

Dear Teacher:

in preparation for a visit to your school by the South American ensemble "Los Llaneros," we have put together a few references which we encourage you to obtain or consult ahead of time, so your students can get the most out of the programs offered by "Los Llaneros."

1) Watch videos on "Los Llaneros" web site: <http://www.losllaneros.com>

2) Latin America Music And Culture Kit: CD-Rom containing many resources and information about Latin America, including short films, theater pieces, photos, music for all ages, and more. This CD-Rom is a wonderful cross-curricular resource that last many years (grades K-12). Please ask us about what sections to review prior to the arrival of Los Llaneros at your school. Order it from www.laticulturekit.com (\$39 incl. shipping and handling).

3) *The Magic Harp: A Story From Venezuela*

Legends and Folktales From Around the World Series, Video Cassette - 26 minutes - Color - 1985

A story from the Llanos region of southern Venezuela about a boy who saved his family from destitution through the power and beauty of his music. In Spanish with English voice-over narration.

(We can loan you the video if your local library can't obtain it.)

4) The Internet

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llanero>

http://www.lastfrontiers.com/venezuela/detail_llanos.htm

Run searches for "Venezuelan cowboys," "vaqueros," "South American cowboys," etc.

5) Your local library may have books about "Venezuela," "Colombia," "Los Llanos," "Llanos," "Venezuelan savannas or savannahs," "Venezuelan Llanos," "Colombian Llanos," "Venezuelan cowboys," "Venezuelan hatos" (ranches), "Llaneros," and "Vaqueros." You might find some surprises in those searches!

LATIN AMERICA

In political and economic terms, Latin America can be defined as all of the countries south of the United States, including the Caribbean Islands. Latin America occupies nearly half of the Americas.

Over 400 languages are spoken in Latin America. Every country has from 7 to 200 languages, including its official language(s). Spanish and Portuguese, the most common official languages in Latin America, derived from ancient Latin - hence the name "Latin America." They belong to the family of Romance languages, which also include French, Italian, Romanian, and Romanche. Worldwide, there are nearly as many people who speak Spanish as their first language, as there are people who speak English as their first language. Even though commonly referred to as "America," the United States is not the same thing as America. America consists of the South American and the North American continents. America contains 42 countries.

THE LLANOS (YAH-nos)

The Llanos is the savanna region which encompasses the vast watershed of the Orinoco River. It unites eastern Colombia with the central third of Venezuela. This expansive and beautiful land is characterized by ample, open grasslands, and slow-flowing rivers and creeks flanked by gallery forests. The human population density in the Llanos has always been low, primarily because of its poor soils.

The Precolumbian Indian tribes of the Llanos, which were descendants of Caribbean cultures, led a nomadic life and subsisted by hunting, gathering, and horticulture. Jesuit missionaries arrived in the Llanos beginning in the Sixteenth Century, followed by large-scale landowners and their cattle herds. Since then, the life of the Llaneros has been closely tied to cattle ranching. Even today, cattle ranching is the predominant economic base of the Llanos, although farming and oil extraction have also become important in some areas. Over the centuries, Spanish influences were adapted and transformed, and from this process emerged a distinct Llanero culture with very similar characteristics on both sides of the border between Colombia and Venezuela. Music plays a central role in the daily lives of the Llanero cowboys, the "vaqueros," and the interesting cultural blending which has shaped the people of the Llanos, is reflected in every note and syncopation.

HISPANICS

The term Hispanic, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, refers to Spanish-speaking people of any race. This means that a Hispanic person can be Native American, Caucasian, Black, Asian, or any combination thereof. The estimated Hispanic population of the United States as of July 1, 2003, is 13.7%, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest minority.

LATIN AMERICAN MUSIC

What is loosely termed "Latin American music" is indeed a highly diverse collection of musical styles, ranging from ethnic music played in remote settings (both Indian and African-rooted); to folk music played both in rural and urban areas (typically the result of various ethnic influences converging); to popular music performed in regional and international urban settings (everything from the Brazilian "bossa nova" to the New York "salsa," to Shakira's, Jennifer Lopez', and Marc Anthony's rock tunes).

Prior to contact with Europeans, Native Americans played a large variety of wind and percussion instruments, primarily for sacred purposes. With the arrival of the Europeans, string instruments were introduced, such as the harp, violin, lute, and mandolin, which were quickly adopted, both forcibly and voluntarily, and which subsequently inspired the creation of dozens of string instruments, native to Latin America. Africans enriched Latin American music with a myriad of new rhythms, percussion instruments, and strong vocal harmony traditions. Europeans and Africans brought both sacred and secular music to America.

THE COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA



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