

GEOGRAPHY CONNECTIONS

Geography Connections is a series of sixteen pages presented in collaboration with NIE, CT Geographic Alliance and PIER. For more information about NIE visit www.courantnie.com or call 860.241-3847.

Republic of Haiti

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Located in the Caribbean Sea between Cuba and Puerto Rico, Haiti shares the western third of the island of Hispanola with the Dominican Republic. Originally settled by the Spanish in 1496, it became a French colony in 1697 then declared independence in 1804. Haiti, which means "mountainous country," is 10,714 square miles and lies in the hurricane belt of the Caribbean. The capital city, Port-au-Prince, is on the southwestern side of this island nation.

The geography of Haiti makes living conditions difficult. The mountainous region on the Eastern side, along the border of the Dominican Republic, blocks the cooling trade winds. The hot and dry tropical weather means only about 12% of the land is usable for growing crops. There are few trees so buildings are made from cement blocks or other materials. Fault lines make the country prone to earthquakes.

Haiti once thrived with sugar plantations and forestry products. African slaves who were brought in to do the work. However, overworked land and deforestation has led to serious damage to the Haitian environment, making it very difficult for the people to grow the food they need.

The poor land quality is especially dangerous during their many storms and hurricanes. Over time, the difficult living conditions and political violence has made Haiti the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

With 80% of the population below the poverty line, this earthquake disaster is even more of a tragedy. There are few resources and medical facilities - one doctor to nearly 10,000 residents. Intensive international relief efforts continue to help to the people of Haiti.

SNAP SHOT



- **Full Name:** Republic of Haiti
- **Latitude = 18 degrees, 32.4 minutes North**
Longitude = 72 degrees, 20.2 minutes West
(18 32 N, 72 20 W)
- **Independence Day (National Holiday):**
January 1, 1804
- **Constitutional rulership established since May 2006**
(adopted in 1987)
- **Median age:** 20.2 years
- **Languages:** French, Creole
- **Main religions:** Catholicism, Protestantism, Voodoo
- **Currency:** Gourde (many businesses accept US dollars)

NAVIGATING THE NEWS

1. The situation in Haiti is heart wrenching and has affected people worldwide. This nightmare is exacerbated by the staggering death toll, collapsed buildings, hunger, shortages in medical care and supplies, etc. Communication, organization and security are essential. There has been much criticism on supply distribution.
 - Use the Courant to help formulate your thoughts.
 - ✓ Do you think that security issues should dominate supply distribution?
 - ✓ How would you suggest distributing rations when 300,000 people are homeless and hungry?
 - ✓ What do you think should be done to those who try to profit from catastrophe?
2. In 1985, Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie composed and assembled famous artists to sing a charity single "We Are the People," raising money for African famine relief.
 - Using the information you have learned about Haiti, compose lyrics for a song, rap, or poem, to be delivered to the unsung heroes and to raise money for the recovery/rebuilding of Haiti.
3. React to the following. Use the Courant to find examples of this quote:
 - "I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back." ~ Maya Angelou

CONNECTICUT CONNECTIONS

Though Haiti is about 1900 miles from Connecticut, there are many Haitian connections in our state. There is a large Haitian population here and many organizations dedicated to helping people in Haiti.

- **Partners for Haiti**, in Uncasville, financially supports two orphanages, a meal program for children, and a medical clinic. www.haitianministries.org provides updates of the disaster, their immediate needs, and suggestions of ways you can help.
- **Jillian Thorpe**, working at a Port-au-Prince mission house for the Haitian Ministries of Norwich, was rescued from the rubble by her husband. The one-story building collapsed on both Jillian and fellow American Charles Dietsch.
- There are many Haitian churches in Connecticut, In Bloomfield, Old St. Andrew's church has sent relief supplies and medical personnel to Haiti. The church and the Metropolitan Learning Center have a partner school near the epicenter of the earthquake in Carrefour called L'Ecole le Bon Samaritain. To assist <http://oldstandrews.net> or Caryn Steadman (cstedman@mlc.crec.org) at the Metropolitan Learning Center.

MAP IT OUT

The 7.0 magnitude earthquake that devastated Haiti took place along a fault line (separating tectonic plates) where the Caribbean Plate meets the North American Plate. Places where tectonic plates meet are often prone to seismic activity. On a map of the world, locate these cities that had major earthquakes in the last 100 years.

Seattle, Washington	February 2001 (damage to SAFECO Field)
Managua, Nicaragua	December 1972 (Roberto Clemente, noted Puerto Rican athlete, lost his life trying to deliver supplies)
Mexico City, Mexico	September 1985 (8.1 on the Richter Scale)
Banda Aceh, Indonesia	December 2004 (tsunami created by Indian Ocean earthquake nearby)
Tokyo, Japan	September 1923 (devastated the port city of Yokohama)
El Asnam, Algeria	October 1980 (Chelif Valley near Atlas Mountains)

ONLINE RESOURCES

<http://www.courantnie.com/kidscoop.pdf>
<http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Haiti.html>
<http://www.wyclef.com/>
<http://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/vis/a000000/a002600/a002640/>
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

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Next page: February 5, 2010

Clue: This coastal city is home to the 2010 Winter Olympics