

Colombia: Sofia Survives the Border | Worksheet Packet

Geography Focus

Colombia, South America, and Central America



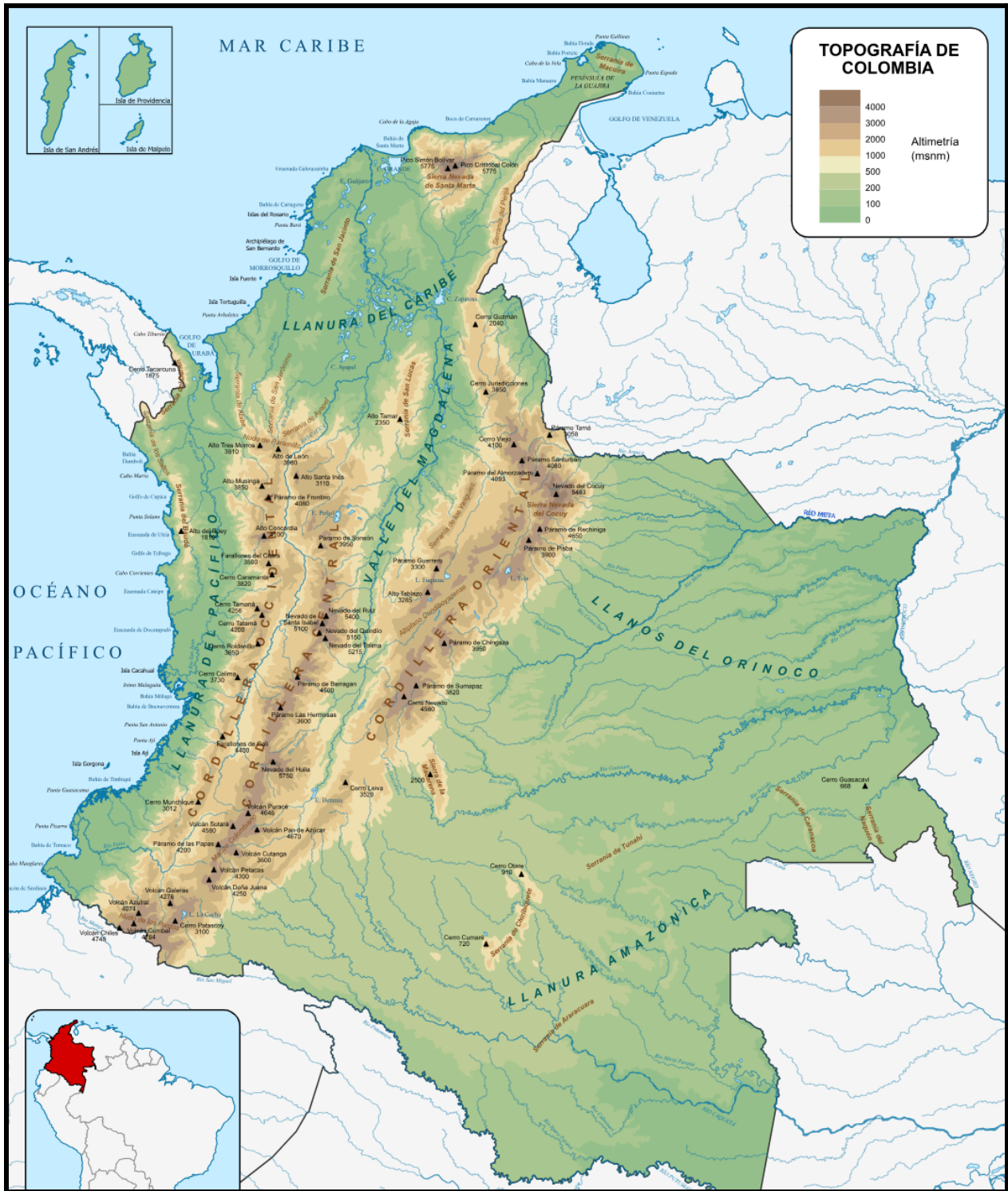
Map of Colombia. © Wikimedia Commons contributors. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

Directions: Using an online or printed resource, do the following.

- ☐ Identify and label the countries of South America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.
- ☐ Identify and label San Andres Island
- ☐ Identify and label these bodies of water: Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of America
- ☐ Identify and label Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States of America.



Map of the Topography of Colombia



Map of the topography of Colombia. © Wikimedia Commons contributors. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

Directions: Using the Map of the Topography of Colombia, answer the following.

