



The Heritage and Culture of Puerto Ricans

Curriculum Unit 91.02.06
by Rose Christoforo-Mitchell

Introduction

This curriculum unit is intended to provide young people with a fuller picture of our pluralistic society by increasing the opportunities for them to learn more about Hispanic people. The word “Hispanic” refers to that population segment with the capability of speaking and comprehending the Spanish language, whose ancestry identifies with the Hispanic culture. The three major groups in the United States are Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans. For the purposes of this unit, the focus will be on the heritage and culture of Puerto Ricans. This will serve as a supplement to the Social Studies program in grades three and four, but may be adapted for an elementary, middle school or high school level.

For many children in our schools, a knowledge of the history and culture of Hispanic people will enable them to understand better their heritage and culture and to achieve a positive self-image. Children of other ethnic backgrounds will have an opportunity to learn about a large group of Americans who make up our pluralistic society, and especially that group of Hispanic people who live in or come from Puerto Rico.

Design of Curriculum Unit

This curriculum unit is designed on the elementary level to show the social and cultural developments of the island of Puerto Rico, how Puerto Ricans have lived and shaped their distinctive way of life. It provides the student with an understanding of the diverse background of Puerto Rican people as well as with an understanding of how the Indian, Spanish and African cultures were integrated into Puerto Rican culture. The activities in this unit are planned around basic concepts in history and social sciences.

This unit is divided into eleven lessons. The beginning of each lesson a short reading introduces the topic to students. At the elementary level my suggestion is that the teacher read this to the class. Students will have available a variety of resource materials in the classroom. These can include supplementary materials from the Bilingual Department cited within this unit, library books, records, filmstrips and the use of computers (Jostens Learning Corporation, *Comptons Multi-Media Encyclopedia*). Students will be involved in a variety of learning activities such as reading, creative writing, art projects, music, dance, and research and study. The

culminating activities will include a display of class projects and an assembly program for Puerto Rico Discovery Day in November.

The Origin of the Puerto Rican Culture

The Indian, Spanish and African races came together on the island of Puerto Rico, contributing their blood and traditions to the formation of the Puerto Rican culture.

The original inhabitants of Puerto Rico at the time of the Spanish conquest were the Taino and Carib Indian-tribes. The Tainos were peaceful people, but the Caribs were warlike cannibals who had originally come from the jungles of South America.

The Spanish colonists who came to the island belonged to the “white” or “caucasian” race, a blend of various white sub-races with the predominant Mediterranean characteristics of dark-hair and dark eyes. They came to the island hoping to become rich because of reports of gold and rich vegetation.

The third group of inhabitants of Puerto Rico were the Africans. The Spaniards initially brought in African slaves to help in their search for gold, and later to work in the planting and harvesting of sugar cane.

The present population of Puerto Rico can be divided roughly into three overlapping categories: Whites, Blacks and a large variety of types representing various mixtures of Indians, Spaniards and Blacks.

A Brief History of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is a mountainous tropical island directly in the path of trade winds. These tropical conditions account for its tropical rain forest and tropical wet and dry climates. There is little difference from season to season in the energy received by the sun, and being near the equator the length of the day remains fairly constant throughout the year.

Puerto Rico is composed of one large island and several small islands. It is bordered on the north by the Atlantic Ocean, on the east by the Virgin Passage (which separates it from the Virgin Islands), on the South by the Caribbean Sea, and on the west by the Mona Passage (which separates it from the Dominican Republic).

On November 19, 1493 Puerto Rico was discovered by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage to claim lands for the rulers of Spain, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.

In 1493 the island was called Borinquen by the Indians who lived there. Columbus named it San Juan Bautista. Later Spanish traders began calling the island Puerto Rico, which means “rich port”, and that name stuck.

One of the men who landed in Puerto Rico with Columbus was Juan Ponce de Leon. He was looking for the Fountain of Youth. In 1508 he founded the first Spanish settlement colony in Puerto Rico at a spot near where old San Juan is now located. The ruins are still preserved there.

Due to the close proximity of Puerto Rico and the United States, their association had its roots as early as the

end of the eighteenth century. This was when the United States had recently won its independence from England and had a great interest in establishing sources of trade. Trade between Puerto Rico and the United States developed so quickly that the United States soon rivaled Spain in trade importance with the island.

On September 23, 1868 an army of Puerto Ricans proclaimed independence for the island from Spain in what is known as the Grito de Lares, but the army was quickly defeated by Spanish soldiers. In 1897 Puerto Rico was granted autonomy by Spain through the Charter of Autonomy, which gave governing power to an island government. However, the Spanish-American War of 1898 hardly gave autonomy time to develop. In July 1898 American troops landed in Puerto Rico, and the United States acquired Puerto Rico through the Treaty of Paris.

