

Amerindian Migrations

Students will identify entry points into the Caribbean and places of origin for ceramic peoples.



Amerindian Heritage

Grenada National Museum: Teacher Kit

Before You Visit

Background

There is a long history of people living in the Caribbean. The first people to settle here likely came from Central and South America. The earliest known evidence of people migrating to the Caribbean dates back to between 3520-3020 BCE. We know this from archaeological findings in Cuba and Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) of the Greater Antilles. The first known group, the Casimiroid, originated in Central America near what is now Belize. These early hunter-gathers are believed to have migrated to fertile river valleys and coastal regions in search of food, later turning to fishing and agricultural settlement for survival.

These people were able to travel to Cuba thanks to a unique counter-current in the ocean, which ran from west to east. They adapted to island environments, which were rich with wild game, fruits and vegetation, and sea foods. Many native plant and animal species went extinct after these groups arrived, mostly as collateral damage.

Though these early settlers came as early as 3500 BCE, there is little evidence of settlement in the Windward Islands until as late as 500 BCE (the Ortoroids from Venezuela, however, did occupy Trinidad as early as 6220 BCE, but do not seem to have reached any other islands during that time). It is possible that the Casimiroid people found Cuba and Hispaniola to be so plentiful and large that there was no great push for exploring the smaller islands to the southeast. With some exceptions, the Caribbean would not see another major migration until 500 BC, with the arrival of the Saladoids from the Orinoco River Basin in Venezuela.

Grade Levels

- 4th +
- Extension Activities for Secondary Forms 1+

Duration

- Pre-Visit: 2 (20-30) minute periods
- Visit: 25 minutes
- Post-Visit: 15 minutes

Topics

- Human migration patterns
- Hunter-gatherer cultures and survival
- Humans, nature, and extinction

Extensions/Linkages: Pre-Clovis and Clovis peoples, Beringia route, Paleoindian peoples, extinction, archaic tools and cultures, role of archeology in understanding ancient history

Entry Skills/Knowledge: Understanding of time periods and time-keeping (BC/BCE, AD/CE, etc.)

Materials

- Globe or map of North America and map of Caribbean (optional)
- Clipboards or notebooks for students to press on
- Pencils for each student

Exhibit Tie-Ins

- Amerindian Exhibit Display: Peopling the New World
- Migration maps & displays

Objects of Interest

- Maritime objects (canoes, etc.)
- Hunter-gatherer tools

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Around 500 BCE, the Saladoid people from the Orinoco River Basin in Venezuela entered the Lesser Antilles and traveled northwest to Cuba. The reason for their migration may have been due to clashes with the Barrancoid people in Venezuela around 800 BCE, whose presence may have pushed the Saladoids out. These settlers are credited with advances in agriculture and their use of ceramics and pottery.

Despite their migration route, the earliest evidence of Saladoid culture in the Caribbean appears to be in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Though the earliest ceramic styles do appear further south, no radiocarbon dates taken at Saladoid sites in the Windward Islands show evidence of their settlement until about 500 years *after* the Greater Antilles. Competing theories try to explain this enigma: they either skipped over the islands instead of navigating them in a stepping-stone fashion, or there simply hasn't been enough archaeological work (esp. with radiocarbon dating) in the Windwards.

Much of our ability to place groups in regions during certain historical time periods lies in studying carefully unearthed artifacts, including tools and ceramic items. The earliest ceramic styles do show up in Grenada, so it's possible the Saladoid people were here from the beginning. However, the earliest radiocarbon dates are at Pearls, St. Andrews, around 100 AD (CE).

Lesson objectives

SWBAT identify the entry points into the Caribbean and identify the places of origin of these early settlers.

