

# **STORIES OF INSPIRED YOUTH**

## **ABOUT LATIN AMERICA**

Written by the 5th-8th graders of the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program, Chicago, IL.  
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## **ABOUT LATIN AMERICA**

### **1. MARIBEL SANCHEZ: RAINFORESTS**

A rainforest is a dense, wet forest. The trees produce oxygen. Plants in the rainforests can be used in medicine. Tropical rainforests are found around the equator. Rainforests get 80 inches of rain each year. The temperature is usually 75-80 degrees Fahrenheit. The soil of a tropical rainforest is thin and ancient, and is only about 3-4 inches. Tropical rainforests are very important to the Earth's ecosystem, and only cover

about 7% of Earth's surface. Bananas, cocoa, mango, cinnamon, vanilla, oranges, and pineapples grow in the rainforests. Indigenous people live in the rainforests. Since the soil in the rainforest is so poor, and another part of it is cleared, their gardens move around a lot. (Information from "Enchanted Learning Software.")

## **2. GUSTAVO VALENCIA: THE KEEL-BILLED TOUCAN**

That bird is from South America and it has a big beak. It is not a good flyer. He hops around trees. They live in low land rain forest and holes in trees. It is about two feet long and the bill is one third of his leg. The bill is light and bright. It has one toe less than we do. Toucans like fruit but they also eat bird eggs. Females lay eggs but both parents feed and keep eggs warm.

## **3. ASHTON BROWN: PERU**

Peru is the third largest country in South America. Peru is almost the same size as Alaska. In Peru they often have a lot of earth quakes. The earth quake killed about several hundred people in 1990. Peru often has floods and mudslides. These floods, mudslides, and earthquakes destroyed hundreds of miles of roads and left about 200,000 people homeless. Peru's population is 26.6 million. About 45 percent is Indian, descendants of the Incan Empire, 31 percent are mestizo, and 15 percent are European descendants. In Peru they travel on buses. In rural areas, people travel on animals. Peruvians are well educated. Public education is free between ages seven and sixteen.

## **4. DAYSY DIAZ: POTATOES**

If you like potatoes, thank the Andes. Andes developed potatoes over thousands of years ago. Potatoes came in different colors and there are 600 different kinds. Sweet potato is a plant entirely different, which originated in the Caribbean.

**5. AMBAR ARVIDEZ: ALPACA** Alpaca are mammals. They are a relative of camels and llamas. Alpaca have many colors, like brown, black, white, and gray. Alpaca only eat plants. They don't eat meat. One of their biggest enemies are the puma. They live in the Andes Mountains in western south America. They're smaller than llamas. Alpaca live to be 15-20 years or older.

## **6. SALVADOR PRADO: FIDEL CASTRO**

He was born in 1926 in Havana, Cuba. He also went to school at a Roman Catholic School. The Congress foiled at Bautista, canceled elections in 1952. His career was in politics. He is also the longest-serving in the world today. Castro of his family he was also popular. He is the President in

Cuba. Nearly million people go in exile every day. He is 80 years old and until recently has had good health. They all wonder what happens in his death. He named his brother Raúl as his successor, but they are almost the same age. He began to appoint younger men to top jobs.

### **7. CORZAY YOUNG: FIDEL CASTRO**

Fidel Castro was born on August 13, 1926. He was a member of the Orthodox Party. On July 26 in 1953, he launched an attack on the Moncaja army barracks. He went into exile in Mexico. He trained and assembled a July 26 Movement. He had support from Che Guevara and others before he left Cuba in 1956. Bautista was forced to flee in 1959. The United States government tried various schemes to assassinate Fidel Castor and continues to economically isolate Cuba.

### **8. DANIEL ARVIDEZ: JOSÉ MARTÍ**

José Martí is known as the father of people of Cuba. José Martí was born in 1855. At fifteen years old he worked with the newspaper *The Free Fatherland*. He moved across Europe, Central America, and Mexico. In 1881 he moved to New York to live with his wife. José Martí fought for Cuba because the United States was trying to control Cuba. José Martí was stressing the need for democracy, social justice, and racial equality. José Martí was killed in Cuba in 1895. In 1902 they became an independent republic. Later it was led by dictators.

### **9. MARCO SUAREZ: VENEZUELA**

I learned that you have to be polite a lot. Venezuela is bigger than Texas and Oklahoma. Venezuela has a population of 23.2 million, which is growing at 1.7 percent annually. The most popular sports in Venezuela are baseball and basketball. Good medical facilities can be found in urban areas, but the best are private and very expensive for the average citizen.