The island thus again reverted to colony status now under the military domination of the United States. Military control ended in April 1900 through the enactment of the Foraker Act which established free trade between the island and the United States, and placed Puerto Rico under the American monetary system and tariff provision. In 1917 the Jones Act replaced the Foraker Act, granting American citizenship to Puerto Ricans and providing them with protection under the Bill of Rights.

During the postwar World War II period American economic influence on the island grew tremendously, to the point where the United States essentially controlled the island's economy. In 1947 the American government gave Puerto Rico the right to elect its own governor, Luis Munoz Marin became the first elected governor of Puerto Rico. In 1950 Puerto Rico was authorized by the United States Congress to draft its own constitution. Finally on July 25, 1953, Puerto Rico was transformed from an American territory to a commonwealth, a status it still retains.

Commonwealth status links Puerto Rico to the United States through common citizenship, common defense, common currency, and a common market. However, Puerto Ricans do not pay federal taxes, and are denied voting representation in the U. S. Congress. Almost without exception, the same federal rules and regulations apply to Puerto Rico as a commonwealth as to the States.

Unit Objectives

The primary objective of this unit is to provide students with an understanding of the cultural richness and diverse background of Puerto Rican people. This will help students to achieve mutual respect and understanding of how Puerto Ricans express themselves in a culture which through the years became vital and unique. This unit will provide the classroom teacher with information, materials, resources and activities that reflect the influence of different ethnic and racial groups of Puerto Rican heritage and culture. This is exemplified well in the typical Puerto Rican musical instruments, folkloric songs, dances, art and festivals which are a fusion of Indian, Spanish and African elements. The design of this unit will help teachers develop meaningful activities giving students a greater understanding of culminating activities which celebrate specific Puerto Rican traditions and holidays.

Specific Objectives

1. The contributions to Puerto Rican culture made by the Taino Indians (language, music, dance, art and cultural traditions).
2. The contributions to Puerto Rican culture made by the Spaniards (language, music, dance, art, and cultural traditions).
3. The contributions to Puerto Rican culture made by the Africans (language, music, dance, and cultural traditions).
4. The importance of those traditions of Puerto Rican heritage and culture as expressed in national celebrations.

Readings Puerto Rico

- Reading # 1 Puerto Rico
- Reading # 2 Christopher Columbus
- Reading # 3 Taino Indians
- Reading # 4 Juan Ponce De Leon
- Reading # 5 The Spaniards and the Taino Indians
- Reading # 6 The Arrival of the African Slaves
- Reading # 7 Luis Munoz Rivera
- Reading # 8 The Puerto Rican People
- Reading # 9 Puerto Rican Culture and Celebration
- Reading #10 Puerto Rico's Musical Instruments
- Reading #11 Puerto Rico Today

Reading #1 Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is a beautiful island in the Caribbean Sea, only 100 miles long and about 40 miles wide. It was one of many islands formed about 185 million years ago when a great land shift sank some parts of the earth and pushed others upward. Puerto Rico is actually the top of a range of mountains which has been pushed up from the floor of the Atlantic. The island lies on the rim of the Caribbean Sea, 300 miles south of the Tropic of Cancer and about 1000 miles southeast of Miami. It is the eastern most island of the four great Antilles, the other three being Cuba, Jamaica and Hispaniola. The mountain slopes are green and fertile, good for growing coffee, citrus fruits and tobacco. Along the coast are plains. Because of the rich soil washed down from the hills and plenty of rainfall, it is an ideal place for growing sugar cane and pineapples.

Most of the time the climate is sunny and warm. On most of the island the northeast winds keep the weather

from getting uncomfortably hot. Rains are sudden and short. The surest sign of winter is the arrival of thousands of tourists who flock the island.

Puerto Rico is a peaceful island. At night one hears the pleasant peeping of the tree frog called “ *Coqui* ”. Most of the violence has been caused by nature. The earliest settlers heard the Indians speak of the great wind they called *huracan* . The natives said that such storms were caused by the evil God *Juracan*. These storms were what we call hurricanes. In Puerto Rico, hurricanes are not given women’s names, but are named for the saint’s days on which they fall.

The first inhabitants of Puerto Rico were the *Taino* Indians, one of the Arawak peoples who may have come by raft from the South American mainland to the greater Antilles. They were peaceful and not very energetic. It was these people who gave Puerto Rico the first name we know of. They called the island *Boriquen* which means “Land of the Noble Lord”.

