argentina, Uruguay, Norway and Sweden. But, Brazil's biggest coffee customer is the United States. The U.S. usually buys up to two-thirds of Brazil's entire yearly coffee crop.

## WORD PUZZLE

Find and circle the words that tell part of the story of coffee.  
Can you remember and explain their meaning?

F A Z E N D E I R O M A  
 Z M B R A Z I L F L A S  
 E G R T B E A N S D R G  
 T K A D S A N T O S A K  
 H V Z T I R L G C R N A  
 I J I P N C A F E O H F  
 O H L C I G P C N U Ã F  
 P D I S Ã O P A U L O A  
 I F A Z E N D A P R V F  
 A A N A R R O B A I N S

(Answers: Brazil, Brazilian, Fazenda, Fazendeiro,  
 São Paulo, Santos, Beans, Ethiopia, Café, Maranhão,  
 Kaffa, Arroba.)