1. Identify and circle the location of the Darien Gap (Serrania del Darien). Why might this region make road construction difficult?

2. What major physical features can you identify on this map? (Give at least four.)

3. Which colors correspond to the highest elevations? _____

4. Which colors correspond to the lowest elevations? _____

5. Why would the cartographer choose these colors to represent elevation in this way?

6. Based on the map, come up with a good dictionary definition of valley.

7. Based on the map, come up with a good dictionary definition for plain.

8. How is a valley different from a plain?

9. Based on the map, come up with a good dictionary definition for cordillera.

10. What do you notice about city development in Colombia? Where are they located, and why are they located there?

Vocabulary Focus & Sentence Writing

Word Bank:

migrant	customs	refugee	cartel	Darien Gap	sovereignty
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Match the term to its definition:

1. _____ A cooperative arrangement between groups typically involved in organized crime.
2. _____ A remote, roadless, and densely forested region of Central America that stretches between Panama and Colombia.
3. _____ A person who moves from one place to another, often to find work, family, or better living conditions.
4. _____ The right and power of a country to govern itself without interference from others and defend its territory.
5. _____ The place at a country's border where government officials check what people and goods are entering or leaving the country.
6. _____ Someone fleeing their country because of war, violence, or persecution and seeking safety in another country.

Write two sentences using any two words from the word bank above. Try to connect your sentence to the story.

7. _____

8. _____

Cause & Effect Chart

Use the chart below to track 2-3 challenges from the story and the policies or ideologies that cause them.

Problem	Policy/Ideology Behind It	Effect on the Character
<i>Example: Masses of Venezuelan refugees entering Colombia.</i>	<i>Venezuela's "socialist regime" restricts businesses and people, contributing to poverty/instability that pushes people to leave.</i>	<i>Sofia's town changes: more tents/camps, trash/sanitation issues, strangers passing through, and general uncertainty.</i>

Reading Comprehension and Personal Reflection

Answer the following questions based on your reading.

1. Cartels operate near the border and use smuggling routes. What is the cause-and-effect link between border insecurity and cartel power?

2. Migrants are guided by coyotes and face robbery and/or abandonment. Why does high demand for migration create exploitation?

3. The story describes border towns being overwhelmed. How does that lead to problems like trash, sanitation issues, and crime?

Long Answer Response:

4. The “Border Breakdown” section discusses both the humanitarian crisis and sovereignty challenges. How can the goal of helping those in need and protecting country borders be strengthened?

Personal Reflection Prompt:

5. What is one community effort you could participate in (with a parent/guardian or trusted adult) that would help people in need? Explain what you would do and how this would contribute to human flourishing.