Activities

1. Introduce new vocabulary.

- | | |
|-----|-------------|
| 1. | Puerto Rico |
| 2. | island |
| 3. | huracan |
| 4. | Juracan |
| 5. | hurricanes |
| 6. | natives |
| 7. | coqui |
| 8. | Tainos |
| 9. | inhabitants |
| 10. | Boriquen |

2. Locate Puerto Rico on a map. Identify principal cities and boundaries. Have children make a map of Puerto Rico.

3. Discuss the geological formation of the island of Puerto Rico. Write an essay describing the geological evolution of the island of Puerto Rico.

4. Discuss and locate the four mainland regions.

- | | |
|----|-----------------------|
| 1. | The Coastal Lowlands |
| 2. | The Coastal Valleys |
| 3. | The Foothills |
| 4. | The Central Mountains |

5. Introduce the National Anthem of Puerto Rico “ *La Borinquen* ”, music by Felix Astol y Artes. Children will learn lyrics in Spanish and English.

6. Discuss and display the flag of Puerto Rico. Have students make flags.

Research and Study

(The following sources may be obtained from the Bilingual Office, New Haven Public Schools. These materials include additional information about Puerto Rico and pictures to color. These materials may be reproduced for students.)

1. *The Indians of Puerto Rico* — Connecticut State Department of Education
2. *The Music of Puerto Rico* — Connecticut State Department of Education
3. *Puerto Rico* — by Thomas J. Foran
4. *Dedicatoria* — by Martin J. Stuart, Editor
5. *Puerto Rico En Mi Corazon* — by Federico Ribes Tovar
6. *Puerto Rico* — by Miriam L. Transue

Use of Computer

Have students use Jostens Learning Corporation— *Compton's Multimedia Encyclopedia* . This system will be used as a reference source for further information.

Reading #2 Christopher Columbus

Puerto Rico was discovered by Christopher Columbus, on November 19, 1493. This was his second *voyage* . to claim lands for the rulers of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella.

When Columbus discovered Puerto Rico he had many more ships and men with him than he had on his first voyage in 1492 when he first discovered America. He had a force of 12,000 men and seventeen ships. There were sailors, *noblemen* from Spain, priests, farmers and *artisans* .

Columbus's ship *anchored* near San Juan Bautista for two days. Many men went ashore to *explore* the island. The Spaniards found no people, but discovered a Taino village. The Tainos had hidden when they saw the strangers approaching.

While the Spaniards were at San Juan Bautista they gathered supplies. They got fresh water, caught many kinds of fish and gathered *tropical* fruits. They then sailed to Hispaniola. The Tainos came out from hiding and went about their usual tasks.

November 19 ... Puerto Rico Discovery Day

Every year on November 19, many towns and cities on the west coast of Puerto Rico celebrate the landing of Columbus on that date in 1493. Each community claims to be the spot where the landing took place. Since no one is really sure, everyone celebrates happily. There are speeches, parades and floats. Children dress as Indians and welcome a citizen dressed as Columbus as he steps from a boat that is rigged like the *original*.

Activities

1. Introduce new vocabulary

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

voyage
noblemen
artisans
anchored
tropical
celebration
San Juan Bautista
explore
community
original

2. Develop a time line to be continued throughout this unit.

Begin:

1492 Christopher
Columbus's first
voyage
1493 Christopher
Columbus's second
voyage

3. *Celebrations* —Discuss and begin planning—Americans celebrate *Columbus Day on October 12* and Puerto Ricans celebrate *Puerto Rico Discovery Day on November 19* . Begin plans for an *Assembly Program*.

4. *Columbus Day Parade* —The Columbus Day Parade is an annual event in New Haven. Discuss that this year the event is extra special because it marks 500 years since his discovery (1492-1992). The children will participate in the parade.

5. *Research and Study*

- a. Write a biography of Christopher Columbus, and the rulers of Spain Ferdinand and Isabella.
- b. Compare Columbus's first voyage in 1492 to his second voyage in 1493.

Reading #3 The Taino Indians

When Puerto Rico was discovered it was inhabited by the Taino and Carib Indian *tribes* . The Tainos were peaceful people, but the Caribs were warlike *cannibals* who had originally came from the *jungles* of South America.

The Tainos were short and muscular with straight black hair and copper-colored skin. The men wore *loin cloths* and married women wore a *nagu* , which was like a skirt. They painted their bodies with designs in bright colors. Their paints were made from plants and soils. They wore necklaces and bracelets made from seashells, clay stones, gold and animal teeth.

They lived in small villages near the coast and around the river banks, in order to have fresh water for

drinking, bathing and cooking. The Tainos built round thatch huts, called *bohios* . They were made from bamboo and tree branches tied together; grass was woven into them and they were packed with mud. There was one great house where the chief (*Cacique*) lived called the *caney* . This house stood at one end of the village and the other houses were around the outer edge. In the center of the village was a large open space called a *plaza* , which was used for games, dances and religious ceremonies.

