# Table of Contents

**Why Study Cultures?** ................................................. 2

**Geography & Climate**
- Brazilian Coast & Climate Regions .......................... 3

**History**
- African Heritage .................................................. 8

**Politics & Economics**
- Brazilian Voting System ......................................... 12

**Lifestyle**
- Brazilian Families ............................................... 15

**Reference Material**
- Facts about Brazil ................................................. 20
- History and Holidays ................................................ 21
- Additional Resources ............................................... 23
- Visuals ................................................................. 25


**HISTORY**

**AFRICAN HERITAGE**

Because the Indians were not able to provide enough labor to run the plantations and gold mines, the Portuguese began to use African slaves. Unlike the slaves in many other countries, the Africans who came to Brazil mixed with the whites and the Indians and helped to build the Brazilian race. That is why Brazil is known as a racial melting pot. African cultural heritage has greatly influenced Brazilian religion, music, dance, and food.

**Starting Points**

1. With the class, make a list of countries where Africans were enslaved.
2. Briefly talk about the slave trade, how it has influenced different cultures throughout the world, and the consequences it has had in the United States.
3. Show some Capoeira [kah-po-éy-da] pictures (see History Visuals 1–2) or play a Capoeira song (see Additional Resources). Ask the following questions:
   a. Where is Capoeira from?
   b. What cultures do you think influenced Capoeira?

**Information**

**Slave History in Brazil**

When the Portuguese first arrived in Brazil, they encountered the original inhabitants of the land—the Indians. The Portuguese provided the Indians with protection from other colonizers and introduced them to the Catholic faith. In return, the Indians worked for the Portuguese. However, many Indians did not work hard enough, nor were they strong enough to work on the plantations—they simply weren’t used to that kind of labor. Also, the Portuguese carried many new diseases with them from Europe, and many Indians died after catching those diseases. The Portuguese soon realized that the Indians couldn’t provide enough labor, especially when the need for laborers to work in the plantations (and later in the gold mines) increased. The Portuguese decided to solve this problem by going to Africa and bringing back Africans to work as slaves. They were brought to Brazil in ships under terrible conditions. Hundreds and even thousands died during the journey across the Atlantic. Once the slaves arrived in Brazil, they were sold in the market; they were not treated like human beings, but like property.

Some African women worked in the big plantation houses. They were in charge of cooking, cleaning, and taking care of their owners’ children. However, most of the Africans worked on the plantations. The work was hard and they had little time to rest. They lived in houses called *senzalas* [sen-záh-lahs] without beds or any other
personal items. Sometimes they were forced to sleep in chains to prevent them from running away.

Soon the African slaves were working almost everywhere. They worked in plantations, homes, and mines. They also worked in construction and raised cattle. These slaves were abused and were kept in terrible living conditions. If they did anything wrong, or tried to escape, they were punished severely. One way to punish slaves was to tie them to a post and whip them several times across the back. Another punishment was to make the slaves stand all night in stocks, similar to a form of punishment used by the Puritans in early American history. Still, even with the threat of severe punishment, many slaves tried to run away. Some were captured; others escaped to safety. Runaway slaves lived in communities called quilombos [kee-lóme-bôse], or “brown communities.” The most famous quilombo was Palmares [pau-máh-rees], which today is the state of Alagoas [ah-lah-goas]. In 1694, Palmares was destroyed by a military expedition. The leader of the brown community, Zumbi dos Palmares [zoom-bee dos pau-máh-rees], was killed and became an Afro-Brazilian hero. There is a city called União dos Palmares [oo-niəu dos pau-máh-rees] in the place where the brown community used to be, and Alagoas’ main airport is named after this black hero.

In the 1800s, the movement against slavery gained momentum. Journalists played a large part in this uprising. After much struggle and debate, slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888. It was mainly a political act. The acting ruler, Princess Isabel, signed a declaration which made the slaves free. People celebrated by throwing flower petals in the streets. The American ambassador in Rio de Janeiro collected some of the petals and sent them to Washington as a symbol of the peaceful end of slavery in Brazil.

**African Heritage in Brazilian Culture**

The Africans who were taken to Brazil were from various regions in Africa, and they brought with them many different traditions that influenced the Brazilian culture. Many whites married Africans or Afro-Brazilians. Their children are called mulatos [moo-láh-tos], and make up a great part of the Brazilian population today. The children born from marriages between Indians and Afro-Brazilians are called zambos [jám-bos].

We can see the African influence in Brazil today in the different types of religion, such as Umbanda [oom-báhn-dah] and Candomblé [kah-nahn-dom-bléy]. These religions combine elements of traditional Catholicism, native African religion, and Indian spirituality. Most Brazilians, regardless of their religion, throw white flowers into the sea on New Year’s Day to Iemanjá [ee-em-ahn-jáh], the Umbandan goddess of the waters. Some people, especially fishermen and sailors, believe they are protected from drowning if they appease the goddess with these offerings. Today, this tradition is also used to bring luck. Most African deities are mixed with Catholic saints in what is called syncretism. This is why many Catholics also practice Candomblé.