- Students will list reasons why prehistoric groups migrated, and trace their general pattern into the Americas
- Students will explain how archaic peoples survived and populated the Central and South Americas and, later, the Caribbean
- Students will understand the concept of nonrenewable or "limited" natural resources and how this led a shift from migratory, hunter-gatherer cultures to agricultural, sedentary cultures

Pre-Visit Lesson-Part I (30 minutes)

Procedure

1. Give the students a few minutes to think about this scenario:

*The time is 3500 BCE, over 5,500 years ago. Pretend you are part of an ancient prehistoric tribe living in a dense jungle. The jungle has lots of lush vegetation and plant life, beautiful waterfalls, cool rivers, mountains and valleys. The jungle is your home. It is very dense and has a lot of wildlife and plants, but there is no one else around you except for your tribe of 11 other people—4 men, 3 women, and 4 small children and babies. You and these 11 people know you must have food and water to survive. **Create a list of tasks and things you would need in order to live.***

Have the students write answers to these questions either as individuals or in small groups (5 minutes):

- *What will you eat?*
- *What tools can you make out of things found in the jungle?*
- *Where can you find water?*
- *What else do you need to do in order to survive?*

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2. Review these questions and student answers as a class. Probe for answers relating to hunting, picking/gathering fruits and other plants to eat, collecting fresh water, making tools (spears, arrows, and axes made of stone, rope, baskets, ceramics, nets, etc.) for survival and hunting, and creating shelter from jungle vegetation, mud, wood, and other materials. Write down major items and jobs/tasks as they relate to **hunter-gatherer cultures** (hunting, picking fruits/seeds/vegetation, finding water, exploring, making tools, starting fires, finding shelter, etc.) on the blackboard as students name them.

3. Did students name agriculture/ farming? Domestication of animals? Better tools for hunting such as the bow and arrow? (Note: bow and arrow was a relatively “late” invention) Bones and animal hides for tools, clothing, and protection? Explain that all of these advances started to come around at this time, but in different *places* depending on where the people were living in the world. This development marks the beginning of **sedentary, agricultural societies**.

4. Explain that sometimes, hunter-gatherer groups left their territories in search of new lands. Pre-Clovis (Paleoindian) cultures from as long as 11,000 to 14,000 BCE (or longer) are believed to have settled the Americas from Asia via a land bridge across the Bering Strait (Beringia). As ice regions of North America started to melt away, larger migrations occurred, with groups populating downward along the western coastline and deeper mainland in present-day Canada and USA, gradually extending into Central and South America. **Using a map (if possible), trace these routes and have students note the time periods of each major migration area (See *Migrations* handout).**

Ask why people might leave their territories where they hunted and roamed. Probe for responses like running out of animals to hunt or fruit/vegetation to eat, following seasonal game, exploration and discovery of new, fertile lands to accompany advances in agriculture (e.g., river basins and valleys), population growth and competition with neighboring groups over hunting grounds, etc.

Debriefing

Use this discussion to introduce the concept of “limited natural resources” and the transition to agriculture. Walk them through these details to help them construct meaning:

- When you harvest a patch of forest for specific plants, seeds, fruits, etc., you eventually have to move to another patch.
- Likewise, in parts of the world with four seasons, animals migrate as the temperature changes. If you depend on those animals, you must move with the animals.
- Thus, early humans in the New World (Paleoindians) were migratory and did not create big villages or towns, living rather in family clans.
- When you hunt a wild animal for food, that animal can no longer produce offspring. In fact, very large animals cannot produce more than 1-2 offspring a year, just like humans.
- The more people focused on specific animals, the less those animals could mate and grow their own population.
- With more and more people raising children, more food was needed. Thus, more animals and plants needed to be harvested, and in places where the animal population was small to begin

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- with, human hunting could have caused animals to disappear entirely (go extinct).
- No matter where you are, however, if there are enough humans (like today), animals can be hunted faster than they reproduce, causing extinction and creating scarcity.
 - Thus, hunter-gatherer groups migrated to where plants and animals were more plentiful. Unlike animals, however, plants have the opposite effect to being harvested: their seeds are dispersed.
 - The plants people like to eat were therefore thriving! (And other plants that might naturally be more plentiful were struggling. Basically, people were dropping fruit pits and seeds all over the place, dispersing their favorite plants everywhere they went.)
 - Whenever someone made the connection and started intentionally planting these seeds (which appears to have started and stopped at different points and places in history), the plants that sprouted were born into an already “domesticated” landscape as opposed to pristine/wild nature.
 - People realized they could simply plant the seeds of their favorite plants and stop migrating. In the New World, this appears to have happened in the Brazilian Amazon before moving across northern South America. Seasonal campsites became permanent villages and towns. As long as people produced enough plants, their populations continued to grow. Some people made useful tools, pottery, and art and traded with people that were farming (bartering). Thus, people began to *specialize* in different jobs (the basis for modern society). The first agricultural people to migrate into the Caribbean, the Saladoids, lived like this.