The Tainos slept and rested on cotton nets from the ceiling called *hamacas* , which today we call *hammocks* . The Tainos lived in different tribes. Each tribe had its own chief or *Cacique* . The men who ruled over all the tribes was the Supreme Cacique.

In the village each tribe had men who carved stones and wood in the shapes of men, women, animals, birds, flowers and geometric shapes. These objects were called *Cemis* . They had faces carved on them and sometimes were decorated with gold. The Tainos believed the *cemis* were like gods, able to help the crops grow or protect them from evil.

There was also a priest called a *buhiti* in the village. He remembered the Taino history and told stories of famous Cacique and warriors and of important historical events. It was his duty to make peace with Gods such as the Supreme Being *Yuquiyu* and the evil *Junacan* . The *buhiti* was the priest, doctor and teacher of the village.

Hunting, fishing and farming provided the Taino with food. The Taino built their own homes and made their own tools and furniture. Everyone in a Taino family had work to do. Work was important to the Tainos, but they found time to play. They also enjoyed music. Their *drums* were hollowed tree trunks that they hit with sticks. They made another kind of sound by shaking hollow gourds called *maracas* . The *guiro* was another Taino rhythm instrument made from the marimbo gourd. Musicians around the world still use these instruments.

The Tainos emphasized dance and music in celebration of the major events in their lives (marriage, birth, death, harvest, storms, etc). Although music and games were important to the Taino, little is known about the actual nature of the music due to the lack of written language and musical notation.

The Taino Indians liked gold for its beauty, but they only used it to make jewelry. To the Spaniards gold was very valuable, and the Tainos helped Ponce de Leon and his men search for the gold they wanted.

Later Ponce de Leon went back to Hispaniola. He returned to San Juan in 1509, bringing more settlers and their families. He was named governor by the King of Spain. The Spaniards decided to take over the island because of the gold in its rivers and mines. They did ask permission of the Tainos, nor did they treat them as people who had been kind to them; instead they treated the Tainos as slaves. The Tainos, once free, now they were forced to work for the Spaniards whether they liked it or not.

Activities

1. Introduce new vocabulary.

1. cannibals
2. tribes
3. jungles

7. cacique
8. caney
9. hamacas
13. Yuguuyu
14. Junacan
15. gourds

- | | | | |
|----|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 4. | Loin cloths | 10. hammocks | 16. maracas |
| 5. | nagua | 11. cemís | 17. guiro |
| 6. | bohíos | 12. buhítí | |
2. Locate on a map of Puerto Rico the settlements of the Taino Indians.
 3. Discuss the contributions to Puerto Rican culture made by the Taino Indians.
 4. Invite parents or community members to visit classes to discuss the influence of Indians on Puerto Rican culture.
 5. Have students design a Taino Village.
 6. Have students draw pictures of Taino Indians.
 7. Have students make a design jewelry similar to that worn by the Taino Indians.
 8. *Research and Study*
 - a. Have students read more about Taino and Carib Indians. Compare the Taino and Carib Indians.
 - b. Discuss the carvings of the Taino Indians called Cemís. Have students read more about the Cemís. Students may draw or use clay to make models.
 - c. The Indians were polytheistic. Discuss and write about the beliefs of many gods. Their main two gods were Yukiyu, symbol of goodness, and Juracan, the god of evil. They also believed in minor gods who protected their homes, whom they called Cemíes.
 - d. Learn more about hurricanes. Discuss why we give hurricanes women's names, whereas in Puerto Rico hurricanes are named for the saint's days on which they fall.

- e. Discuss words that have been incorporated into the Spanish language and character traits from the Indians, such as bohios (Indian House), hamaca (hammock) and words related to the tropical flora (flowers) and fauna (animals).
- f. Discuss the Areyto, or tribal meetings which was one of the main events in Indian life.

Reading #4 Juan Ponce de Leon

One of the men who landed in Puerto Rico with Columbus was Juan Ponce de Leon. In 1509, he returned to build the first European settlement in the Taino homeland.

When Ponce de Leon reached the island, he met the Supreme Cacique, the most important chief of the Tainos. The Supreme Cacique never seen white men before. He didn't understand their language. They were a different kind of people who wore different type of clothing and carried steel swords and rifles.

Although they were different, the Tainos were friendly to the visitors. They helped the Spaniards look for a good place to live. Ponce de Leon admired a natural harbor that he found on the north coast of the island. He called it Puerto Rico, meaning "rich port". Years later the whole island was to be known by this name, and the port would be called San Juan. Slightly to the north and east of this harbor, the Spaniards began their first town, Caparra.

Activities

1. On a map of Puerto Rico locate the town of Caparra.
2. Continue to make a time line, 1509. The first European settlement—Town of Caparra.
3. Discuss the different names for Puerto Rico, beginning with Borinquen, San Juan Bautista and finally Puerto Rico.
4. Discuss the relationship between the Taino Indians and the Spaniards.