To the east of the Orinoco River is a large plain (llano). The rainy season is from May to November. Before the arrival of Columbus, Venezuela was inhabited by a number of indigenous groups, including the Caracas, Arawaks, and Cumanagotos. A freely elected president came to power in 1958, and democratic elections have been held since. They named the area Venezuela (Little Venice) because the coastal homes were built on stilts, reminding them of Venice, Italy. Record-low oil prices in the late 1990s deepened Venezuela's economic crisis.

Students are required to take English courses in high school. Venezuelans admire honesty, generosity, and a good sense of humor. In all areas and at all levels of society, it is important to look one's best and be properly groomed. During conversation, people stand much closer than they do in

the United States. Backing away is improper. Venezuelans generally use their hands during conversation to communicate or emphasize a point. Family ties are strong and most families are close-knit. Dating and courtship traditions are similar to those in other Western countries. The standards of living of most Venezuelans is falling. Venezuela features beautiful natural sights as well as numerous cosmopolitan resorts. I liked it because it was interesting.

#### **10. JASMINE TRIPP: HUGO CHAVEZ**

Hugo Chavez was the 61<sup>st</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> president of Venezuela. He launched Bolivarian Missions, whose goals are to combat disease, illiteracy, malnutrition, poverty, and other social ills. He was named one of Time magazine's 100 most influential people in 2005 and 2006. He was born on July 28, 1954 in Sabenta, Barinas, Venezuela.

#### **11. FABRICIO SALAZAR: ECUADOR**

The passage that I read was about Ecuador. Ecuador was named after the equator. Ecuador has four geographic regions – La Costa, La Sierra, El Oriente, and Archipiélago de Colón, where Charles Darwin developed his theories. Also, the climate varies with elevation more than with season. The coastal lowlands are hot and humid, while the highlands include everything from subtropical valleys to frigid mountains. Another interesting fact about Ecuador is that it is located at the center of the El Niño weather phenomenon.

Three groups conquered Ecuador between 1400-1800 and they were the Incas, Spaniards, and DeSucre. I learned that Ecuador along with Colombia and Venezuela gained its independence in 1922 and became part of Gran Colombia. Ecuador declared itself a republic in 1830. Peru wanted to conquer some territory of Ecuador and this led to many battles until 1998. Ecuador had 62 presidents, dictators, and military juntas.

#### **12. JASMINE TRIP: TICOS (COSTA RICANS)**

Costa Ricans like to call themselves Ticos, which also comes from the old saying, "We are all hermanitos: [little brothers]. Tico means small or little. Also -tico and -ico are usually at the end of Spanish words. Costa Ricans say gordo (fat) and flaco (thin), but they are not saying anything bad to people. They also say mi amor (my love) to make other people feel friendly and welcome. They like to introduce themselves and they are very polite when they say hello and goodbye.

#### **13. CORTEZ YOUNG: HERNAN CORTES**

Hernan Cortes was a Spanish explorer and conquistador. He was known for taking over the Aztec empire and claiming Mexico for Spain. He was born in 1485 in Medellin, Extremadura. In 1499 he studied law, but not for

long. He wanted to explore the New World. Later Cortez joined the army, then was elected Mayor-Judge of Santiago.

Cortez sailed for Mexico. When he landed he suppressed the town. Then soon he met his wife, Malinche. He also learned about the Aztec Empire. Then he came inland with his troops forcing an alliance. Then he pretended to be Que5tzalcoatl, and they entered Tenochtitlan. Also Cortez killed the Aztec emperor Montezuma, and claimed the land for Spain in 1521.

In 1521 Tenochtitlan fell because a plague killed many Aztecs. In 1528 he went home to Spain. Then he was a hero in his homeland and given the title "Marques del Valle de Oaxaca." Cortez was also appointed the governor of the New Spain, but fell out of favor with the royals.

Lastly he fought against the pirates of Africa in 1541. Later in the same year he went back to the New World, and led a force against the Mayans. Cortez died on December 2, 1547 near Seville, Spain.

#### **14. KEONA PETERSON: THE LEGEND OF THE VOLCANOES**

It's about the Emperor and his wife who had a baby girl named Iztaccíhuatl, which means white lady. She fell in love with the chief named Popoca. He went to the war and his enemy said he died. Izta went out and didn't stop crying and she died. While the Emperor was preparing the funeral, the warriors arrived victorious and he found out she was dead. They built a funeral table and the bodies turned into great volcanoes. Then he died of sadness and Popocatépetl is the biggest volcano.

