

Caribbean Music An Introduction

The Caribbean (also known as The West Indies) is made up of island *states* that speak English, Spanish or French.

English speaking islands	Spanish speaking islands	French speaking islands
Jamaica	Cuba	Haiti
The Bahamas	Puerto Rico	Martinique
Trinidad & Tobago	Dominican Republic	Guadeloupe

Although there is a wide variety in the religions and cultures practised in each island, they share a common history. Their original **inhabitants** were the Arawak and Carib American-Indians. They were driven out when European settlers arrived in the late 15th Century. The Europeans set up the Slave trade. Slaves were taken to the Caribbean, and forced to work. They grew crops, which were then sold in Europe. For most of the slaves, the conditions were terrible. In 1804 these African slaves rose up and made Haiti the first free slave state in the Caribbean.

It is difficult to explain what Caribbean music is. However we can hear musical influences from African and Western music. The African influence is clear from the lively, **syncopated rhythms**, the use of **call-and-response** vocal patterns, and the use of **ostinatos**. Western influence can be heard in the use of major and minor keys. Caribbean music styles range from traditional folk (mento, merengue) to popular styles (reggae, salsa).

Glossary:

Inhabitants	People who live in a certain town or country
Syncopated rhythms	Off-beat rhythms
Call-and-response	The call, a short phrase of words and melody was sung by a leader, and an answering response was sung by a chorus.
Ostinato	A short repeated pattern of notes

Questions

1. Where is the West Indies?
 2. What are the main languages that are spoken in the Caribbean?
 3. What language do they speak in Haiti?
 4. The Caribbean islands share a common history. What is this?
 5. Why do you think that the main languages used in the Caribbean are French, Spanish and English?
 6. What influences did African and Western music have on Caribbean music?
 7. Name some main styles used in Caribbean music.
 8. Why do you think the slave trade was set up?
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