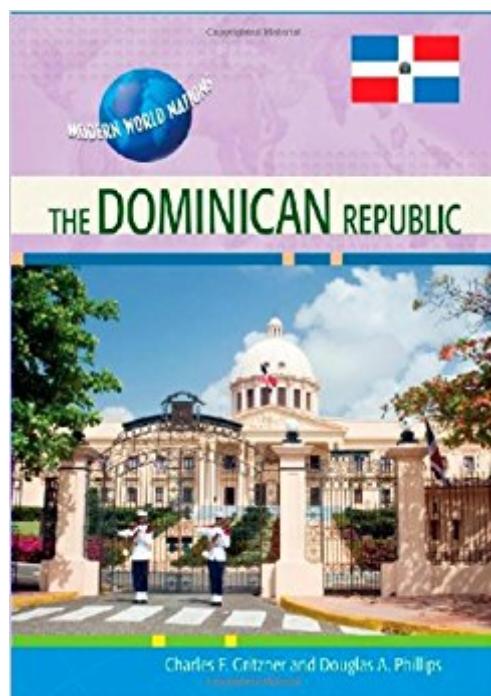


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Synopsis

Inhabited by the Taino Indians since the seventh century, the Dominican Republic became the site of the first European settlement in the Americas when Christopher Columbus claimed the island for Spain in 1492. Santo Domingo proudly boasts the first cathedral, fortress, hospital, monastery, university, palace, and streets in the Americas. Once ruled by Spain, France, and Haiti, the country eventually gained its independence in 1844 and modeled its constitution after the U.S. Constitution. A legacy of unsettled, nonrepresentative rule followed, capped by the ironfisted dictatorship of General Rafael Trujillo. Today, the Dominican Republic is a democratic republic with a major railway and an economy based on tourism. Because of the vast inequalities among the rich and the poor, Dominicans still face many hardships, and high unemployment remains a challenge. In *The Dominican Republic*, explore this island nation's history, culture, peoples, and government.

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