Brazil

A Reading A–Z Level T Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,090

Discussion Questions

Compare and Contrast:

How are the Pantanal and the Amazon Rainforest alike? How are they different?

Cause and Effect:

In the past, Brazil was a colony of Portugal. How has this past affected what Brazil is like today?

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Brazil

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COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD

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Front and back cover: Iguazu (EH-gwah-SOO) Falls is a series of waterfalls between Brazil and Argentina.

Title page: Beautiful hyacinth macaws live in Brazil. They are in danger of disappearing from the Earth due to habitat loss.

Page 3: People wear colorful costumes and dance in parades during Carnaval, a holiday in Brazil.

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Countries Around the World
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Correlation

LEVEL T	
Fountas & Pinnell	P
Reading Recovery	38
DRA	38

Table of Contents

Where Is It? 4

People 6

Land 8

History 10

Celebrations 11

Animals 12

Conclusion 14

Glossary 16

Where Is It?

Brazil is the largest country in South America and covers nearly half of the entire continent. It is almost as large as the entire United States.

The western half of Brazil shares a border with many smaller countries. These countries include Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, and Uruguay.

To the east of Brazil is the Atlantic Ocean. The country's coastline is more than 7,400 kilometers (4,600 mi.) long.

The capital of Brazil is Brasília (bruh-ZIL-yuh), which is located near the middle of the country. However, Brasília wasn't always the capital. The larger city of Rio de Janeiro (REE-oh DAY zhuh-NAIR-oh), located on the east coast of the country, was the capital until 1960. The government decided to build a new capital city farther inland.

Brasília is filled with many modern buildings.

Although it is still new, Brasília is growing quickly. More than two million people live and work there. Many people work for the government, since the city is Brazil's political center.

People

More than 200 million people live in Brazil, and eight out of every ten people live in cities. The country has several large cities, including São Paulo (SOW POW-low), the largest city in South America.

Many people in Brazil work in service industries, such as construction, banking, education, and healthcare. Large hotels and restaurants line many of the country's beaches, providing work for people living along the coast. Other Brazilians work in factories, making cars, airplanes, and steel. Many of these factories are located around São Paulo.

In the countryside, people work in mining and farming. Brazil is a leading producer of minerals such as iron ore, tin, and even gold. Brazil's farmers grow much of the world's coffee on huge **plantations**. They also grow oranges, **cassava**, and soybeans. Some farmers raise hogs and chickens, and ranchers raise cattle.

Brazil grows the most popular type of coffee, called *Arabica*.

Pelé

Futebol

Many Brazilians enjoy watching and playing soccer, which they call *futebol* (FOOT-bohl). Brazil has won the World Cup, the world's largest soccer tournament, more than any other country. The country's most famous soccer player—Pelé—is known around the world. Pelé led his team to victory in the World Cup in 1958, 1962, and in 1970.

Brazilians come from many different backgrounds. Some are descended from the native people who first lived there. Many others are descended from people who came to Brazil from far-away countries such as Portugal, Spain, Germany, and other places in Europe. In fact, Brazil was a colony of Portugal for three hundred years, and the main language in Brazil is Portuguese (POR-chuh-geez). Many other people are descended from slaves brought to the country from Africa to work on plantations and in mines.

Land

The Amazon River carries more water than any other river on Earth.

Many rivers flow through Brazil, making the soil rich and good for growing crops. However, one river clearly stands out. The Amazon River is one of the widest and longest rivers in the world, flowing for at least 6,400 kilometers (4,000 mi.) through northern Brazil. Its waters feed the vast Amazon basin, which covers nearly half of Brazil and about 7 million square kilometers (3 million sq. mi.). The largest tropical rainforest in the world, the Amazon rainforest, is also located here.

Brazil is so large that it includes five main regions. The landforms in each region are so different that they are like separate countries. The north and southeast regions include **highlands**. In the north, the Guiana Highlands consist of steep mountains and deep valleys. In the southeast, hills and low mountain **plateaus** make up the Brazilian Highlands.

Brazil's long east coast makes up another region. It includes beautiful sandy beaches, which are some of the main attractions for tourists visiting the country.

The **Pantanal** is located in central Brazil. It is one of the world's largest freshwater wetlands and extends for thousands of miles around the **tributaries** of several different rivers.

History

The first known people who lived in Brazil were American Indians. Different groups of these people still live in the jungles and along the banks of the Amazon River today.

In the early sixteenth century, Portugal claimed Brazil. The Portuguese used the land to collect a type of wood called *pau brasil* (POW brah-SEEL), or brazilwood. This unique type of wood is how the new colony got its name. The Portuguese forced many of the American Indians to work on huge **sugarcane** plantations. Later, slaves were brought from Africa to work on coffee plantations and in diamond and gold mines.