Bring students back to the scenario: Ask them, as members of their “tribe”, what would they have to do if their jungle started running out of fruit to pick or animals to hunt? Relate their responses to migrating groups covered in this lesson. Also have them think about how an island environment might cause further stress on animal populations (e.g. smaller area for both to coexist, environmental changes by humans, focus on fishing/marine resources could affect those animals, etc.).

In preparation for **Part II**, ask them to think about limited resources on an island vs. mainland. How does that affect group migration?

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Pre-Visit Lesson-Part II (20 Minutes)

Use Part II to build on the concepts of migration and limited resources for hunter-gatherer groups and explain how groups from the Central and South Americas expanded outward and along the coastal regions of their land before eventually entering the Caribbean. Tie migration patterns in with the gradual advancement of cultures (agriculture, population growth, development of canoes and maritime culture).

Ask students to remember and think about some of the discussion from Part I, especially the reasons why some groups may need to travel great distances to survive and the concept of limited natural resources.

5. After living deep in the jungle for a long time, tell students that a member of their tribe has discovered a beach and ocean several kilometers east, with a shallow area full of shelled creatures, strange rocks, and very foul-tasting water. Have students discuss how this new beach/coastal land might affect their survival—what resources might they find there? Use this scenario to **explain how groups left the main lands of South and Central America for fertile river valleys and eventually coastal regions, before they ever entered into the Caribbean.**

6. Explain that, after living on the coast for a time, these people became a maritime culture ('sea culture') and learned to craft canoes in order to explore and navigate the sea around them. Build on topics covered in Part I, including how people migrated and explored lands far around them in search of more resources, after exhausting many of the animals and vegetation they relied on. Pair this migration concept with **advances in technology**, including the ability to **craft boats**, which helped expand their reach into the Caribbean.

7. Explain also that population growth created **competition and wars with other groups and tribes in neighboring regions**, who also traveled and salvaged for food. This threat was sometimes enough to drive groups to risk their lives crossing the sea in search of new lands.

Describe the Casimiroid people and their travels by small canoe from Central America to Cuba in search of additional hunting-gathering grounds and resources. **Trace their migration patterns to Cuba and Hispaniola using a map of the Caribbean (if available).** Ask students what they think the people found once they arrived in Cuba. Was it populated with other people? Ask students what else they may have found in Cuba. Probe for undisturbed/unsettled jungle, fertile land and vegetation, lots of wild animals for hunting, etc. Remind them of the period 3500 BCE, and that archaeologists believe they were the first to arrive, based on archaeological sites and evidence of their settlements dating back to that time period.

Next, describe a similar push for people to explore away from the northeastern regions of South America and north into the Caribbean. Similar competition with neighboring tribes along the Amazon and coastal region may have helped drive the Saladoids from the Orinoco River Basin in Venezuela into the Caribbean, but not until thousands of years later, in 500 BCE.

Debriefing

Use these final questions to assess students' understanding of reasons why ancient civilizations needed to

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migrate in order to survive. Alternatively, this may be given as a **written assignment**.

- What are some of the limited resources that people needed to survive when living in a jungle?
- Why do these resources eventually run out over time?
- Why did people go through such trouble of moving around so much, including crossing the ocean to reach Cuba in the Caribbean?
- Identify on a map (or name) some of the areas of origins of the people who settled the Caribbean. Why did they leave these lands?

Summarize the lesson by recounting some of the major themes and topics you discussed, and conclude that migration patterns eventually changed because people became more “settled” thanks to advances in farming and domestication of animals.

The second theme, depletion of resources, ties into topics concerning limited resources and the need to migrate. Explain how human growth in population affects the resources around them, sometimes causing animal species to go extinct. However, not all extinction is caused by humans: other causes include the introduction of new species (predator) and the extinction of plant species (food) due to climate change.

Extension Questions (Secondary)

How did geographical challenges affect migration patterns of ancient civilizations from the Americas? What major advances were needed to overcome these challenges?