Sofia Survives the Border | Answer Key

Geography Focus

Colombia, South America, and Central America

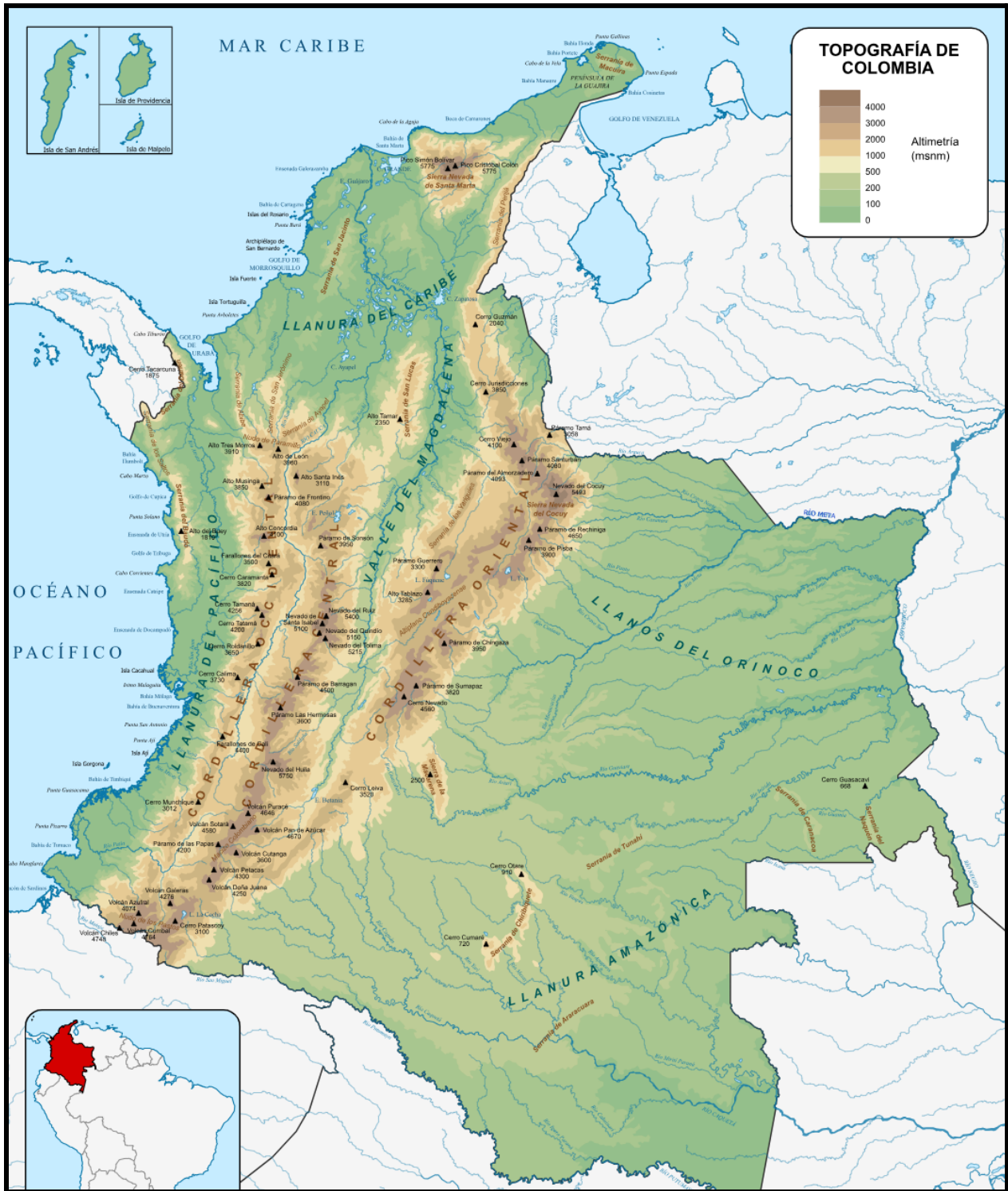


Map of Colombia. © Wikimedia Commons contributors. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

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Map of the Topography of Colombia



Map of the topography of Colombia. © Wikimedia Commons contributors. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

1. Identify and circle the location of the Darien Gap (Serrania del Darien). Why might this region make road construction difficult?

The area is thick with jungle, very wet due to heavy rainfall, and features very steep, rugged terrain, with lots of rivers and swamps, all of which make building and maintaining roads expensive and dangerous.

2. What major physical features can you identify on this map? (Give at least four.)

Answers will vary, but may include any of the following: Mountains, valleys, plains, lowlands, coastal regions, bays, rivers, tributaries, an isthmus, corilleras, etc.

3. Which colors correspond to the highest elevations? Dark brown / tan

4. Which colors correspond to the lowest elevations? Dark green

5. Why would the cartographer choose these colors to represent elevation in this way?

Answers will vary, but may include the following reasoning: Cartographers want to show that lowlands and valleys have more vegetation and are green, whereas higher elevations have less vegetation and are more rocky and barren. The color choices reveal the landscape's reality.

6. Based on the map, come up with a good dictionary definition of valley.

Model definition: A low area of land between higher areas of elevation (often mountains or hills), usually forming a long trough where a river may flow.

7. Based on the map, come up with a good dictionary definition for plain.

Model definition: A large area of mostly flat or gently sloping land, usually at low elevation, with few steep changes in elevation.

8. How is a valley different from a plain?

Model answer: A valley is a low strip or trough of land between higher areas, while a plain is broad, wide, and not necessarily enclosed by higher terrain.

9. Based on the map, come up with a good dictionary definition for cordillera.

Model definition: A system or chain of connected mountain ranges, often running roughly parallel and forming a larger mountain region.

10. What do you notice about city development in Colombia? Where are they located, and why are they located there? Answers will vary, but may include the following reasoning: Many cities are located near mountain regions and along rivers. Higher elevations can have cooler temperatures, provide more buildable land than the jungle regions, and provide access to water. Cities also tend to develop along transport routes.

