



# *Caribbean Studies for CAPE® Examinations*

*An Interdisciplinary Approach*

*2nd Edition*

JENIFFER MOHAMMED

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# Preface

The second edition of the text *Caribbean Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach* has been rewritten to include new syllabus material, to deepen the interdisciplinary nature of the subject and to respond to comments made by teachers. Caribbean Studies belongs to that genre of study known as Area Studies; other examples are Latin American Studies, Egyptology and Brazilian Studies. An interdisciplinary study weaves together research and scholarship from different academic disciplines, all of which are relevant to understanding more about the particular area or region. Much of the content is derived from the Social Sciences and the Humanities and includes history, geography, sociology, political science, languages, literature and cultural studies.

Since most teachers have been trained in well-defined disciplines, the interdisciplinary nature of Caribbean Studies may pose a challenge in delivering the curriculum. It is indeed remarkable that such a subject should find its way into post-secondary education, which has traditionally been the domain of systematic knowledge with strong disciplinary boundaries such as science, modern studies or languages. Caribbean Studies has 'weak boundaries' and is perhaps symptomatic of a postmodern curriculum celebrating the interconnected nature of knowledge and people. To facilitate the interdisciplinary approach, related themes and core concepts have been used to structure each module. The thematic approach is very useful in organising teaching and learning materials which are integrated in an attempt to promote meaning in the real world rather than just disciplinary knowledge.

Undoubtedly, the major aim of such a study is to bring to awareness in Caribbean youth a comprehensive understanding of the potential and challenges of the region. The text is written especially for the post-secondary and tertiary student, targeting those issues threatening human development in the region. This emphasis is addressed through a number of strategies and approaches which are detailed below.

■ **Content.** The expository part of the text emphasises issues important in generating and developing knowledge of the past, present and future of the region. It deals specifically with the challenge of

human and economic development in small states, especially within a context of global interaction. While factual content is provided, this is subservient to the main intention of engaging the student in thinking through important issues.

- **Activities.** There are both lower-order knowledge items and activities designed to deepen the reflective spirit and encourage analytical and critical thinking. There is some focus on helping a person to understand his or her own role in shaping the region.
- **Boxes.** These give greater detail to issues introduced in the text and may highlight the unique experience of specific Caribbean countries. Within the general Caribbean region it is important to realise that experiences may differ from one territory to another. Boxes may also be used for showcasing divergent and controversial views to provoke thought and discussion.

The text has been conceptualised and written with a particular view of the learner in mind. For example, the student is envisaged as one who has an interest in the Caribbean and its links with the wider world, but little specific pre-knowledge of other Caribbean countries. At the same time, the learner has the desire to discuss controversial and provocative issues dealing with society, culture, youth and development but has not had much experience in reflecting on his or her own preferred ways of thinking and prejudices. Thus, the text emphasises important specific details of different Caribbean countries and proposes or provokes some deeper thinking and self-introspection.

Elements of a constructivist approach have been used to help students to continue to develop a sense of Caribbean identity and a greater appreciation of the region's potential and problems. Thus, it is highly affective and the factual, definitional aspects of content are used as a platform to encourage students to engage in reflective and analytical thinking. The activities represent a major area of stimulation in developing these skills and competencies, especially bringing to the fore the role which the individual plays in society, culture and development.

*Jeniffer Mohammed*

## Dedication

**This book is dedicated to Sylvia, Curt, Mikhail, Nikolai and Isabel.**





# 1

# Caribbean Society and Culture

One of the goals of Caribbean Studies is to develop a Caribbean citizen who has a deep awareness and understanding of the challenges and possibilities of the region. Module 1 seeks to develop this awareness and understanding through a study of Caribbean society and culture, focusing particularly on the impact of geography and history on the formation of that culture, and the interactions between different groups in the Caribbean who have settled here from across the world.

To grasp the opportunities and avoid the pitfalls of development, Caribbean citizens should be thoroughly knowledgeable about how their societies were created and how they developed – and indeed continue to function – in contexts of constant change, conflict and contradiction. Understanding of the ongoing development of the region also involves awareness of the evolution of the Caribbean diaspora and its influence on both the Caribbean region itself and societies and cultures outside.

## MODULE OBJECTIVES

### On completing this module, you will be able to:

1. understand the factors which have shaped Caribbean societies and cultures, including the history and geography of the region;
2. appreciate how the culture of the region has developed through the experiences of Caribbean peoples;
3. understand the features which unite the region, and those that give it its cultural diversity;
4. assess the dilemmas that Caribbean society and culture experience in their intra-regional and extra-regional relationships;
5. relate what you have learned to your own individual life and the life of your community.