Chapter 6

Physical Geography of Latin America
Section 1

PHYSICAL FEATURES
Landforms

– Latin America- divided into 3 subregions (smaller areas)

• Middle America
  – Mexico and Central America- isthmus (narrow piece of land that links two larger pieces of land)
  – Four tectonic plates meet there- volcanoes and earthquakes- ash makes soil fertile
  – Mexico- mountains on the outside, plateau in the middle
  – Central America- mtns like a backbone- plains are narrow- heavy rainforests
Landforms

• The Caribbean
  – 3 groups- the Greater Antilles, the Lesser Antilles, the Bahamas
    • Greater Antilles: larger islands- Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Jamaica
    • Lesser Antilles: archipelago (group of islands)- Virgin Islands to Trinidad
    • Bahamas- another archipelago
  – Cuba- ½ of Caribbean land area
  – Some islands are low-lying, others are volcanic and mountainous
    • Soil is fertile- sugarcane and tobacco
Landforms

• South America
  – Andes mountains- cordillera- 5500 miles long on Pacific coast
    • World’s longest mtn system
    • Some peaks over 20k feet
    • Between mtn chains are plateaus and valleys- people inhabit
  – Amazon Basin- east of Andes- 2.7 square miles- Amazon River
  – Brazilian highlands- north and south of Basin- end in escarpment (cliff) that slope down to coastal plain
  – Plains- Llanos (western Columbia and Venezuela) and Pampas (Argentina and Uruguay)- cattle herding and grain like Great Plains