

Cobblestone™

A VISIT TO PUERTO RICO

Use the articles, lessons, and activities in this Teacher Guide to help students learn about the history, culture, and characteristics of Puerto Rico.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

How are Puerto Rico's history and culture unique?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about Puerto Rico.
- Students will examine the physical and cultural characteristics of Puerto Rico.
- Students will learn about how Puerto Rico's characteristics changed over time.
- Students will compare Puerto Rico before and after the Spanish conquest.
- Students will learn about Puerto Rico's political status as a territory.
- Students will create a travel brochure on Puerto Rico including the culture, plants, and animals found in Puerto Rico.
- Students will create a timeline of Puerto Rican history.
- Students will examine opposing viewpoints and participate in a debate.
- Students will create a political poster.
- Students will learn about Puerto Rico's political status as a territory.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core Social Studies skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

- **Getting Started**
Expository Nonfiction, ~1050L
- **Spanish Conquest** Expository Nonfiction, ~970L
- **Weighing In on Statehood**
Expository Nonfiction, ~990L

Cobblestone® Teacher Guide: March 2303

Getting Started

p. 2, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article to learn about the basic physical and cultural characteristics of Puerto Rico.



RESOURCES

- Examine Characteristics

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about Puerto Rico.
- Students will examine the physical and cultural characteristics of Puerto Rico.
- Students will create a travel brochure illustrating important highlights of Puerto Rico including the culture, plants, and animals.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **conquerors (p. 2)** a group of people who have taken complete control of a country or place
- **lowlands (p. 2)** areas where the land is at, near, or below the level of the sea
- **tensions (p. 2)** hostility or opposition between individuals or groups

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How are Puerto Rico's history and culture unique?

Ask students to think about the place where they live. What are some of the descriptions they would use to describe it to someone else? What kinds of things make it special? Are there certain animals, plants, and environments that are found in that place? Discuss how every place has its own unique set of characteristics.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the following statements and underline the key vocabulary words. Review with students how to infer the meaning of new words by using context clues and background knowledge. Divide students into pairs to discover the meaning of the term. Then show the class the definitions.

1. The Spanish conquerors contributed to the culture of Puerto Rico.
2. Puerto Rico's geography includes both mountains and lowlands.
3. There are political tensions between the United States and Puerto Rico.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. Why is this short article important to understanding other articles about Puerto Rico?
2. What factors contribute to Puerto Rico's rich heritage?
3. Explain the terrain and climate of Puerto Rico.
4. Why is it important to know about the geography and environment of Puerto Rico?
5. Why is the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico trained?
6. How did Puerto Rico's economy change in the 20th century?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Examine Characteristics

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article provides basic information about Puerto Rico's history, geography, and politics. Remind them that these are important in understanding a place. Introduce the *Examine Characteristics* worksheet and have students use information from the article to complete the chart.

ASSESS: As a class, review the chart and discuss the answers.

EXTEND

Science: Invite students to use print and digital sources to research Puerto Rico. Have them create a travel brochure showing the important highlights of Puerto Rico that include the culture, plants, and animals.

Examine Characteristics

Understanding the characteristics of a place helps us understand its culture and history. Using the information in the article “Getting Started,” fill in the chart. As a bonus, research some of the island’s plants and animals and fill in those characteristics as well.

Category	Defining Characteristics
Geography	
Climate	
Inhabitants	
Type of government	
Bonus: Plants and Animals	

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Spanish Conquest

pp. 5–8, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about the Spanish conquest of Puerto Rico to learn about how the island changed as a result.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about how Puerto Rico changed over time.
- Students will compare Puerto Rico before and after the Spanish conquest.
- Students will create a timeline of the Spanish conquest of Puerto Rico.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **clan** (p. 5) a group of families or households who are related to each other
- **primitive** (p. 6) relating to a human society where people live in a simple way without machines or a writing system
- **fertile** (p. 7) land that produces abundant vegetation or crops

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How are Puerto Rico's history and culture unique?

Ask students if they know what it means for one country to invade another and claim it as their own. Can they think of an example of this, either recent or in the past? Ask students what kinds of things might occur as a result of someone taking over another place. Can they think of an example of negative or positive things that might happen?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then arrange students in small groups and have them practice using two or even three of the words in a single sentence. Finally, tell students to look for these words as they read the story.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. Why was Columbus's discovery of Puerto Rico an accident? What was he looking for?
2. How did the Spanish conquerors treat the indigenous people they found on the islands?
3. How did the Spanish change the way of life of the islands they found?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Compare and Contrast

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article describes how life changed for the indigenous people of the Caribbean islands once the Spanish explorers arrived. Then using the information in the article, have them work in pairs to create a timeline of the events in the article, beginning with Columbus's arrival in 1492.

ASSESS: Have students compare their timelines with the rest of the class and discuss any differences, especially what each student chose to include.

EXTEND

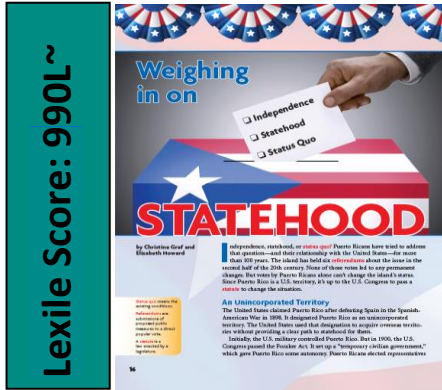
English: Invite students to write a fictional first-person narrative as if they were one of the Taino people witnessing the arrival of the Spanish conquerors.

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Weighing In on Statehood

pp. 16–20, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about Puerto Rico's status as a U.S. territory to explore the issue of statehood.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about Puerto Rico's political status as a territory.
- Students will examine opposing viewpoints and participate in a debate.
- Students will create a political poster.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **territory** (p. 16) a geographic area belonging to or under the jurisdiction of a governmental authority
- **autonomy** (p. 16) the right of a country or region to be independent and govern itself
- **commissioner** (p. 17) an official in charge of a government department or other organization

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How are Puerto Rico's history and culture unique?

Ask students if they think it is important for countries like the U.S. to have states. What might be some of the good and bad things about being a state? What might happen if part of the mainland U.S. wasn't a state? Why is it good to have both state and federal governments?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define the words with the students. Have students work in pairs to create a crossword puzzle using the three vocabulary words and at least seven more related words. The related words should have to do with Puerto Rico or the U.S. government.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. Why did Puerto Rico become a territory of the U.S.?
2. Why didn't the U.S. make Puerto Rico a state in 1898, when they claimed it?
3. Explain the armed rebellion of 1950.
4. How did the granting of commonwealth status appease many Puerto Ricans fighting for independence?
5. Why is migration into the U.S. from Puerto Rico at an all-time high?
6. What are some of the reasons that Puerto Rico wants to be a U.S. state? Why might they not want to become a state?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Opposing Viewpoints

INSTRUCT: Tell students that this article explains that the question of whether Puerto Rico should be a U.S. state is a controversial one. Some Puerto Ricans feel that it would be a positive step for the island, and others want it to become an independent country. Divide the class into two teams. One team will argue for Puerto Rico to become a state. The other team will argue for independence.

ASSESS: Assess the teams on the strength of their argument points and how well they used information from the article.

EXTEND

Art: Invite students to create a political poster in favor of either statehood or independence.