

Summary: Neighbors in North America

Canada

Canada is the United States' neighbor to the north. It has three territories and ten provinces. Its history is similar to American history. American Indians lived first in both countries. Europeans colonized both countries. In Canada, the colonists were mostly French. After a French-British war in 1754, Canada became a British colony. Many people in Canada speak both French and English. Both languages are now official languages there. In 1867, Canada gained its independence from Britain. Canada is a democracy. Like the United States, Canada is multicultural.

In 1992, Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Mexico. NAFTA increased trade among the three nations. Canada is the United States' biggest trade partner. The two countries also work together to solve environmental problems that affect both countries.

Mexico

Mexico is the United States' neighbor to the south. It has 31 states and one federal district. The Maya and Aztecs lived in Mexico first, and they built large, beautiful cities. Spain colonized Mexico in 1521. In 1821, Mexico fought Spain for its independence and won. Mexico has a representative government that gives a lot of power to the President. Most Mexicans have a mixture of Spanish and Mexican Indian heritage. Spanish is the official language, but many people speak Indian languages. Mexican art, building styles, and food are common in the Southwest United States, which was once part of Mexico.

Many Mexicans work in maquiladoras, and many Mexicans come to the United States to work. This helps the U.S. economy. In 1992, Mexico signed NAFTA with the United States and Canada. Mexico's most important trading partner is the United States. After Canada, Mexico is the United States' second most important trading partner.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

province *noun*, a political region of a country that is similar to a state

multicultural *adjective*, having many cultural traditions

maquiladora *noun*, a factory in Mexico near the U.S. border

After You Read

REVIEW Why is French one of the two official languages in Canada?

Circle the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW How and when did Mexico gain its independence? Draw a box around the sentence that tells how and when Mexico gained its independence.

REVIEW What are some of Mexico's connections with the United States? Circle the sentences that tell about connections with Mexican culture, work, and trade.