Describe ocean currents and the counter-current mentioned in Background, which enabled the Casimiroid people to cross from the west.

Compare and contrast the concept of “nonrenewable resources” as they concerned ancient cultures with our own, present-day culture. How do limited natural resources affect human lifestyle choices and society? What challenges do present-day civilizations face, which ancient civilizations may not have faced?

Adaptations for Struggling Students

- Rather than focus on specific groups and time periods, much of this lesson can focus on the major distinction between hunter-gatherer groups and agricultural groups (migrating vs. sedentary).

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At the Museum

Exploring Migration Patterns

Overview

Students will explore the Amerindian Room in pairs to identify migration patterns into the Caribbean, explore reasons for these migrations, and identify settlement patterns to determine why Amerindians chose certain areas for their homesteads.

Background Information

In the pre-lesson, we determined that gradual population growth and the search for depleting food sources caused some ancient groups to travel great distances in search of new places to inhabit. The gradual outward migration from inner lands in the Americas to coastal regions helped create sea-life cultures, which learned to craft small boats/canoes and explore the sea around them. By using ocean currents to cross channels in the Caribbean sea, the first settlers arrived on Cuban shores to a vast, uninhabited tropical island, full of lush vegetation and wildlife.

Lesson objectives

SWBAT identify the entry points into the Caribbean and identify the places of origin of these early settlers.

- Students will observe, through examination of artifacts and museum displays, the factors leading to successful entry and migration into the Caribbean, tracing migration routes from their points of origin
- Students will learn about the wealth of natural resources available to migrating peoples/early settlers

Procedure

1. If you completed the pre-visit lesson: Before the trip, ask students to recall the reasons why an indigenous group may need to leave its inhabited territory.

If you did not complete the pre-visit lesson, describe to students the possible reasons why tribes needed to migrate distances in search of food and resources. Mention the competition of neighboring tribes and cultures for limited hunting grounds and areas to collect fruit, plants, etc.

2. Use the Migration Handout or have each student complete the following activities in their exercise books, while exploring the exhibit:

- *Find a map on one of the museum displays. Use this map to draw your own map of the Caribbean onto a small section of your paper. Then, trace your own migration path to get from Grenada to Cuba. Where would you stop? How would you get there? How might the ocean currents help you or slow you down?*
- *What would you need to **bring with you** on your journey? Write down a few objects you see in the museum that will help you make the trip. Don't forget food!*
- *Next, name 3 things about these islands that will help your tribe survive if you settled there. What plants and animals are living there? Is there enough food and fresh water? What else do you*

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observe about the islands that you think is important for your tribe?

Debriefing

After 15 minutes of exploration in pairs, gather students back together (preferably around the Migration Display and Map). Ask a few student pairs to retrace their own “migrations” from Grenada to Cuba, and have them explain why they chose that route. Probe for length of time at sea, things they would bring with them, number of stops at islands along the way, and how long they think it would take them. Ask them to describe things they saw in the museum to help them with their journey. Describe why these items are important.

Ask other student pairs to name some characteristics of the island that could help their tribe start a new life there. What characteristics, objects, and features of their new land would help them with survival?

After Your Visit

Extensions

Recount the experiences of Amerindian navigation to reach the Caribbean, and the different entry points used by groups from Central and South Americas. Despite its proximity, there has been no migration from Florida into the Caribbean, as previously believed. Describe some possible reasons why this is the case.

What information do historians rely on to determine migration routes and verify the past sites of ancient civilizations?

Post-Visit Activities

Back in the classroom, have students return to their pair formations.

1. Ask student pairs to develop a detailed plan of their move to a new island. List a reason why they are moving, items to bring, method and route of travel, time estimate of travel, what their new home should have to settle there, and tasks to complete once they get there. **Optional:** Ask pairs present their plans.
2. Have students work individually on a journal entry of an Amerindian child describing life on the new island. What is the new island like? How is it different from where they used to live? What are members of the tribe doing to pass their time as they settle in? What was the journey like? **Optional:** Ask students to share experiences with classmates when finished.

Post-Visit Reflection

- What can museums teach us about Grenada’s history? What does learning about ancient settlers of the Caribbean tell us about our own past and heritage?