Cuba at the Crossroads
Lesson 2
Cuba: The Reality Tour

Introduction

American cartoonist Bill Griffith travelled around Cuba for two weeks in October, 1994 at the height of the Special Period. Griffith, noted for “cartoon-o-journalism” style writing, chronicled his experiences in *Cuba the Reality Tour* and *Cuba Uncovered: Zippy Goes to Cuba* from March to April, 1995. Zippy, the pinhead clown, and Griffy introduce readers to Cuban culture, the realities of daily life during the Special Period, and to the unique experience of a country void of fast food restaurants and American commercialism. In this lesson students will learn about Cuban culture and the Cuban economy in the 1990’s from a foreigner’s perspective.

Essential Questions for Lessons 2 Activities 1-4

- How do artists express their most important social and political views?
- How can a comic strip be studied as a primary source document?
- What can we learn about Cuban culture and history from a foreigner’s perspective?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of Cuba’s dependence on foreign powers?
- What lessons from the past can be applied to Cuba’s dependency on other countries?

Objectives

Students will:

- analyze the graphics and text of Bill Griffith’s cartoon *Cuba: The Reality Tour* and *Cuba Uncovered: Zippy Goes to Cuba*
- complete an object-based observation organizer
- watch a slide show of Cuba, 2016
- read about Cuba during the Special Period of the 1990’s

Materials

Cuba’s Special Period BBC Witness [http://bbc.in/1IfioJ8](http://bbc.in/1IfioJ8) (9:00).

Activity Sheets

Activity 1 Cuba: The Reality Tour
Activity 2 The Special Period of Cuban History-Homework
Activity 3 Cuba Uncovered: Zippy Goes to Cuba
Activity 4 Spanish Version Cuba: The Reality Tour

Suggested Readings and Multimedia


Assessments

Activity sheet responses
Discussions

Extension Activities

- Listen to songs about the Special Period from Silvio Rodriguez’s Album “Silvio.”
- Discuss Cuban economic dependency on Venezuela

Instructions for Lesson 2 Cuba: The Reality Tour

Step 1:
Activity 1- Distribute Bill Griffith ‘s cartoon-o-journalism *Cuba: The Reality Tour*, and student activity sheets. After students examine graphics and text, generate a conversation about Cuban culture and learning about that culture from a foreigner’s perspective.

Step 2:
Present the slide show *Cuba, 2016* https://youtu.be/FihBKRUNF70. Initiate a discussion in which students compare what they learned in *Cuba: The Reality Tour* from 1995 and the images in *Cuba, 2016*.

Step 3:
Activity 2- Assign homework readings and then discuss the causes and effects of the Special Period on Cuba:
• Cuba History: The Special Period and Recovery  
• NACLA: life in the Special Period by Mirta Rodríguez Calderón  
  https://nacla.org/article/life-special-period  

Extended reading AP/College level see:  
• Skidmore and Smith, Modern Latin America Chapter 5, Policy Experimentation and The Contemporary Scene pages 131-141.

Step 4:  
Activity 3- Divide students into groups of 2-3. Distribute 2-3 Cuba Uncovered: Zippy Goes to Cuba strips and student activity sheets to each group. Draw conclusions about Cuban culture, economy and history. Discuss the pitfalls of one nation’s dependency on another country such as Cuba and the Soviet Union and Cuba’s relationship with Venezuela in uncertain times.