Reading #5 The Spaniards and the Tainos

The Tainos no longer lived in the "Land of the Noble Lord". They lived in San Juan Bautista, land of the Spanish conquerors. They were forced to work long hours, under terrible working conditions, in gold mines and fields. The Spaniards enforced laws on the Indians, broke up tribes and separated families.

The Tainos were afraid of the Spaniards. They were reluctant to fight back because they believed that the Spaniards were like Gods and that they made a pledge of friendship to them. When the Tainos finally decided to fight back, they realized that the Spaniards were like human beings and they could be killed

Many Indians fled in their canoes to other islands, or hid in the mountains. Those who did not escape were treated like slaves. Other Tainos chose death over slavery. They killed their families and then themselves. While many of them were dying out, the number of foreigners in Puerto Rico was increasing. Many young Spaniards continued to come to the island hoping to become rich overnight. They expected to find gold on the ground in the streams.

The *newcomers* soon discovered that they had to dig deep for the gold. The weather was very hot, and the men soon grew tired. Many of them got sick. Some even died from tropical diseases. They soon discovered that Puerto Rico had little gold. The lack of gold made Puerto Rico less important to Spain.

The country folk of Puerto Rico were called the *Jibaros*. During the early days of Spanish *colonization* of the island they were the *colonists* who were given land in the interior. The Jibaros were a group of people who lived in *isolation* and had a simple way of life.

The Spaniards on the island soon began to look for other ways to make a living. Many of them became farmers. It was the Indians who taught them how to grow corn, *yucca*, sweet potatoes, *yams*, pineapples, and peanuts. They picked island fruits such as the *mamey*, the *quanabana* and the *quenepa*. The Spaniards experimented with different kinds of crops. They brought in new plants—coconuts, bananas, *guavas*, *papayas* which grew well in Puerto Rico's climate. Coffee was very successful, but *sugar cane* became Puerto Rico's principal source of *trade*, on which the Spaniards counted mainly to make money.

Activities

1. Introduce new vocabulary.

1. Yucca

2. yams

3. quanabana

4. quenepa

5. guavas

6. papayas

7. Sugar cane 13. mamey

8. coffee 14. colonization

9. Jibaro 15. isolation

10. slavery 16. colonists

11. foreigners 17. interior

12. trade 18. newcomers

2. Discuss the reasons for conflicts which arose between the Spaniards and the Taino Indians.

Have students develop a *Recipe Book* (Such as; paella, chicken with rice, gazpacho,

3. pasteles, sancocho, mofongo, alcapurria, bacalito etc.). Recipes will be found in recipe books. Parents will assist students.

Discuss the contributions of the Spaniards to the Puerto Rican culture as reflected in the

4. language, religion, traditions, customs, music and art. Students will utilize resources from bilingual office.

- Invite parents or community members to visit
5. the class to discuss the influence of Spanish culture on Puerto Rican culture.

Reading #6 The Arrival of African Slaves

When gold failed to make the Spaniards dreams of great wealth come true, they turned to sugar cane. Sugar cane had been grown in Puerto Rico from the very beginning of Spanish rule. The Spaniards came to depend on sugar cane as a valuable resource.

Planting and harvesting sugar cane was hard work. In the beginning the Spaniards depended on the Tainos, but with time there were not enough Tainos left to work for the Spaniards. Many Tainos had rebelled, others had fled, and others became ill and died. With the growing demand for slaves to help in planting and harvesting sugar, even more slaves were needed. By 1530 there were more Africans in Puerto Rico as slaves than all other people together.

The black slaves had few rights. They were allowed to save money that they earned on their own. Some slaves were able to use the money to buy their freedom. Some freemen continued to work in the field, others took up crafts, such as carpentry.

Activities

1. Discuss the cultural impact: of the African cultural legacy on the Puerto Rican culture.
Have students do research about distinguished Puerto Ricans who fought for the abolition of
2. slavery. Such as: Ramon Emerterio Betances, Segundo Ruiz Belvis, Francisco Mariano Quiones, and Jose J. Acosta.
3. Obtain and play records in the classroom of Puerto Rican plena, la bomba, and other African musical expression of Puerto Rico.
4. Invite parents and community members to visit classes and request them to discuss themes in Puerto Rican culture of African traditions.

Reading #7 Luis Munoz Rivera

On March 22, 1873, all slaves in Puerto Rico were declared free. Even though slavery was ended, no Puerto Rican was completely free. The island still belonged to Spain. The governor continued to be a Spaniard. The islanders had some voice in their own government, but the important laws were made in Spain.

