Stretching from Mexico through Central America to the southern tip of Argentina, Latin America includes more than 20 independent countries. These nations range from tiny Caribbean islands like Haiti to huge areas like Brazil. In the mid- to late 1900s, these countries moved into modern times. They faced problems like rapid population growth, poverty, and political instability.

Latin America is culturally diverse. When the Europeans colonized the area, they introduced their civilization to the Native Americans who lived there. Slave traders brought Africans to the area. These populations came together to create new cultures. People in Latin America speak Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, many Native American languages, and African dialects.

Since colonial times, Latin America had an uneven distribution of wealth. This means that a small group of people controlled most of the money. The wealthy people were mostly descendents of Europeans. The majority of the population was poor. It was made up of Native Americans, African Americans, and mestizos. Mestizos are people of mixed European and Native American backgrounds. The uneven distribution of wealth caused social and economic problems.

Latin America’s population grew from 166 million in 1950 to over 443 million by 1990. The population explosion made economic problems worse. In rural areas, there was not enough work for the number of people. So, many people moved to the cities. As the cities grew, poverty grew too. Many people lived in slums that surrounded the cities.

Latin American society changed when the majority of people lived in cities. Instead of farming to raise food, people had to earn money to buy it. It was difficult to make a living in the crowded cities. Some turned to crime in order to make ends meet. Thousands of abandoned or runaway children lived on the streets.

Many different political groups tried to fix things. They all wanted to improve conditions for the poor. However, powerful conservative forces, including the military, refused to make changes that would cause them to lose power. In the 1960s and 1970s, military governments seized power in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and other countries.

In recent years, most Latin American countries have held elections that have replaced military governments with civilian governments. They are working to overcome poverty and social inequality; develop stable governments; and build strong, modern economies.
Multiple Choice

1. Since colonial times, Latin America had an uneven distribution of __________.
   A. governments
   B. people
   C. wealth
   D. cities

2. The majority of the population was __________.
   A. wealthy
   B. poor
   C. rich
   D. middle class

3. Latin America is made up of people of __________ descent.
   A. European
   B. Native American
   C. African American
   D. all of the above

4. Latin America’s __________ grew rapidly in the 1900s.
   A. farming industry
   B. population
   C. economy
   D. political groups

5. In recent years, most Latin American countries have __________.
   A. replaced military governments with civilian governments
   B. given their military governments more power
   C. replaced civilian governments with military governments
   D. stayed the same
Latin America in the Twentieth Century

Crossword Puzzle
Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.

ACROSS
1. __________
2. Latin America is culturally __________.
3. _______ includes more than 20 independent countries.
4. Many people lived in _______ that surrounded the cities.
5. _______ governments seized power in many countries.
6. In rural areas, there was not enough _______ for the number of people.
7. The _______ distribution of wealth caused social and economic problems.

DOWN
1. As the _______ grew, poverty grew too.
2. Most Latin American countries have held _______ to replace military governments with civilian governments.
3. _______ are people who are of mixed European and Native American backgrounds.
4. Latin American countries are working to overcome poverty and social inequality; develop stable governments; and build strong, _______ economies.
Latin America in the Twentieth Century

Chart – Population of Latin America, 1950-2020
Use the chart to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census
Note: Populations for 2010 and 2020 are projections.

1. How many people lived in Latin America in 1950?

2. How many more people lived in Latin America in 1990 than in 1950?

3. How many people will be living in Latin America in 2020?
Quiz: Latin America in the Twentieth Century

True/False
Decide if each statement is true or false, and write “true” or “false” in the blank.

1. Latin America’s population decreased in the 1900s.
2. Most Latin American countries have replaced military governments with civilian governments.
3. Latin America had an even distribution of wealth since colonial times.
4. Latin America is culturally diverse.
5. There was plenty of work in rural areas.

Multiple Choice
Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. Latin American countries are working to _________.
   A. overcome poverty
   B. develop stable governments
   C. build strong, modern economies
   D. all of the above

7. Many people lived in slums that surrounded _________.
   A. cities
   B. rural areas
   C. farms
   D. all of the above

Short Answer
Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. How did Latin American countries replace their military governments with civilian governments?
In September of 1952, Japan’s economy was struggling. Fifty years later, Japan had become one of the greatest economic powers in the world. Japan’s recovery is called the Japanese Miracle.

