

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
SECONDARY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

GRADE SEVEN (7)

SOCIAL STUDIES

WEEK 10 LESSON TWO (2)

Topic: Our ancestors

Sub-Topic: The six ethnic groups from which Guyanese have descended

Objectives: Students will:

- Explain the way of life of the:
 - Amerindians
 - Europeans

Concept: We must have respect and appreciation for the culture of different ethnic groups in Guyana.

Content:

THE AMERINDIANS

Amerindians are regarded as the indigenous people whose forefathers came from Asia during the Ice Age. Many of these people migrated in search of food and warmth. It is believed that they crossed the Bering Strait and arrived in North America. Some migrated to the West Indies and others travelled further south and settled in Central and South America. In Guyana, these Amerindians live in tribes in thatched-roof huts and demonstrate their own peculiar way of life.

The Four Main Amerindian Tribes In Guyana.

- Arawaks
- Caribs
- Wapisianas
- Warraus

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Each tribe has a leader who is the person in authority. He is responsible for the organisation of work in the village and he makes major decisions relating to their occupations, judicial system, festivals and religious ceremonies. Under their leader, they work co-operatively. Amerindians are religious people and believe in many gods and spirits. In the traditional dress, the men wear little clothing consisting of cotton hand bands and loin coverings. On special occasions such as festivals, they decorate their bodies with feathers, beads, shells and dyes of different colours.

The men and women are skilful. They produce beautiful handicraft using the materials found in their environment. Their food is obtained mainly by hunting, fishing and planting.

Their staple crops are cassava and maize (corn). While most of the men clear the fields, the women do the planting and are responsible for caring for the children. They are famous for making paiwari and cassiri. Many of the Amerindian foods are classed among our national delicacies. Pepper pot, a favourite dish of many Guyanese originated from the Amerindians who used that dish as one way of preserving meat after a successful hunt.

The men are involved in settling disputes. They use canoes for travelling on the rivers and their tools and weapons - knives, arrows and bows - are usually made of wood and stone.

THE EUROPEANS

After the discovery of the mainland colonies of South America, the Spaniards showed little interest in settlement as their emphasis was on conquest and exploration. Stories of El Dorado, a wealthy monarch who lived in a golden city in Guyana, reached Europe.

The stories described the streets of the city as being paved with gold. This made other Europeans excited to visit Guyana to gain some of the wealth. Sir Walter Raleigh's voyage in 1595 and his subsequent book on the riches of Guyana also stimulated much interest in the area.

The Dutch, French and English came on expeditions to search for gold. However, they were disappointed with the quantity obtained. The Dutch set up trading posts early in the 17th century and transacted business with the Amerindians. Some of the articles of trade included hide, tobacco, cotton, coffee and dyes.

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The Dutch soon after became settlers and established plantations. There was a greater need for labourers than the force supplied by the Amerindians. Arrangements were then made to import Africans as slaves. The Amerindians were afterwards used as an unofficial police force to capture and return runaway slaves to the plantations as well as suppress slave rebellions.

By 1650 the Dutch cultivated sugar cane in the Essequibo. Berbice was next to be developed and then by 1746 Demerara grew as a colony. When the French and English established plantations, the Dutch supplied them with slaves and other necessities. In 1831 the three colonies were united under the British rule.

Activity

1. Use any relevant material to do additional reading on the Amerindians and the Europeans.
2. Write two separate reports on the following:
 - (i) The Amerindians
 - (ii) The Europeans

Homework

1. Paste and label pictures of Amerindian handicraft in your exercise books.
2. Write a short description on the purpose of the handicrafts you would have pasted in your exercise books.

Reference

1. Ministry of Education Social Studies teacher's guide level 7 pages 73 to 85
2. Ministry of Education Curriculum guide page 8 and 9
3. New Horizon in Social Studies book 7 pages 63 to 72
4. http://www.guyana.org/features/guyanastory/guyana_story.html