#### **15. ALEJANDRO SOTO: QUETZAL**

Quetzals are birds that live in Central American rain forests. They were really important to the Mayas. Their feathers are iridescent green, deep green, red, and white. They eat mostly fruity, but also eat worms, frogs, insect larvae, and snails. Predators who eat Quetzals include the kinka jou, and the gray squirrel, and the hawk eagle and owls. Quetzals are the national bird of Guatemala. Quetzals are really endangered and scientists are trying to help them.

#### **16. KEONA PETERSON: CHE GUEVARRA**

Che Guevarra was born in Argentina in 1928. He qualified as a doctor. He became a commander in the Rebel Army. In 1967 he was captured by the Bolivians Che's memory lives on in posters, monuments, books. In 1965 Guevara left Cuba. His passion was helping the poor. He was a hero to the radical groups because of his ideals and brilliant intellect.

### **17. ANDRE TRIPP: THE SMILING RABBIT**

One day it was an old coyote and they were trying to find food but they couldn't find anything and it was a rabbit and they wanted to eat that for their food but there was a jaguar too. And the rabbit didn't know that they wanted to eat him, so the jaguar told the rabbit that the people wanted to eat the jaguar but the rabbit thought they were making hot chocolate for breakfast. And the rabbit told Jaguar that and the Jaguar believed it, so the Rabbit told the Jaguar to get in a cage. And the Rabbit tricked the Jaguar, by the jaguar getting into the cage. And then the jaguar was trying to get so he caught the rabbit. Then he tricked him again by telling the Jaguar he did not know the jaguar because he was scared of the rabbit. Then he tricked him again by telling the Jaguar to hold up the wall but I think that is kind of strange. But at the end of the story the jaguar was really trying to get him. He saw him when he went on the branch, and the jaguar pulled the branch back so hard that it snapped and he lost him, so he didn't get him really that good because the rabbit got stuck in the moon. And we still see the rabbit laughing, on the moon.

### **18. LUIS LOPEZ: LLORONAS**

What happened is that the dad said when he was a kid he saw a woman and he wanted to talk to her but she didn't answer until the kid knew that she was floating and he got scared because she said, "My children," and he ran back. The people who was involved was a grandma and son and the Llorona. It is kind of scary because I am a kid. It took place at Mexico in 1997 at a stream. The only way it effect people is the kids because she only take children because she killed her own children. She just did something to her kids and crazy women because she is looking for her kids.

### **19. MARCO SUAREZ: RAINFORESTS**

Latin America is home to some of the richest forest and marine ecosystems on Earth. Latin America's Amazon rainforests provide a home for thousands of rare animals.

Logging, mining and energy-related development, as well as the production of agricultural products for export have taken a severe toll on many Latin American wildlands.

U.S.-based environmental groups including NRDC have been able to play major roles in a broad range of campaigns to protect the people wild life and natural landscapes of Latin America.

Illegal logging continues to devour the Amazon rainforest's native cultures and biologically rich habitat, particularly in Peru and Brazil.

## **20. FERMIN ESTRADA: BRAZIL**

Brazil is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world. Brazil is bigger than the U.S. It has the largest tropical rain forest. It has the world's largest river, the Amazon River. In 1500 Portugal took over Brazil.

**PEOPLE:** Brazil's population is approximately 172 million people. The East coast's population is 90% of all Brazilians. Fifty percent of Brazilians were under 20 years old. Most Christians in Brazil are Catholic. Portuguese is widely spoken in Brazil. Most Brazilians have descended from other countries, such as, Portugal.

**CUSTOMS:** Many Brazilians exchange kisses and hugs when they greet each other. When it's a nice day people visit with each other outside. Brazilians eat continental style, for example, in the right hand with a knife and in the left hand with a fork. In Brazil people get offended by personal questions, for example, salary and age. Extended families get together to eat lunch on Sundays.

## **21. OSVALDO ESTRADA: RIO DE JANEIRO**

Rio de Janeiro means in English River of January. It's a state and a city in southern Brazil. It's famous for its spectacular setting. There is a statue of Jesus called Cristo Redentor in Corcovado mountain. Rio is very famous. It has 10 to 11 million people called Cariocas.

After two years of bloody conflict the French were expelled and settlers began to cultivate the fertile lands. In the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the city's importance and population increased immensely as it became the main shipping port for gold and diamonds that came from Minas Gerais. By 1891 the city had prospered economically and had a population of over 600,000.

