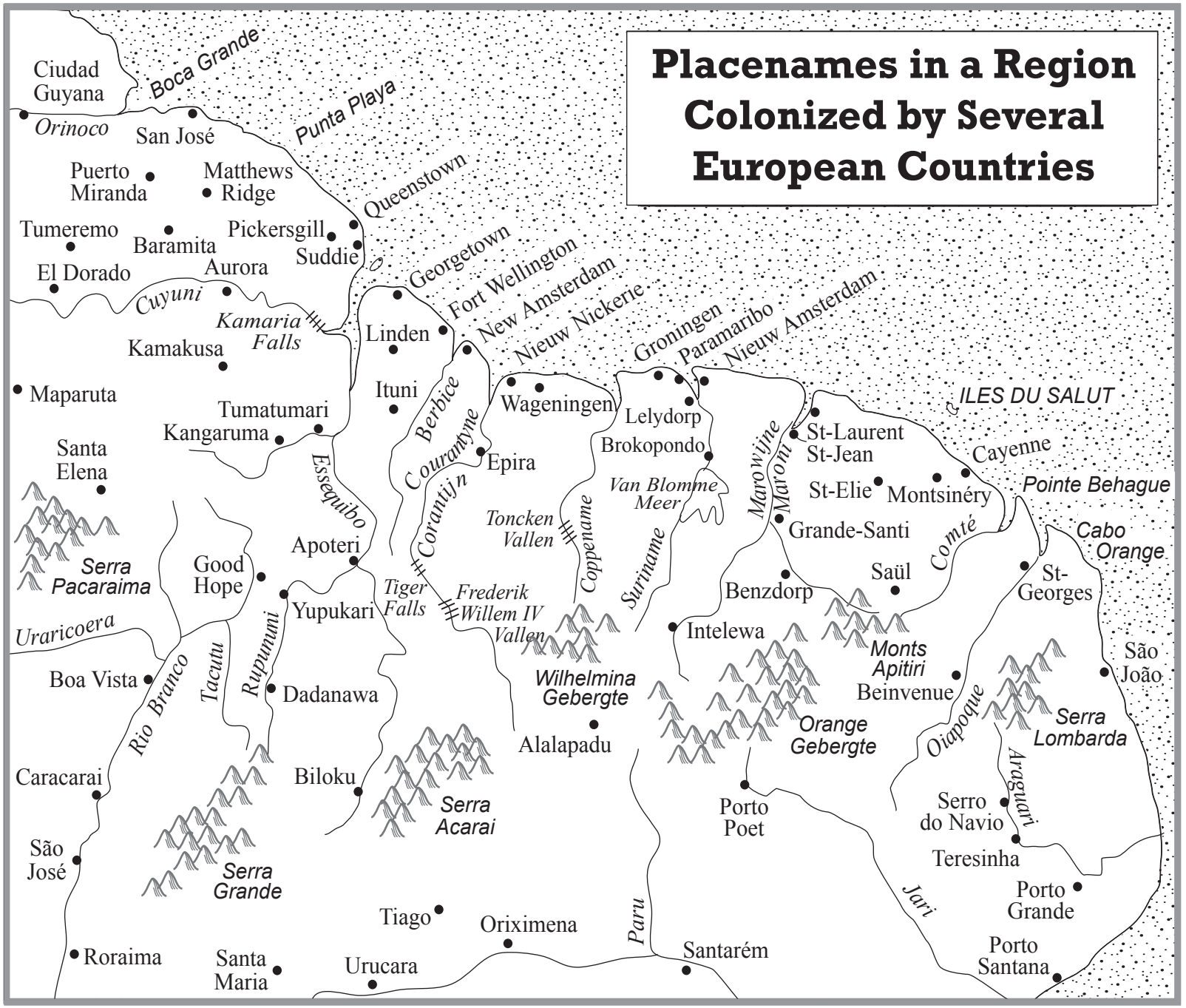
Placenames in a Region Colonized by Several European Countries



Instructions

Try to identify which group of people gave each place its name on this map.

Use a color marker and write a large letter on top of each name, following this letter code:

D - Dutch

E - English

F - French

N - Native

P - Portuguese

S - Spanish

X - other

Optional: lightly color each language region a distinctive color.

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Placenames and History

Clues about territorial claims in a colonial area

People who give a name to a place are saying that they either own it or have some kind of control over it. This fact gives us a great way to learn about a place: study its names.

Clue 1: Saints. Saint names can indicate a link with a country. Saint Patrick, for example, is associated with Ireland; Saint Cyril with Slavic countries; Saint Laurent with France; etc. Unfortunately, there are thousands of saints, and it's not easy to memorize the ones associated with every country. Fortunately, there is a simpler but still useful clue: different languages spell the word *saint* in different ways. *San* and *Santa*, for example, mean male and female saints in Spanish. Portuguese spell the same words *São* and *Santa*. In French, the words are spelled *Saint* and *Sainte* (or abbreviated as *Ste*).

Examine the map and find all places named for saints. Mark them with a large E, F, S, or P if you are pretty sure they come from English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese (or use S/P for a word like *Santa*, which could be either S or P).

Clue 2: Home Places. Colonists sometimes use names of places "back home." For example, New London, CT, was named after London, England. More examples:

England: Birmingham, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Wellington
France: Bordeaux, Cherbourg, Lyon, Marseille, Orleans, Paris, Toulouse
Netherlands: Amsterdam, Groningen, Haarlem, Lely, Rotterdam, Wageningen
Portugal: Barreiro, Coimbra, Lisboa, Portalegre, Porto, Santarem, Setubal
Spain: Barcelona, Cartagena, Cordoba, Malaga, Madrid, Seville, Valencia

Can you find any places named after European places? If so, mark them with E, F, P, S, or D (for the Netherlands, where the main language is called Dutch).

Clue 3: Features. Many placenames are based on common landscape features. Mark places with E, F, P, S, or D if their names include these common words:

English	French	Portuguese	Spanish	Dutch
River	Riviere	Rio	Rio	Rivier
Lake or Sea	Lac, Mer	Lago	Lago, Mara	Meer, See
Bay	Baie	Baia	Bahia	Baai
Cape	Cap	Cabo	Cabo	Kaap
Point	Pointe	Ponta	Punta	Punt
Island	Ile	Ilha	Isla	Eiland
Land	Terre	Terra	Tierra	Land
Mountain	Mont, Montagne	Serra	Montana, Sierra	Gebergte
North	Nord	Norte	Norte	Noord
East	Est	Leste	Este	Oost
South	Sud	Sul	Sur	Zuid
West	Oueste	Oeste	Oeste	West
White	Blanc	Branco	Blanco	Blank, Wit
Black	Noir	Negro	Negro	Zwart
Green	Vert	Verde	Verde	Groen
Red	Rouge	Rubro	Rojo	Rood

Clue 4: Sound. Many words in native languages in this area have a string of four or five consonant-vowel syllables. This makes a smooth-sounding name, like Orinoco or Surinama. Study the map, and put a large N on places with names have no European clue and sound like they might be native.

Use your best judgment to draw boundaries between regions claimed by each country.

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