Luis Munoz Rivera was one of Puerto Rico's leaders at the time. He was a native Puerto Rican, born in Barranquitas in 1859. He became a newspaper writer. In his writing he insisted that Puerto Rico should have autonomy. This meant that Puerto Rico would still be part of Spain, but would have the power to decide many

of its problems. Puerto Rico would have its own legislature and could trade with other countries.

In 1897 Spain granted Puerto Rico the kind of autonomy that Luis Munoz Rivera hoped for. He was named leader of the new government of the island. The new government began its work in February, 1898, but it didn't last long. War broke out between Spain and the United States. By the end of 1898, Puerto Rico no longer belonged to Spain. The island was given to the United States. Once again Puerto Ricans were not allowed to govern themselves.

Activities

1. Continue to develop *Time Line* , add
 - 1809 - Spanish colonies invited to Spain's legislature or *Cortes*
 - 1812 - Constitution written
 - 1814 - King of Spain throws out constitution
 - 1868 - *Grito de Lares* revolution against Spanish rule
 - 1898 - Spanish-American War. Puerto Rico ceded to United States
 - 1900 - U.S. Congress established civil government for Puerto Rican's to elect their own governor.
 - 1917 - Puerto Ricans became citizens of the United States
 - 1947 - Congress amended the Jones Act to permit Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor
 - 1949 - Luis Munoz Marin elected first governor of Puerto Rico
 - 1952 - Puerto Rico became a Commonwealth

2 *Research and Study*

- a. Discuss Spain's legislature or Cortes. Have students write a short essay on the Cortes.
- b. Discuss the Constitution of 1812 and the King of Spain's decision to throw out the constitution. How did this affect the people of Puerto Rico? Have students write a short essay.
- c. Discuss the revolution against Spanish rule the Grito de Lares. Have students write a short essay on the revolution.
- d. Discuss the Spanish-American War. Have students write a short essay.
- e. Have students write reports on the Jones Act.
- f. Have students write a biography of Luis Munoz Marin.

g.

Discuss what commonwealth status means. Have students write a short essay on the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Reading #8 The Puerto Rican People

By the early 1800's Puerto Rico was truly a melting pot. A "melting pot" is a place where people of many nations and cultures live together. People from Spain had taken the island from the indians. They were joined by Spanish people from the Canary Islands, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Venezuela. Settlers from other lands and African slaves also became part of the growing population.

The dominant surviving elements of Puerto Ricans race and culture were those brought by the Spaniards who began to populate the island at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The language and religion of Puerto Rico, traditional relationships among people, is essentially Spanish.

Puerto Rican Families

A deep attachment to family life is the most outstanding characteristic of Puerto Rican society. The family structure is a tight one. Puerto Rican children and young adults cherish the love and approval of their parents. This extends well beyond the immediate family. Respect for grandparents, aunts, uncles and distant relatives is a way of life for the Puerto Rican people. The family is the first loyalty of the Puerto Rican.

Dignidad or dignity is also important to most Puerto Ricans. They desire it in themselves and respect it in others. Anyone can have dignity if he does his work well and fulfills his obligations to family and friends. Respect is what one owes to the particular dignity of every person, especially parents, teachers, and persons in authority.

The home is the center of social life. Most people prefer to celebrate birthdays, weddings, anniversaries etc. at home rather than in public places. Music, dance and food play an important role in Puerto Rican festivities.

The family provides a type of support system on the island in time of great stress. In Puerto Rico history, family life has helped to unify the people. Changes in the American family unit have affected Puerto Rico in recent years, and Puerto Rican values have changed slightly. Nevertheless, the home continues to be a place of comfort warmth and family solidarity.

Intermarriage between Puerto Rico's original Indians, Whites, and Black inhabitants has made Puerto Rican society a mixture of races.

Activities

1. Have students share family pictures with the class.
2. Have students write about their family.
3. Recommended Filmstrips (May be obtained from the New Haven Public Schools Audiovisual Department)

“Puerto Rico” (i,m)

“Man and His Music” Puerto Rico (2fs-lr) (i,m)

Reading #9 Puerto Rican Culture and Celebration

Puerto Ricans are described as passionate and festive people. They are very religious. On the island you will find frequent celebrations known as Catholic Feast Days. Every town has its own patron saint, and it is not unusual to find carnival celebration taking place for several days at the time of the saint’s feast day. The celebrations feature dancing, singing, gambling, amusement park rides, and many processions and religious ceremonies.

Puerto Rico’s list of annual events is extensive. There are a number of religious and political holidays celebrated annually. The following is a short list of holidays celebrated in Puerto Rico. This does not include the individual town’s Feast Days.

