

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson Title: U.S.-Cuba Relations

Grade level: 9-12

Subject Area: U.S. History, Geography

Duration: Two class periods

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Explore the history of relations between Cuba and the United States
2. Examine in detail one event or period to be included on a class time line of U.S.-Cuba relations

Materials:

- Internet access
- Newsprint
- Markers
- Large index cards (one for each pair of students)
- Print and online resources about Cuba (Web sites are listed below)

Procedures:

1. Point out Cuba on a map of North America and on a map of the Caribbean. Ask students what they notice about Cuba's location. Then display a map of Cuba that shows its physical features and major cities. Write students' observations on a piece of newsprint. (They may notice that it's an island, it's the largest country of the Caribbean, it's very close to the United States, it has a lot of rivers, the names of its cities are Spanish, and the capital is Havana.)
2. Ask students what images, names, or events come to mind when they think about Cuba. Write their answers on the chart paper. If students have difficulty, you may want to prompt them to mention Fidel Castro, Elián González, Communism, or the Bay of Pigs.
3. As a class, look over your list and consider what some of these items reveal about the relationship between Cuba and the United States. After a brief discussion, explain that the U.S. has had a long, complicated, and often tense relationship with Cuba, which lies only 90 miles from Florida. It has been ruled by a Communist government since 1959. (See the definition of *Communism* below.)
4. Explain that the class will create a time line highlighting the history of the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba from 1898 to the present. Students will work in pairs to learn about an important event, person, or policy associated with this relationship. Each pair will write a summary of the event, person, or policy on an index card, including basic facts and its significance in U.S.-Cuba relations. Then students will pin their cards along a time line. (You

or a few students can create the blank time line with a long piece of newsprint; mark 10-year intervals.)

5. Have students work in pairs. Assign one or two of the following topics to each pair. (You may write these dates and terms on the index cards they will use for the time line.)

1868-78: Ten Years' War

1898: U.S. battleship *Maine*/Spanish-American War

1901: Platt Amendment

1902: Tomás Estrada Palma

1903: Guantánamo Bay

1906-9: Charles E. Magoon

1933: Batista

1959: Fidel Castro

1961: Bay of Pigs

1962: U.S. trade embargo

1962: Cuban missile crisis

1980: Mariel boat lift

1991: Dissolution of the Soviet Union

1993: Domestic economic reforms

1994: U.S.-Cuba immigration agreement

1998: Visit to Cuba by Pope John Paul II

1999: Elián González

6. Ask students to research their topic and write a descriptive summary explaining why the topic was significant in the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba. Provide the following Web sites for their research:

World Book: Cuba (Also see other sites listed under “World Book Online” below.)

<http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/worldbook/atozgeography/c/142820.html>

U.S. State Department: Cuba

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn/index.cfm?docid=2886>

Cuban Experience

http://library.thinkquest.org/18355/for_students.html

Cuba

<http://www.islandconnoisseur.com/cuba/history.htm> (See also “Government and Economy.”)

For more recent events, such as the Pope's visit and Elián González, search these news sites:

CNN

<http://cnn.com>

TIME for Kids (Intended for younger students but provides good summaries.)
<http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/news/index.html>

Scholastic News
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/newszone/index.asp>

7. When they've completed their summaries, have students present them to the class in chronological order and pin their index cards to the time line in the appropriate spot.
8. After the class has completed the time line, ask students to discuss the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba. Why has the U.S. been involved in Cuba's affairs? What are some important turning points in the relations between the two countries? Looking at Cuba's history, can students see reasons that Fidel Castro was able to take control of the country?
9. The following time line highlights important events in U.S.-Cuba relations. You may want to use this for your own reference or to share it with students after they have completed their research. It may also help to highlight connections between events.

Timeline of U.S.-Cuba Relations

1492	Christopher Columbus lands in Cuba and claims the island for Spain. (Spain rules Cuba for the next 400 years.)
1868-78	Cuban revolutionaries fight Spanish rule in the Ten Years' War. Spain retains control but promises reforms.
1895	Cubans again revolt against Spanish rule, and a second war of independence begins.
1898	The U.S. joins Cuba in its war after the U.S. battleship <i>Maine</i> is blown up in Havana harbor. The U.S. and the Cuban rebels defeat Spain in the Spanish-American War (known in Cuba as the "Spanish-Cuban American War"). Spain gives up all claims to Cuba.
1898-1902	A U.S. military government controls Cuba.
1901	Cuba adopts a constitution that includes a set of provisions called the Platt Amendment . The amendment allows the U.S. to intervene in Cuban affairs.
1902	Tomás Estrada Palma becomes the first president of the Republic of Cuba.
1903	Under a treaty with Cuba, the U.S. receives a permanent lease on Guantánamo Bay and begins to build a large naval base there.
1906	U.S. troops return to Cuba, and a government headed by American Charles E. Magoon rules Cuba until 1909.
1933	A revolutionary group led by Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar (" Batista ") takes control of the government.
1934	The U.S. and Cuba sign a treaty that cancels the Platt Amendment. International investments in Cuba expand during the 1940s and 1950s.
1959	Fidel Castro's forces overthrow Batista's government, and Castro becomes the ruler of Cuba.
1961	Fidel Castro declares Cuba a Communist country. Cuban exiles sponsored by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and are quickly defeated by Castro's army.

