

Haiti

THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

Is there something in your life that you have had to try many times to achieve? What strate-

Key Terms
Creole dialect

Key People and Places

Jean-Bertrand Aristide
Toussaint L'Ouverture
François Duvalier
Jean-Claude Duvalier
Port-au-Prince

Questions to Explore

1. How did Haiti's struggle for democracy affect people's lives?
2. How does the history of Haiti affect the culture of its people?

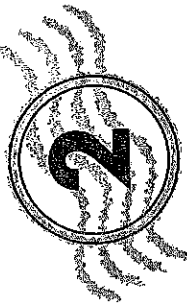
▽ After his exile, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide returned to Haiti amid cheers of support.



The plane dipped toward Port-au-Prince (port oh PRINS), the capital of Haiti. It flew over a sprawling slum. The slum was a neighborhood of crumbling cardboard huts with tin roofs. In the streets, people were jammed into a solid mass. All heads turned up toward the sky. As if in one voice, a cheer of joy rose from the crowd. In the plane, Haiti's president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide (zhan behr TRAHND uh ris TEED), was returning to his country after a three-year exile. He had been elected by the people, but Haiti's military had forced him to leave. Then, a group of generals had taken over the country. The United States and other nations had pressured the military to give power back to Aristide. Many hoped that Aristide's return would also bring back democracy.

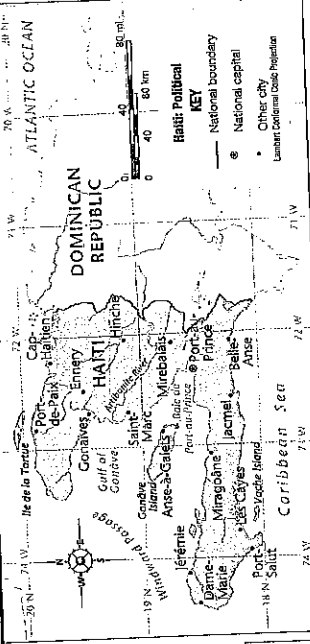
Haiti's Struggle for Democracy

Aristide was the first president to be elected democratically in many years. This does not mean that most Haitians did not want democracy. Their country was born out of a desperate struggle for freedom. Haiti is the only nation in the Americas formed from a successful revolt of enslaved Africans.



Country Profile: Haiti

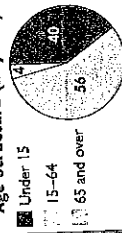
Location West Indies; western one third of the island of Hispaniola



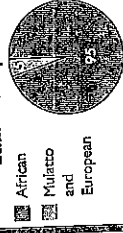
Climate Tropical
Terrain Mountainous
Population 6.8 million
Major Religions Christianity
Government Republic

Economy Agriculture: coffee, sugar, grains
Major Industries: sugar refining, textiles
Exports Coffee, light industrial products such as electronic equipment, sugar cane, sisal, cacao
Imports Petroleum, fats and oils, machines and manufactured goods, food products

Age Structure (in years)



Ethnic Groups



Map and Chart Study This map shows the country of Haiti. Haiti is on the island of Hispaniola. Region What other country is on the island? Find the city of Cap-Haïtien. This is near the spot where Columbus landed in 1492. **Location** On what side of the island is

Cap-Haïtien? In 1492, the Arawaks lived on Hispaniola. Look at the chart of ethnic groups. Do the Arawaks, a Native American group, still live in Haiti? What group makes up the largest part of the population?

The Birth of Haiti As you can see on the Country Profile above, Haiti lies on the western third of the island of Hispaniola. Haiti was once a colony of France. Europeans brought enslaved Africans to Haiti to work on sugar cane and coffee plantations. In the 1790s, slave revolts began. A Haitian leader named Toussaint L'Ouverture helped banish slavery from Haiti in 1801. He also offered Haitians a new way of life, based on the idea that all people could live as equals.

Troubled Years In the years that followed, Toussaint L'Ouverture's goal of freedom and equality was never fully realized. Most of Haiti's presidents became dictators once they got into power. One of the worst was François Duvalier (frain swah doo vah yay), who took power in 1957. Because Duvalier had been a country doctor, Haitians called him "Papa Doc."

READ ACTIVELY

Papa Doc died in 1971. He was followed by his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier (zhan KLAHD doo WAH yay), or "Baby Doc." Both Papa Doc and Baby Doc were cruel leaders. They stole government funds and used violence to keep power. During their rule, Haiti became the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

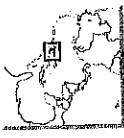
In 1986, rebels forced Baby Doc to leave the country. Many Haitians thought a period of freedom and prosperity was about to begin. But this was not to be. Haiti was ruled by one military leader after another. And most Haitians still made a living trying to farm small plots of land.

Life on a Farm When farmer Pierre Joseph stands at the top of his land, he can see the calm waters of the Caribbean. When he looks down, he sees the dry, cracked earth of his one acre.

About two thirds of the people in Haiti make their living by farming. The land has been overused. Most trees have been cut. Rains wash the topsoil into the sea. Joseph is thin because he rarely gets enough to eat. "The land just doesn't yield enough," he says. He points to the few rows of corn and beans that he can grow on his one acre.