January 6	Three Kings Day
January 11	Puerto Rican Educator and Essayist Eugenio Maria de Hostos
Mid Jan.-March	Drama Festival in San Juan
Mid February	San Juan Carnival
Mid March-May	Puerto Rican Theater Festival in Old San Juan
March 22	Emancipation Day, marking the abolition of slavery in 1873
April	Tropical Flower Show in San Juan
Mid June	Flower Festival in Aibonito
June	Barranquitas Native Handicrafts Fair
June 23	Eve of San Juan Bautista Day
July 17	Birthday of Luis Munoz Rivera, Puerto Rican Patriot
July 25	Commonwealth Day, marking the adoption of the Puerto Rican Constitution in 1952.
October 12	Columbus Day called Dia de la Rey or Day of the Race
November 19	Discovery Day, marking Columbus’s arrival in Puerto Rico in 1493.

The Puerto Ricans have a rich cultural life. In 1955 the Institute of Puerto Rican culture was established in San Juan by the government. This institute designs programs in archeology, music, architecture, literature, drama and dance. The Department of Parks and Recreation on the island has developed parks and baseball fields. They offer plays in Spanish and courses in dramatics, folk dancing and native music. Very often mobile theatrical companies and bookmobiles tour the island.

Puerto Rico has a famous art form called the *santos*. Santos are small wooden saints called *Tres Reyes Magos* (Three Magi Kings). The santos are small wooden saints carved by a diminishing group of artisans known as *santeros*.

The literature of Puerto Rico often refers to social and political issues, like that of many Latin American countries. Puerto Rico’s most important literature was produced in the late 19th century. Noted authors are Manuel A. Alonso, Alejandro Tapia, Luis Llorens Torres, Antonio Padriera and Tomas Blanco.

Activities

1. Encourage the students to do research about difference cultural traditions in the island of Puerto Rico.
2. Discuss the art form *Tres Reyes Magos*. Have students recreate replicas of same. Have students write a short essay about the artisans known as the santeros.
3. Have students write biographies about famous authors in Puerto Rican Literature such as Manuel A. Alonso, Alejandro Tapia, Luis Llorens Torres Antonio Padriera and Tomas Blanco.

Reading #10 Puerto Rico's Musical Instruments

The typical Puerto Rican musical instruments reflect the influence of the different ethnic and racial groups existing in Puerto Rico during the colonization of the island. The “guiro” and the “maracas” came from the Taino Indians who inhabited the island when the Spanish conquerors arrived. The “cuatro” and the “tiple” are variations of stringed instruments brought by the Spaniards, such as the guitar. The drums, timbrels and marimbas represent the Afro-Antillan black influence. Because musical instruments were difficult to get to the interior of the island, draftsmen made them from local materials. While they were at it they made alterations to suit; the tastes of their customers, often decorating them with carvings and inlays representing flowers, birds and landscapes.

To make these instruments, the Puerto Ricans used the fruit of some tropical trees like the higuera and the marimbo. They also use the trunk and bark of other trees.

A guiro is made by carving the shell of the elongated fruit of the cucumber family and making parallel fluting on its surface. It is played with a wire fork called a *pua* . A rhythmic, rasping sound that beats the time of the dance is produced.

The Maraca is made from the fruit of the higuera tree. It must be round and small. After taking out the pulp of the fruit through two holes bored on its surface, small pebbles are introduced into it. Then a handle is fitted to the dry fruit shell.

The Tiple (Treble) is a small guitar, but may have from one to five strings. It is made from one piece of wood. Its sounds are more sharp and high than those of the guitar.

The Cuatro is the same size as the tiple, made in the shape of a narrow mouthed pitcher. It has five strings (two pairs and one single)

Puerto Rican Dance

The Puerto Rican *Danza* is of Spanish origin. This dance forms part of Puerto Rico's musical culture. *Danza La Borinquena* is the national anthem of Puerto Rico. Other dances of Spanish origin with Indian influence are the *Cadenas*, the *Fandanguillo*, the *Sonduro*, the *Seis* and the *Puntillanto*. There are a great variety of dances of African origin, including the *Mariyanbda*, the *Guateque*, the *Curinqueque*, the *Candungue*, the *Bomba* and the *Plena*.

