

Social Studies

Links with the USA today

Name _____

Vocabulary

1. Ally, allies – friendly country, countries
2. Visas – document giving permission for a person to travel to another country
3. Caribbean Basin Initiative – help offered to the Caribbean countries by special trade agreement on some goods
4. Fast food – food cooked and served quickly in a restaurant
5. Market research – finding out about what people do or think

It is good to have friends. All of us like to do things with our friends. Friends share secrets and help each other. Sometimes they join together to fight an enemy. They become **allies**.

The Bahamas has many allies. One of these is the United States of America, or the USA. We do things together, we share secrets, we help each other and sometimes we fight alongside each other.

As friends, each country has a special place, called an embassy, in the other's country. The United States Embassy in Nassau issues **visas** to Bahamians so that they can travel freely to the USA, and to other American territories. The embassy provides help in other ways too: for example, helping young Bahamians to study at American colleges and universities, and providing special help to our Government for drug detection. The embassy also helps Americans who live in The Bahamas, or who visit our islands as tourists.

The Bahamian embassy in the USA is in Washington D. C. It is a small piece of the Bahamian territory inside the USA. The Bahamian ambassador to the USA keeps our government informed of political events in that country. The ambassador helps the good relationship between our two nations.

Most of the money that we spend in The Bahamas comes from tourism, and most of the tourists who come here are from the USA. The money that the tourists spend helps our country to develop. The Bahamian government uses the money from tourism to build roads, schools and hospitals, and to pay people who work in government. It also buys things that the country needs from other countries. Most of these goods - food, clothing, cars, and so on - are imported from the USA.

Many US companies and banks do business in our country, adding more money to our economy. They pay a special fee to the Bahamian government and they also train and employ Bahamian people to work in their business.

The USA has developed a plan that it can provide more help to Caribbean countries by offering trade agreement on some special goods. This is called the *Caribbean Basin Initiative*. The Bahamas exports a few things to the USA – fish and fish products, agricultural products and rum.

Many Bahamian people travel to the USA for vacations and to shop, especially in Florida, which is the oldest US state to our islands. Many people who live in Florida enjoy Bahamian culture. Some of the festivals in Florida celebrate the music, food craft and dance of The Bahamas. In turn, The Bahamas has aspects of the US lifestyle such as **fast food**.

There are a number of organizations through which Bahamians and Americans can share social, historical and cultural relationships. The Bahamas will always share strong ties with the USA.

Tourism

Perhaps the most important link that The Bahamas has with the USA is the tourist link. This link is not a new one since tourism really began in the 1740s. At that time, Nassau the capital was known as a place where poor health could be restored. Hence the first tourists were invalids.

Tourism arrivals increased with the completion of the first hotel, the Royal Victoria, in 1861 and the Colonial Hilton (now the British Colonial Hilton) in 1898. By the 1900, the Miami – Nassau Winter Steamship service had started. Visitors of a different kind began to visit Nassau, mainly during the winter. These were mostly the rich and famous.

Tourism grew at a slow pace, and it first began to be looked at as a business only in the 1950s, when the late Sir Stafford Sands was put in charge of the Development Board. He aimed to increase the number of visitors that came to the Bahamas and to also make tourism a year – round business.

To achieve this, Sir Stafford Sands encouraged hotels to install air conditioning. Gambling was made legal and casinos were built in Nassau and Freeport. These were added attractions for the tourists. Another important step to increase visitor arrivals was a massive advertising campaign that was carried out in the USA, Canada and Europe to encourage visitors to come.

Tourism took an added importance after 1964, the year that saw the introduction of internal self-government. The development Board was replaced by the Ministry of Tourism.

In 1967, the new Progressive Liberal Party government recognised the importance of tourism to the economy of the Bahamas. From 1969 to 1979, under Minister Clement Maynard, spectacular progress in tourism, based on **market research**, was implemented. Tremendous efforts were made to improve tourism through staff training, courtesy campaigns and in helping hotels and hoteliers in planning new programmes.

The majority of tourists who visit The Bahamas are from the USA – the largest market being from the north-east region, from cities like New York, Boston and Philadelphia. The next largest market is found in the southern states of Atlanta, North Carolina and Florida. The fewest visitors come from mid-western states such as Ohio, Nebraska and Missouri. This tourism link is the bread and butter of the Bahamian economy.