Introduction
In Lessons 1 and 2 of this unit on Cuban history and culture, students learned about the push-pull factors of migration to the United States, and about life in Cuba during the Special Period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Gradual loosening of restrictions on American remittances, economic and tourism deals with European and Latin American countries, agricultural diversification, and cooperation with Venezuela under President Hugo Chavez has helped to ease the country’s economic woes.

In December 2014 the White House announced that President Obama is “charting a new course on Cuba”. What does it take to improve Cuban-US relations? According to Los tres magníficos by Cuban artist Pablo Borges, Pope Francis, Barak Obama and Raúl Castro are superheroes for opening a new era in Cuban-US relations.

Essential Questions for Lessons 3 Activities 1-5

- How can we learn about a culture and history by studying its art?
- How can we use primary source objects and documents to learn about the past?
- How do superheroes enhance our sense of possibilities?
- How do nations bridge differences and forge new relationships?
- What steps can a country take to improve the economic climate?

Objectives

Students will:
- brainstorm the qualities and importance of superheroes in our culture.
- analyze Los tres magníficos by Cuban artist Pablo Borges.
- respond to questions about US-Cuban relations based on a Democracy Now, December 18, 2014 presentation.
- research and present information about the challenges and progress of Cuban-US relations.
- interpret a poem by Richard Blanco, Cuban-American poet.

Materials


Borges, Pablo. Los tres magníficos.


"Cut Loose the Shackles of the Past": U.S. and Cuba Announce a New Dawn in Diplomatic Relations. Retrieved: http://www.democracynow.org/2014/12/18/cut_loose_the_shackles_of_the_%20. (Note: Click on Watch Full Show).


Activity 1 Superheroes
Activity 2 *Los tres magníficos*
Activity 3 Democracy Now: Cut Lose the Shackles
Activity 4 Dreams: Challenges and Progress
Activity 5 Matters of the Sea
Activity 5 Spanish Version “Cosas del Mar”

**Suggested Readings**


**Assessments**

- Activity sheet responses
- Discussion
- Presentations

**Extension Activities**

- After completing the activities in this lesson, listen to Gloria Estefan explain why she will not sing in Cuba; discuss this Cuban American’s strong sentiments with the class.

  - News from Cuba - A country in Transition - The Crossroads Cuba Pt. 1 (3:31) [https://youtu.be/lghyTTAdiyY?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd_gKx](https://youtu.be/lghyTTAdiyY?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd_gKx)
  - Cuba’s Economy - More Money New Problems? - The Crossroads Cuba Pt. 2 (3:35) [https://youtu.be/B7IjLPlPTA?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd_gKx](https://youtu.be/B7IjLPlPTA?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd_gKx)
  - Cuba & The US - What Now? - The Crossroads Cuba Pt. 3 (4:06) [https://youtu.be/zO34mZgDRg8?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd_gKx](https://youtu.be/zO34mZgDRg8?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd_gKx)

- Direct students to research the Cuban flag raising ceremony in Washington, DC, or the story behind the many bare flagpoles in front of the American Embassy in Cuba.

**Instructions for Lesson 3: Superheroes of the 21st Century**
Step 1:

Activity 1: Superheroes
Distribute student response organizer for Activity 1. Divide students into small discussion groups to brainstorm the qualities and importance of superheroes in our culture.

- Talking points:
  - What is a hero?
    A hero is a person who is admired for great or brave acts or fine qualities, is greatly admired, is the chief male character in a story, play, movie, etc. (Merriam Webster)
  - What is a superhero?
    A superhero is a fictional hero having extraordinary or superhuman powers; also: a very successful person.
  - Who are some popular superheroes in our culture? Superman, Superwoman, Wolverine, Captain America
  - Where do we see superheroes in popular culture?
    Radio, TV, movies, comics, cartoons, pajamas, lunch boxed, action figures, Halloween costumes
  - What character traits does the superhero Superman have?
    He embodies boy-scout like honesty and is moral, truthful, protects innocent people, tries to do good, sacrifices for others, helps in time of need or crisis-comes to the recue, upholds justice and is an inspirational role model.
  - What superhuman physical abilities does Superman possess?
    He is invulnerable-has extraordinary strength and stamina. He has the ability to fly, is super fast and has super x-ray vision, hearing, breath, and mental powers.
  - What is the Superman stance? What does this body language mean?
    He stands with legs spread apart, arms on hips and elbows bent which suggests power/command of physical space.
  - What is the dress code of a superhero?
    Spandex/tights, cape, boots, masks.
  - Did you have dreams of being a superhero when you were little? Who did you admire?
    Open-ended response
  - How can the average person identify with a superhero? Do we have common traits?
    A superhero looks like the average person but with extra powers.
  - Are superheroes fictional or real?
    Open ended response.
  - Who are real life heroes/ superheroes?
    Captain Chesley ‘Sully’ Sullenberger-‘Hero of the Hudson’ -saved lives by landing disabled plane safely in the Hudson River.
    Christian Gunter – Hero teen -saved disabled veterans from a tornado
    Dawn Hochsprung -Sandy Hook Elementary principal saved children during massacre

Step 2:

Activity 2: Los tres magníficos
Distribute student response organizer with image of “Los tres magníficos” by Pablo Borges. Initiate a discussion about how Cuba and the United States can bridge their political differences and why Pablo Borges entitled his work Los tres magníficos.

Step 3:

Activity 3: Homework  Democracy Now: Cut Lose the Shackles
Discuss *Democracy Now* analysis of President Obama’s announcement during the next class period.

**Step 4:**

**Activity 4: Dreams, Challenges and Progress**

Arrange students in small groups, distribute student response sheets, and assign one of the following research topics regarding Cuban-US relations to each group:

- challenges facing Barak Obama / Americans
- challenges facing Raúl Castro/Cubans
- progress to date in Cuban-US relations since December 17, 2014
- aspirations/advantages for Cubans
- aspirations/advantages for Americans

Direct students to consult online sites for the following sources of information:

| Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University | North American Council on Latin America |
| Council on Foreign Affairs | Yoani Sanchez/ 14ymedio Sp |
| Council of Hemispheric Affairs (COHA) Eng/Sp | Upsidedown World Eng/Sp |

Consult with each group about creative presentation platform options. Suggestions are comic strips, dialogue, mock interview/news show, slideshow, political cartoons, and Voicethread.

**Step 5:**

**Activity 5: Matters of the Sea**

- Distribute a copy of “Matters of the Sea” by Cuban-American poet Richard Blanco and student activity sheet to students.
- Play video recording of Richard Blanco reading “Matters of the Sea”.
- Complete student response sheet for “Matters of the Sea”.
- Discuss student responses.