In dance and music, Brazil has the Axé-Music [ashe music] and Axé-Dance [ashe dance], both of African origin. There is also Capoeira. Some call it a dance; others consider it a martial art. Capoeira was created in Brazil as a result of the African resistance to slavery. The slaves had no weapons, so they practiced this kind of “dance,” which was a powerful way to fight their enemies using just their legs and arms. This fight (or dance) is accompanied by instruments such as the tambourine and
the *berimbau* [beh-ding-báu] (see History Visual 1, bottom picture). The berimbau is played by tapping a short stick against a wire strung between the ends of a curved bow. A hollow gourd is attached to the bow to amplify the sound. There is also a chant of African dialectal words that the slaves used to create the rhythm of the fight. Since they appeared to be dancing, the slave owners did not pay attention to the slaves while they practiced. This gave the slaves a chance to practice their fighting skills.

African influence is also found in Brazilian foods, especially foods with lots of hot peppers. The most popular dish, which can be found anywhere in Brazil, is *feijoada* [fey-ju-áh-da]. It has its origin in the slaves’ meals, which consisted of beans and manioc flour (from the cassava plant). Some say that meat was added to this dish as a variation of the Portuguese stew. Others claim that the meat given to the slaves was the meat that their owners wouldn’t eat, such as pigs’ feet and tails, and the slaves would cook these with beans. Today, feijoada is made of beans and pork (some people don’t use pigs’ feet or tails) and it is served with white rice, manioc flour, and peeled, sliced oranges (see History Visual 3). It is a very spicy dish and very high in calories.

**Feijoada Recipe**

**You will need:**

- 1 lb black beans
- 1/4 lb jerked beef
- 1/4 lb salt cured pork
- 1/4 lb bacon
- 1/4 lb pepperoni
- 1 small chopped onion
- 1/2 tsp olive oil
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- pepper to taste
- 1 pig’s ear (optional)
- 1 pig’s tail (optional)
- 1 pig’s foot (optional)
- 2–3 oranges
- 5–6 servings rice
- 5–6 servings rice

**Preparation**

1. In separate bowls, soak beans and salted meats overnight.
2. Put beans, meat, and bay leaf into a large pressure cooker. Cover the ingredients with the water that the beans soaked in overnight (the water level should be one inch above the beans). Cook over medium heat for 20 minutes.
3. In another pan, heat a tablespoon of olive oil and fry the 6 cloves of garlic and the chopped onion.
4. Pour the garlic and onion mix into the beans and mix well. Add pepper to taste.
5. Remove a cup of the beans and crush them with a wooden spoon. Add them into the mixture to thicken the sauce.
Activities

1. Have the students research and write a report on a slave who worked in Brazil or America. Assign a day when everyone will give a five-minute presentation. You may want to bring feijoada for the class on this day.

2. Have the students write and perform a play depicting the lives of slaves in Brazil.

3. Have the students cook or help cook feijoada, or buy some at a Brazilian restaurant.

4. Ask the students to pretend they were journalists in Brazil in the 1800s. Have them write an article against slavery.

5. Play Guess That Word (see History Visual 4).

Discussion Questions

1. Compare African heritage in the United States to African heritage in Brazil.

2. Why did the American people use African labor?

3. How did African slaves influence American culture?

4. Do you think that racism today is a result of slavery in the past? Why or why not?
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

EMBASSY TO THE UNITED STATES
3006 Whitehaven Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008-3634
Phone: (202) 238-2700, Fax: (202) 238-2827
E-mail: webmaster@brasilemb.org
Web site: http://www.brasilemb.org

BRAZILIAN DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
16 West Little Brazil Street
West 46th Street between 5th & 6th
New York, NY 10036-4503
Phone: (212) 840-3733, (800) 848-2746, Fax: (212) 719-4142
Web site: http://www.embratur.gov.br

BOOKS
FILM
*The Three Caballeros*, Disney, 1945.
*National Geographic’s Amazon: Land of the Flooded Forest*, National Geographic, 1997.

INTERNET SITES
**Africans in Brazil:**
http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/curriculum/1m15/stu_actthree.html
**Amazon Life:**
**Assessment:**
http://www.mct.gov.br/clima/ingles/comunic_old/jcr.htm
**Brazilian Embassy in London—Abolition of Slavery:**
http://www.brazil.org.uk/page.php?cid=86&offset=0
**Brazilian FAQ Culture and Language:**
http://www.agr.informatik.uni-kl.de/~awangenh/brasfaq.3.0.html
**Brazilian National Elections (Security in voting):**
http://fitug.fitug.de/debate/9902/msg00287.html
**Capoeira:**
http://www.abada.org
**Ecobrazil.com:**
http://www.ecobrazil.com/geo.asp
**Friendship Bridge (picture):**
www.brasilhoteis.com.br/fotos/pr/foto8.htm
**Gallery of Rain Forest Photos:**
http://www.realtime.net/~raintree/gallery/gallery.htm
**Hydroelectric Dam (picture):**
**Iguacu Falls:**
http://www.uoregon.edu/~sergiok/brasil/iguacu.html
**The Land, Culture, and People of Brazil:**
http://www.brazilbrazil.com/
**Neo Populism in Brazilian Politics:**
http://www.tche.br/nupergs/celi.html
**Virtual Trip to Brazil:**
http://www.vivabrazil.com

MUSIC
History Visual 1: Capoeira
History Visual 2: Capoeira
History Visual 3: Feijoada
History Visual 4: Guess That Word

Cut out the following cards. Divide into two teams. Team one begins with one team member choosing a card and trying to get his or her team to guess the word at the top of each card within one minute. You cannot say any of the words on the card or say, “It rhymes with . . .” A person from team two watches to make sure none of the words are said. If a word is said, the person from team two says, “oops!” and team one does not receive a point; it is then team two’s turn.