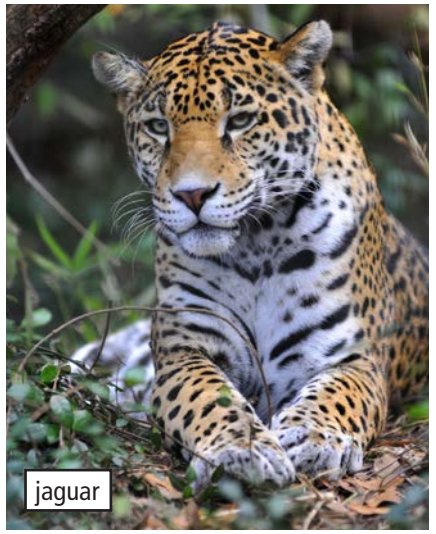
In 1822, Brazil became an independent country ruled by an emperor. Slavery ended in 1888. In 1889, the emperor at the time was forced by the military to step down, and Brazil became a republic. In a republic, the people usually choose their leaders, but this didn't always happen in Brazil. Instead, the people were often led by **dictators**. After much turmoil, the country became a democracy in 1985.

Rio de Janeiro has the largest Carnaval celebration in Brazil. It is held in a special building called the *Sambadrome*.

Celebrations

Many holidays in Brazil are religious in nature. Most Brazilians belong to the **Catholic** faith, a religion that was brought to Brazil by the Portuguese. However, because Brazilians come from many different backgrounds, religious customs of other groups—such as American Indian and African—are also followed.

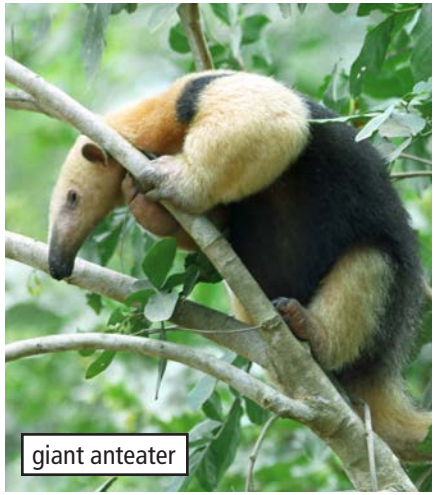
Carnaval is the largest and most popular holiday in Brazil. It is a four-day celebration leading up to Lent, which is the forty-day period in which Catholics prepare for Easter. During Carnaval, people crowd into Brazil's streets for parades and dancing. Many people wear elaborate costumes with masks and headdresses.



Animals

Brazil is home to the widest variety of life on Earth. The Amazon rainforest provides a home to more animals—and plants—than any other environment in the world. Colorful birds such as the toucan (TOO-kan) live there, as well as jaguars and ocelots (OS-uh-lotz). Slow-moving sloths hang from trees, and giant anacondas slither along the forest floor. Many different types of monkeys swing from the trees.

In the Amazon River, meat-eating fish called *piranhas* (pi-RAH-nuhz) hunt in groups of one hundred or more. Large manatees swim through the water.


giant anteater

golden lion tamarin

Other parts of Brazil, such as the Pantanal wetlands, also include unique animals. Storks and herons build nests in the Pantanal's trees. Colorful parrots, such as the blue and yellow macaw, fly overhead. Deer and jaguar roam the land. Giant anteaters also live in the Pantanal.

Sadly, some animals in the Amazon rainforest and the Pantanal could disappear from Earth forever. Every year, trees are cut down for timber and to clear land for farming. As a result, animals like the jaguar and the golden lion tamarin, a type of monkey, are losing their habitat. Many organizations are working together with the Brazilian government to keep this from happening.

The large city of Rio de Janeiro is also known for its many beautiful beaches.

Conclusion

Brazil is a country filled with life. The Amazon rainforest teems with more living things than anywhere else on Earth. The people in the cities and countryside have vibrant celebrations unlike any other.

From its land to its animals and people, the vast country of Brazil has many things to learn about and explore.

Brazil

Population: 202,656,788

Land: 8,458,417 sq km (3,265,813 sq. mi.)

Capital City: Brasília

Primary Language: Portuguese

Primary Religion: Catholic

Currency: Real (ray-AHL)

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (July 2014), World Bank

Glossary

cassava *(n.)* a plant with thick roots that grows in the tropics and is used in cooking (p. 6)

Catholic *(adj.)* of or having to do with the Roman Catholic Church, a branch of Christianity (p. 11)

dictators *(n.)* leaders who rule with total power, usually by force (p. 10)

highlands *(n.)* areas with many mountains; land that is high above sea level (p. 8)

Pantanal *(n.)* wetlands in south central Brazil that extend into Paraguay and Bolivia (p. 9)

plantations *(n.)* large farms with many workers (p. 6)

plateaus *(n.)* large raised areas of flat land (p. 8)

sugarcane *(n.)* a tropical grass that sugar comes from (p. 10)

tributaries *(n.)* rivers or streams that flow into larger rivers (p. 9)