Prior to 1960, Rio de Janeiro was the capital of Brazil. After 1960 Brasilia was the capital. Rio de Janeiro is still a major cultural capital. For example, Rio de Janeiro has an annual party called the carnival. Carnival enlivens the city with music, singing, parties, balls, and street parades and costumed dancers.

## **22. SBHAT NEGASSI: THE AMAZON RIVER**

How great is the Amazon River? The Amazon River is between 6,259 km./3,903 mi. and 6,712 km./4,145 mi. long. The Amazon River is the biggest river in the world because the volume of water is greater than the Nile River. In the Amazon River when the season is dry, 10,000 square km of land are covered with water. When the season is wet the Amazon Basin rises to 350,000 square km. Of land are covered with water. When the

Amazon River is full it drains to the ocean.

The Amazon: Home of Extremes: There are catfish, arapaima, anaconda, and piranha live in the Amazon home. The catfish weighed about 200 lb. When they grow up.

Amazon River fact: The river gets big because it is at the equator and each year it rains about 400 in./1,016 cm.

### **23. SAM MURPHY: ANACONDAS, PIRANHAS**

Anacondas are about 37.5 feet. It eats fish, deer, rats, rodents. It kills by squeezing their prey to death. It goes in the water and could swim. It is a giant.

Piranhas eat fish, rodents, and lizards. It has razor sharp teeth. Piranhas live in fresh water It is a carnivore. It tastes like filet of fish.

### **24. MARIA ESTRADA: MEXICO**

I like Mexican food because some foods are spicy, and USA doesn't have spicy food. I like all kind of Mexican food. I like to talk about my culture. Soccer is the most popular sport in Mexico. I know lots of immigrants came to USA because in Mexico there's not enough medicine for children who get sick. But some people who are rich, they can get medicine and food. Most people celebrate Cinco de Mayo, which is in 1867, a victory over the French. When my mother was in Mexico she used to celebrate El Dia de Los Muertos.

### **25. ANTOINE CONLEY: CINCO DE MAYO**

Cinco de Mayo is about when the French army invaded Mexico and with 6,000 well armed men. They lost. The French won the first war but the Mexicans won the last.

### **26. HIRUT NEGASSI: AZTECS**

Hernando Cortés conquered Mexico for Spain in the early 1500's. In August 1519, Cortés marched toward Tenochtitlan now Mexico City, the capital of he Aztec empire. Tenochtitlan had formed a union called the Triple Alliance with neighboring cities of Texcoco and Tlacopah and had built an empire. The three cities forced other Indian villages to pay them taxes and to provide human sacrifices for their religious ceremonies. Many Indians resented the Aztec empire for its cruelty and volunteered to help Cortés defeat it. Others joined Cortés after he defeated them in battle.

### **27. ANDREW TRIPP: NICARAGUA**

Nicaragua is in the middle of Central America. It borders on the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. It's the largest country in Central America.

Lago de Nicaragua is the only fresh water lake in the world to have sharks and sawfish.

The military of the U.S. has been involved in Nicaragua since 1909. During the 1930s, guerillas led by Augusto Caesar Sandino fought the U.S. occupation. Sandino was assassinated in 1934, and Somoza became president. The Sandinistas, named after the martyr Sandino, wanted to overthrow the Somozas. After a riot in 1976, the Sandinistas took control.

The Sandinistas seized the Somoza fortune, and redistributed their lands to the peasants. The U.S. funded the contras fighting against the Sandinista government in the 1980s. When there were free elections the U.S. ended trade restrictions and the contracts began to expand.

In 1998 Hurricane Mitch caused great devastation, destroying crops and villages and killing thousands. The country is still rebuilding after Hurricane Mitch. Nicaragua is a very poor country, but it is getting better.

## **28. FREHIWET NEGASSI: RAINFORESTS**

What is a rainforest? Why is the rainforest important? What is the temperature of a rainforest?

The rainforest is a nice place for animals to live. It is a nice place to live because it has a lot of foods to eat, it has nice weather, it is warm, wet forests, and it has a lot of rain. There are a lot of animals living there like: insects, birds, reptiles, mammals, and more.

The rainforest is an important place because the rainforests recycle and clean water. There are a lot of plants that grow in the forest. The soil in the rainforest is so poor. Tropical rainforest trees and plants also remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in their roots, stems, leaves, and branches.

The temperature of the rainforest is between 75 degrees Fahrenheit and 30 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature in a rainforest never freezes and never gets very hot. There is rain almost always in the rainforest. Rainforests get over 80 inches of rain each year.