1962	U.S. begins a trade embargo : It becomes illegal for U.S. citizens to conduct business with Cuba or travel there. One of the most serious incidents of the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis , occurs in October when the U.S. learns that the Soviet Union has secretly installed missiles in Cuba. The Soviet Union agrees to U.S. demands that it remove its missiles and dismantle the remaining missile bases.
1976	Cuba adopts a new constitution that establishes the Communist Party as the leading authority in the government and society.
1980	More than 125,000 Cubans move legally to the U.S. This event becomes known as the Mariel boat lift because the refugees leave from the Cuban port of Mariel.
1991	The Soviet Union and its Communist government are dissolved. Cuba loses its most important source of aid, and its economy suffers greatly.
1993	Cuba institutes economic reforms that allow some workers to start private businesses.
1994	After another large wave of immigration, Cuba and the U.S. reach an immigration agreement . The U.S. will admit at least 20,000 Cuban immigrants annually. In return, Cuba pledges to do more to prevent illegal departures.
1998	Pope John Paul II visits Cuba , an historic event because Castro's government outlawed religious freedom in the 1960s.
1999	Elián González , a six-year-old illegal immigrant, is rescued off the coast of Florida. The event sparks controversy about how the U.S. should handle Cuban exiles; Elián is returned to his father in Cuba in 2000.

Discussion Questions:

1. Look at each event on the time line and describe how it relates to the preceding and succeeding events.
2. What role did the Soviet Union and the Cold War play in U.S. relations with Cuba?
3. Why, do you think, is our relationship with Cuba important?
4. Do you think our relations with Cuba will change in the near future? If so, how? If not, why not?

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate how well students participate in class discussion, research and write about their topic, and present their findings to the class:

Three points: participated actively in class discussion; exhibited strong research and writing skills; gave a thorough, clear presentation with several important facts about U.S.-Cuba relations.

Two points: participated to an average degree in class discussion; exhibited on-grade research and writing skills; gave a presentation that included some important facts about U.S.-Cuba relations.

One point: participated little in class discussion; exhibited weak research and writing skills; gave a presentation that included few or no important facts about U.S.-Cuba relations.

Extension:

Colonization in the Caribbean

Explain that Cuba was not the only Caribbean island subjected to colonization and that Spain was not the only country trying to stake its claim in the Caribbean. After Columbus visited the region, other European countries (and later the U.S.) gained control of several Caribbean islands. Today France, Britain, the Netherlands, and the U.S. still control islands in the region. Have students examine the international relations of other islands of the Caribbean, such as Jamaica, Haiti, St. Lucia, Puerto Rico, Martinique, the Cayman Islands, and Aruba. Ask students to select one island and answer the following questions:

- Describe the nation's government. Is it an independent country or a dependency?
- Which other country or countries have played the greatest role in its history?
- What influences have outside countries had on the island's language, architecture, or culture?

Refer students to the following Web sites:

Caribbean (See the “History” and “Government” sections for each island.)
<<http://www.islandconnoisseur.com/destinations/>>

West Indies

<http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/worldbook/atozgeography/w/598680.html>

Suggested Reading:

Fodor’s Exploring Mexico (4th ed.)

Fodor’s Travel Publications, 2001.

There’s nothing quite like a travel guide to transport you to exciting places! Here’s a chance to visit Mexico with lots of color photographs and plenty of information. An introductory section talks about Mexico—as it is today and as it was in the past—including informative discussions about the Aztecs and the Maya. The following sections cover Mexico, piece by piece, with highlights of each area to start things off. A closing summary of travel facts makes this a practical guide as well.

The National Geographic Traveler: The Caribbean

Nick Hanna and Emma Stanford. National Geographic Society, 1999.

With its usual lush photographs, this National Geographic guide covers a host of beautiful islands scattered in the Caribbean—from Jamaica to Aruba to Martinique and more. Each section provides a brief introduction to an area and to some of its highlights. The descriptions are detailed and absorbing. Maps of each featured island are clear and carefully marked, just as you’d expect from National Geographic! The final section, Travelwise, overflows with information for the tourist on money, travel, festivals and holidays, who to contact in an emergency, as well as suggestions for lodging, dining, and places to shop.

Vocabulary:

Cold War

Definition: A period of intense rivalry that developed after World War II between groups of Communist and non-Communist nations, most notably the Soviet Union and the U.S.

Context: The invasion of the Bay of Pigs was one of the most serious incidents of the **Cold War**.

Communism

Definition: A political and economic system in which a single party controls state-owned means of production with the aim of establishing a classless society; a social system in which property and goods are owned in common.

Context: The ideas of **Communism** grew from the writings of Karl Marx, a German social philosopher who lived in the 1800s.

Spanish-American War

Definition: A brief conflict between the United States and Spain that took place between April and August 1898 over the issue of the liberation of Cuba.

Context: In the course of the **Spanish-American War**, the U.S. won Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippine Islands.

Academic Standards:

This lesson adheres to standards issued by the National Council for the Social Studies for students in grades 5-8:

1. Provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.
2. Provide for the study of people, places, and environments.
3. Provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.
4. Provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

Credit

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