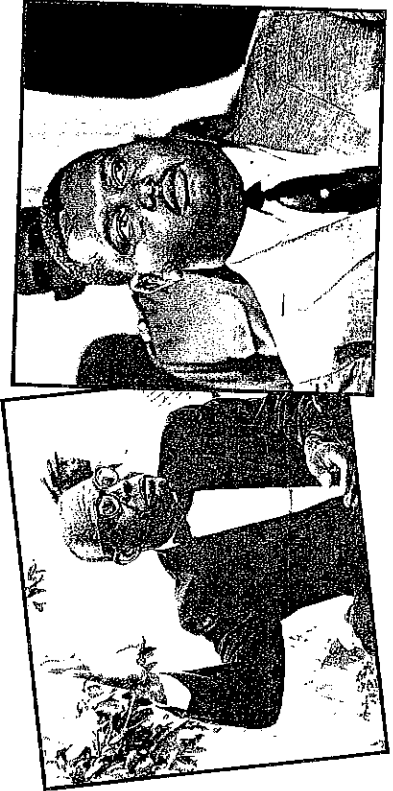
Farmers like Pierre Joseph can barely make a living, but many feel they are rich in other ways. Haitian culture blends African, French, and West Indian tradition. The blend of traditions gives Haiti a Creole culture. Creole is a word referring to people of mixed ancestry.

Creole also refers to the dialect spoken in Haiti. A dialect is the different version of a language that is spoken in a particular region. The Creole dialect is based on both French and African languages.



Papa Doc and Baby Doc

François (left) and Jean-Claude Duvalier (right) often used violence to rule Haiti. The country also became much poorer during their rule. By the time Baby Doc was forced from power, the average Haitian earned only about \$300 a year.



Life in the City Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, is a blend not only of cultures, but also of rich and poor. The wealthy live in spacious wooden houses on the hills overlooking the city. There is a small middle class of doctors, lawyers, teachers, and owners of small businesses, that also live fairly well. Many poor people from the country live in tiny homes of crumbling concrete.

Hopes for the Future

In December 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president. Haitians held high hopes for the future. Aristide was a Catholic priest who had long defended the rights of the poor. He took office in February 1991.

A Military Takeover Aristide served as president for seven months. Then Haiti's military forced him to leave the country. The military also attacked his supporters. "We have been in hiding since police shot up our house in October," an Aristide supporter told reporters in 1991. "We got away because people warned us they were coming."

The year after the election, thousands of Aristide supporters fled the capital. They feared for their lives. They squeezed into trucks by the dozen and went to hide in the hills. Others tore their homes apart to make rafts. Then they took to the sea. Many headed for the United States. Some were sent back.

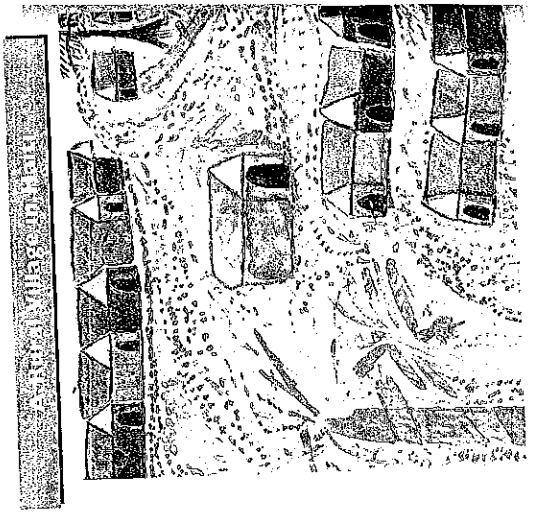
READ ACTIVELY

Predict Why do you think that Haitians were so glad to see Jean-Bertrand Aristide?



Cange Walthre age 12 Haiti

This student drawing of rural Haiti contrasts with the urban scene on the next page. **Critical Thinking** What clues does this student provide to show that this village is in a rural area? What clues show that the village is in a place that has a tropical climate?



Dancing in the Street

Haiti's people danced in the streets of Port-au-Prince when they heard that Aristide was returning to the country. They hoped that peace would return to Haiti along with Aristide.



Hundreds of children also left Haiti on rafts. Fifteen-year-old Fresnel Pierre (frehz uh NEL pea EHR) was one. He had an older brother waiting for him in Miami, where there is a large Haitian community. The children Fresnel sailed with were the children of Aristide supporters. Many were coming to the United States with no one to take them in.

Good Times and Bad In 1994, Aristide came back to Haiti, restoring democratic government. Haitians rejoiced, believing that peace and progress would follow. Instead, by 1998, quarreling between Haiti's parliament and its new president, René Prével, had nearly shut down the government. A powerful hurricane struck Haiti that same year, leaving more than 150,000 homeless and destroying precious crops. As a result, Haiti remains the poorest nation in the region, and its people continue to face an uncertain future.

SECTION 2 REVIEW

1. **Define** (a) Creole, (b) dialect.
2. **Identify** (a) Jean-Bertrand Aristide, (b) Toussaint L'Ouverture, (c) François Duvalier, (d) Jean-Claude Duvalier, (e) Port-au-Prince.

3. How did Haiti win its independence?

4. What obstacles to making a living do farmers like Pierre Joseph face?

Critical Thinking

5. **Making Comparisons** Give an example of how Haitian culture blends African and European traditions.

Activity

6. **Writing to Learn** Write a diary entry from the point of view of Pierre Joseph about how economic and political conditions in Haiti affect his life.