Activities

- The Puerto Rico Classroom Music Handbook* by the Connecticut State Department of Education may be obtained at the New Haven Public School Bilingual Office. This is an excellent resource for students.
1. Have students listen to “Folk Songs of Latin American”; this may be obtained from the New Haven Public Schools Audiovisual Department.
 2. At Truman School we have several of the musical instruments available. Have students observe some. (Several of our bilingual teachers have these instruments).
 3. Research: Have students describe popular musical instruments in Puerto Rico (Güiro, Maracas, Caracol, Drum or Maquey, Cauatro, Tiple, Bordonua, Tres, Guitar, Bomba Drums, Congas, Clave, The Plena Drum, Timbales, Bony Drums, Cencerro (Cos Bell) and Tambora.
 4. Invite parents and community members to class to demonstrate music and dance of Puerto Rico. Specifically: the Danza, La Bomba, Plena, Seis, Decima and Aguinaldos.
 5. Have students write biographies of famous Puerto Rican Composers. Rafael Aponte Ledee, Noel Estrada, Jesus Figueroa, Pedro Flores, Rafael Hernandez, Manuel Jimenez “Canario”, Ladislao Martinez, Angel Mislán, Juan Morel Campos, Sylvia Rexach, Felipe Rosario Goyco, “Don Felo” and Myrta Sylva.
 6. Have students learn a few Puerto Rican Songs and dances. These will be included in the assembly program for Puerto Rico Discovery Day.
 - 7.

Reading #11 Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico’s official name is Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico’s Spanish heritage is reflected in the language and customs of its people. Spanish is the main language of the island, although many Puerto Ricans speak English.

The island’s large cities have freeways, housing projects and shopping centers like those in many cities on the United States mainland.

Puerto Rico is a self-governing commonwealth associated with the United States by its own desire and consent. Most federal laws apply to Puerto Rico as though it was a state. Puerto Rico is represented in the U. S. Congress by a resident commissioner. He is elected to a four year term, but has no vote in Congress.

San Juan, Puerto Rico’s capital and largest city, is a seaport on the north coast. The San Juan metropolitan area also includes Bayamon, Puerto Rico’s second largest city. Ponce, the third largest city, is a commercial and cultural center on the south coast. Puerto Rico is famous for its sandy beaches and resort hotels that make it a favorite vacation place for tourists from the United States mainland.

In the early 1940’s Puerto Rican leaders, with aid from the United States, began a program to improve living conditions on the island. The program became known as *Operation Bootstrap*. Large farms were broken up, and land was redistributed among farm workers. An improved educational program rapidly reduced the number of Puerto Ricans who could not read and write. Thousands of old slum dwellings were torn down and replaced by modern housing.

During the 1950's a sharp rise occurred in Puerto Rican migration to the U. S. mainland. Thousands of islanders moved to New York City and other large mainland cities in search of jobs.

Puerto Rico today is in a period of rapid industrial growth. The Economic Development Association known as Fomento has helped businessmen establish more than 2,000 factories. Industrial growth has reduced unemployment.

Puerto Rico's leaders also stress cultural development. Through the *Operation Serenity* program, people work to preserve traditions and to promote the arts.

Activities

1. Research and Study
 - a. Explain the Commonwealth government, the court system, local government and politics of Puerto Rico.
 - b. Describe the economy of Puerto Rico, natural resources, manufacturing, agriculture, trade, electric power, transportation and communication.
 - c. What are the three largest cities of Puerto Rico?
 - d. What is Operation Bootstrap? Operation Serenity?
 - e. Why is Puerto Rico's climate an important natural resource's?
 - f. How did Puerto Rico become a territory of the United States? How did it become a commonwealth?

Conclusion

This curriculum unit was written to develop an appreciation of Puerto Rico and its people, as well as to provide information about them. Its purpose is to reinforce the cultural ties of Puerto Ricans now living in the United States to their homeland, and to introduce non-Puerto Ricans to the history and culture of the island. The unit presents the people, events and cultural achievements that form Puerto Rico's heritage. It is basically designed on an elementary level and includes information from pre-Columbian times to present day Puerto Rico. As a facilitator in an elementary school, working in a predominant Hispanic school, I have found that many of my students were not cognizant of their heritage and culture of Puerto Rico. This will help both my Hispanic and Anglo students to achieve a better understanding of the pluralistic society in which we live.

Bibliography

1. Bowan, J. David. *The Island of Puerto Rico* . New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1968.

2. Fitzpatrick, Joseph P. *Puerto Rican Americans: The Meaning of Migration to the Mainland* . Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971.
3. Lewis, Gordon K. *Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean* . New York: Monthly Review Press, 1963.
4. Meltzer, Milton. *The Hispanic Americans* . New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1982.
5. Mindel, Charles H., and Habenstein, Robert W. *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations* . New York: Elsevier. 1976.
6. Pietri, Pedro, *Puerto Rican Obituary* . Monthly Review Press, 1973.
7. Pifer, Alan. *Bilingual Education and the Hispanic Challenge* . New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York 1979.
8. Wagenheim, Kal, with Olga Jiminex de Wagenheim. *The Puerto Ricans*. New York: Anchor Books, 1973.
9. Wakefield, Dan. *Island in the City* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959.
10. Winzlow, Zachery. *Puerto Rico* . Pennsylvania: Chelsea House Publishers, 1968.

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>