After World War II, much of Japan was in ruins. From 1945 until 1952, Allied forces occupied Japan. This means that Allied military forces had control over Japan. Led by U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, the occupation administration had two main goals. It would stop Japanese militarism, or military aggressiveness, and set up a democratic government.

Japan was given a new constitution. The constitution guaranteed basic civil rights, like freedom of the press and freedom of assembly. It gave women the right to vote. The constitution also took away much of the power of the emperor. Japan now had a constitutional monarchy, or a government in which the people hold the power. The Japanese people elected representatives to speak for them in the Diet, Japan’s Parliament.

Before, war was a part of Japan’s national policy. The country had plans for attacking and taking over other areas. The new constitution took this policy away. It said that Japan would never keep military forces except for its own defense. The Japanese armed forces were broken up.

In the early 1950s, Japan turned its attention to rebuilding the economy. Many of Japan’s industries had been destroyed during World War II. Japan was forced to build brand-new factories. These modern factories were more productive than older factories in other countries. Japanese businesses focused on making goods to export, or sell to other countries. By the 1970s, people all over the world were buying Japanese cars and electronics.

The Japanese culture is a big reason for Japan’s economic success. In general, the Japanese have a group-oriented culture, so people find it easy to work together. They are known for working hard and saving their money rather than spending it. Because people saved money, Japanese banks had more money to invest. This made more money for the nation.

Today, Japan exports more goods than most other nations. It has not only caught up with the West, but it is moving ahead of many Western nations. Other Asian countries have followed Japan’s example by focusing on exports. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, which are called the Asian Tigers, have also developed successful export-based economies.
The Japanese Miracle

Multiple Choice
Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. Japan’s economic recovery is called the __________.
   A. Diet
   B. Japanese Miracle
   C. Economic Miracle
   D. Asian Tiger

2. Japanese businesses focus on __________.
   A. exports
   B. imports
   C. cars
   D. electronics

3. Japan’s government is a __________.
   A. dictatorship
   B. monarchy
   C. constitutional monarchy
   D. parliamentary monarchy

4. The new Japanese constitution __________.
   A. guaranteed basic civil rights
   B. gave women the right to vote
   C. took away much of the emperor’s power
   D. all of the above

5. Today, Japan __________ more goods than most other nations.
   A. consumes
   B. imports
   C. exports
   D. all of the above
The Japanese Miracle

Crossword Puzzle
Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.

ACROSS
3. The Asian Tigers have ________-based economies.
4. The occupation administration wanted to stop Japanese ________ and set up a democratic government.
5. From 1945 until 1952, ________ forces occupied Japan.
7. After World War II, Japan could only keep military forces for its own ________
8. Japan exported ________ and electronics to countries all over the world.
10. Japan built new ________ that were more productive than older factories in other countries.

DOWN
1. Japan was given a new ________ that set up a government in which the people hold the power.
2. The Japanese ________ helped improve Japan’s economic success because Japanese people find it easy to work together.
6. Japanese ________ had more money to invest because people saved money.
9. Before, ________ was a part of Japan’s national policy.
The Japanese Miracle

Chart – Motor Vehicle Production

Use the chart to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>7,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>5,289</td>
<td>8,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>11,043</td>
<td>8,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>13,487</td>
<td>9,783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Motor Vehicles Made (in thousands)

1. How many motor vehicles did Japan make in 1950?

2. How many more motor vehicles did Japan make than the United States in 1990?

3. In what year did Japan overtake the United States in motor vehicle production?
Quiz: The Japanese Miracle

True/False
Decide if each statement is true or false, and write "true" or "false" in the blank.

________ 1. Japanese businesses focus on exports.

________ 2. The Japanese constitution took away much of the Diet’s power.

________ 3. Axis forces occupied Japan.

________ 4. Japan imports cars and electronics from countries all over the world.

________ 5. Japan has a government in which the emperor holds all the power.

Multiple Choice
Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

□ 6. The occupation administration wanted to __________.
   A. stop Japanese militarism
   B. set up a democratic government
   C. allow Japan to keep military forces only for its own defense
   D. all of the above

□ 7. Japanese banks had more money to invest because __________.
   A. people saved money
   B. other countries owed Japan money
   C. Japan was a wealthy nation in 1945
   D. the banks stole money from their customers

Short Answer
Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. List two things the new Japanese constitution did.

________