

**SPANISH AMERICAN
WAR OF 1898: PUERTO
RICO**



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Description

Today, most American high school students learn about the Spanish American War through stories and images of Teddy Roosevelt and his Roughriders charging up San Juan Hill in Cuba, but few teachers discuss Puerto Rico. Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students here will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of how and why the United States came to rule over the island of Puerto Rico, what legal and constitutional status the US granted Puerto Rican citizens, and how the relationship between the US and Puerto Rico has evolved since 1898.

Subjects

European History, World History, US History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- [San Juan, Puerto Rico](#)

Essential Questions

- What were the causes of the Spanish-American War of 1898?
- How did the US take physical possession of Puerto Rico during the war?
- Why did the US want Puerto Rico in 1898?
- What were the provisions of the Treaty of Paris (1898) with regards to possession of Puerto Rico?
- What status did the US government grant to Puerto Ricans in 1898? How did that status change over time?

Academic Summary

After Lieut. Huse had captured the place he deployed his small force into the suburbs. But he was soon reinforced by the regulars, who were followed by Company G, of the Sixth Illinois, and then by other troops in quick succession. All the boats of the men-of-war and the transports were used in the work of landing the troops, each steam launch towing four or five boats loaded to the rails with soldiers. Everything progressed in an orderly manner, according to the plans of Gen. Miles. The latter went ashore about noon ...

The Illinois and Massachusetts contingents, which have been cooped up on board the Yale and Rita for a fortnight, will be delighted to get ashore ...

Guanica is the most delightful spot yet occupied by our forces. It is a centre for the coffee and sugar industry and large herds of cattle are pasturing in the meadows, which are bordered by coconut palms. Many head of cattle and a large number of horses have been driven into the mountains by their owners. Some of them will be captured.

Ponce is the second city of the island, has a splendid harbor, and will make a good base of operations.

From "Our Flag Raised in Puerto Rico", New York Times newspaper, 27 Jul 1898

On 10 Dec 1898, after two months of negotiations in Paris, representatives from Spain and the United States signed a treaty ending the Spanish-American War. The terms of the treaty, in reality dictated to Spain by the United States after a short and decisive war, forced the Spanish to give up the last of its colonies. The Philippines and Guam, Spanish territories in the Pacific since the middle of the 16th century, were ceded outright to the United States. Cuba, once the jewel of Spain's Caribbean empire, was granted "independence" (under US "protection"). Puerto Rico, an island long considered important for its strategic position in the Caribbean, was ceded outright to the United States. Spain, once the richest and most powerful nation in Europe, was reduced to a second rate has-been.

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Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of American Imperialism in the 1890s.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of the invasion and occupation of Puerto Rico by US troops during the Spanish-American War.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the US government saw Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans after officially annexing the territory through the Treaty of Paris 1898.
4. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the legal and constitutional status of Puerto Ricans after annexation and how that status has evolved since 1898.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What are the concepts of Manifest Destiny and Imperialism? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Early European Explorers (20 min)
- Video – Last Colony (10 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources on American Imperialism, the Spanish Civil War, and the status of Puerto Rico, taking notes as appropriate. (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework before class.
- Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion on American Imperialism and Puerto Rico. (15 min)

III. Closure

- Exit Ticket / Assessment / DBQ – Essay: Explain in detail American Imperialism and Puerto Rico, focusing on how and why the US acquired the island and how the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States has evolved since 1898.

Extension

On tour: many different memorials around Puerto Rico

While on tour, students will undoubtedly see different memorials and monuments to various men and/or regiments of the Spanish American War. While there is no “official” monument for the war on the island of Puerto Rico, there are a number of smaller ones dedicated to different Spanish, Puerto Rican and/or American soldiers who fought in the conflict. As students come upon these monuments, perhaps they should consider the costs of imperialism, both from a political and a human toll. There is also a Spanish American War Memorial (dedicated in 1902) at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- spanamwar.com/puertoland1.htm
The American Army Moves on Puerto-Rico (secondary source) – by Mark Barnes, Senior Archeologist, National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office – page has link to Part 2 as well
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jones%E2%80%93Shafroth_Act
“Jones-Shafroth Act” – Wikipedia Article on the act passed by Congress in 1917 that granted US citizenship to the people of Puerto Rico
- constitution.org/cons/puertorico-eng.htm
Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (website – full text)
- loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/bras.html
“The Changing of the Guard: Puerto Rico in 1898” (secondary source) – by Marisabel Bras, Phd – on the Library of Congress website
- shenkfamily.com/blog2/2010/05/30/john-wesley-shank-jr-and-his-spanish-american-war-adventure/
Robert Wesley Shank Jr. and His Spanish-American War Adventure – website from the family of one of the soldiers of the Puerto Rican Campaign
- loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/puertorico.html
“The World of 1898: the Spanish American War – Puerto Rico” (website) – from the Library of Congress – includes primary and secondary sources, including maps of Puerto Rico from 1898
- thelastcolony.com/
The Last Colony (website)
- avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/sp1898.asp
Treaty of Peace between the United States and Spain; December 10, 1898 (primary source) – from the Avalon Project at Yale Law School
- www1.nsd131.org/classpages/ndodge/Shared%20Documents/Spanish%20American%20War.ppt
Spanish American War and American Imperialism PowerPoint from Nicole Dodge, history teacher at Nampa High School in Nampa, Idaho
- youtube.com/watch?v=iqsx-6sV7hA
Puerto Rico: “Report on Puerto Rico, USA” 1955 Teleview Productions (video) – 12 minute video promoting the social and economic benefits of commonwealth.
- teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2 minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes – from Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers
- youtube.com/watch?v=kccyDggb1YA
The Last Colony sneak peek: Commonwealth vs Statehood (video)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=8g8NpQsmxj4
History Channel Documentary – Crucible of Empire: The Spanish American War (video) – this documentary is 2 hours long, and thus too long for most in-class showings, but is highly recommended for teachers and students who want to

know more about American Imperialism in the 1890s and the Spanish-American War.

Background Information

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish%E2%80%93American_War
“Spanish American War” – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puerto_Rican_Campaign
“Puerto Rican Campaign” – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_\(1898\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_(1898))
“Treaty of Paris (1898)” – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson_A._Miles
“Nelson A. Miles” – Wikipedia article on the commanding general of the US Army invasion force in Puerto Rico

Key Terms

- Colony
- Imperialism
- Spanish American War
- Yellow Journalism

