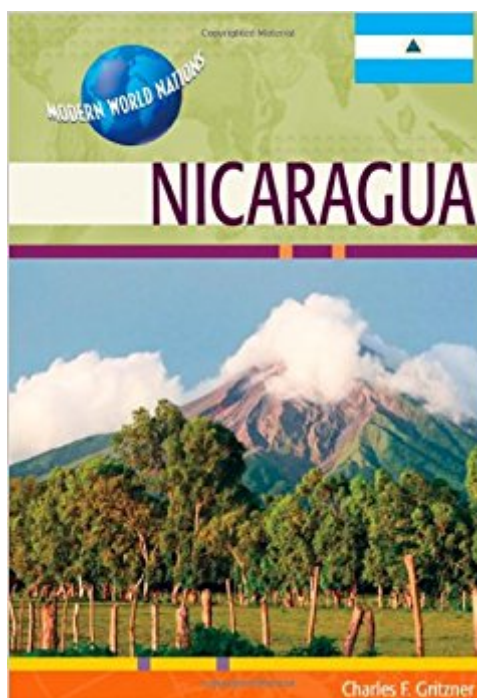


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Synopsis

Though Nicaragua is today thought of as a developing, war-torn country rife with scandal, the country enjoys a long, rich history. In 1502, Christopher Columbus was the first European to reach present-day Nicaragua as he sailed along the coast of Central America. Later conquered by the Spanish, the local Indian civilizations suffered from diseases brought over by the conquistadores and were enslaved to work in valuable mines. Nicaragua gained its independence in 1838, but the region often became embroiled in civil wars. Violent opposition to the government and corruption spread to all classes by 1978, and in 1979, the Marxist Sandinistas gained power. Free elections saw the Sandinistas defeated, and the first female president in the Americas was democratically elected in 1990. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro provided stability that the country had lacked for more than 10 years. Unfortunately, since she failed to dismantle the Sandinista Popular Army, Nicaragua is now again in the hands of Daniel Ortega and the Sandinista-led government. The gains won by democratic institutions face new challenges under the Ortega administration. In Nicaragua, learn about the vibrant culture, geography, history, and current state of this Central American country.

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