Vocabulary Focus & Sentence Writing

Word Bank:

migrant	customs	refugee	cartel	Darien Gap	sovereignty
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Match the term to its definition:

1. **Cartel** A cooperative arrangement between groups typically involved in organized crime.
2. **Darien Gap** A remote, roadless, and densely forested region of Central America that stretches between Panama and Colombia.
3. **Migrant** A person who moves from one place to another, often to find work, family, or better living conditions.
4. **Sovereignty** The right and power of a country to govern itself without interference from others and defend its territory.
5. **Customs** The place at a country's border where government officials check what people and goods are entering or leaving the country.
6. **Refugee** Someone fleeing their country because of war, violence, or persecution and seeking safety in another country.

Write two sentences using any two words from the word bank above. Try to connect your sentence to the story.

7. **Answers will vary.** Look for two complete sentences that correctly use vocabulary from the word bank and relate to the events of the story. For example:
Sofia saw how cartels controlled the smuggling routes near the border, making the journey dangerous for migrants.

8. *The difficult terrain of the Darién Gap makes border enforcement challenging and allows illegal crossings to happen more easily.*

Cause & Effect Chart

Use the chart below to track 2-3 challenges from the story and the policies or ideologies that cause them.

Answers will vary. Students should identify a challenge from the story, connect it to a policy, system, or ideology behind the problem, and explain a clear effect on Sofia or her community.

Problem	Policy/Ideology Behind It	Effect on the Character
<i>Example: Masses of Venezuelan refugees entering Colombia.</i>	<i>Venezuela's "socialist regime" is described as restricting businesses and people, contributing to poverty/instability that pushes people to leave.</i>	<i>Sofia's town changes: more tents/camps, trash/sanitation issues, strangers passing through, and general uncertainty.</i>
Migrants traveling through the Darién Gap on their way north.	Weak border enforcement and the existence of illegal smuggling routes allow traffickers and coyotes to guide migrants through the region.	Sofia learns the jungle crossing is extremely dangerous and that many migrants face robbery, illness, or abandonment.
Cartels operating near the border	Criminal organizations profit from illegal migration and smuggling when governments cannot effectively control remote border regions.	Sofia's community feels less safe and travelers must rely on dangerous criminal networks to move through the area.
Human trafficking and exploitation of migrants along border routes	Criminal networks take advantage of weak law enforcement in remote regions and the desperation of migrants seeking to move north.	Sofia learns that some migrants—especially women and children—are at risk of being exploited or trafficked, making the journey even more dangerous.

Reading Comprehension and Personal Reflection

Answer the following questions based on your reading.

(Answers will vary slightly. Look for complete thoughts, accurate cause-and-effect reasoning, and support from the text.)

1. Cartels operate near the border and use smuggling routes. What is the cause-and-effect link between border insecurity and cartel power? **Example answer:**

When borders are difficult to control, cartels can take over smuggling routes and charge people for passage. Weak enforcement gives criminal groups more freedom to operate, which increases their profits and influence and makes the region less safe.

2. Migrants are guided by coyotes and face robbery and/or abandonment. Why does high demand for migration create exploitation? **Example answer:**

High demand creates a profitable illegal market. When people are desperate to migrate, coyotes and criminals can take advantage of them because migrants often have little protection and few safe options, so exploitation becomes easier and more common.

3. The story describes border towns being overwhelmed. How does that lead to problems like trash, sanitation issues, and crime? **Example answer:**

When a small town suddenly has many more people than it can support, services like trash pickup, housing, clean water, and policing get strained. Overcrowding and limited resources can lead to more trash and sanitation problems, and it can also create more opportunities for theft and crime.

Long Answer Response:

4. The “Border Breakdown” section discusses both the humanitarian crisis and sovereignty challenges. How can the goal of helping those in need and protecting country borders be strengthened? **Example answer:**

A country can strengthen both goals by combining compassion with order. Clear border enforcement and monitored entry points reduce cartel control and make migration routes less dangerous. Supervised aid near official checkpoints—shelter, medical care, food, and reliable information—can help vulnerable people without rewarding smugglers. A consistent legal process for asylum or refugee claims can protect those truly in need while maintaining national sovereignty. When rules are clear and enforced, both citizens and migrants are safer.

Personal Reflection Prompt:

5. While helping others is kind, students should stay safe and never put themselves in risky situations, especially with strangers. There are still practical, supervised ways to help when needs are real.

What is one community effort you could participate in (with a parent/guardian or trusted adult) that would help people in need? Explain what you would do and how this would contribute to human flourishing. **Example answer:**

I could volunteer with a parent at a local food pantry or church donation drive to pack meals and hygiene kits for families in need. We could sort supplies and prepare items like soap, toothbrushes, and nonperishable food. This supports human flourishing because it helps people stay healthy and meet basic needs with dignity.