

Cuba at the Crossroads

Lesson 3: Superheroes of the 21st Century

Essential Questions

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

<p>In this unit on Cuban history and culture, you learned about the push-pull factors for migration to the United States and about life in Cuba during the Special Period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Gradually, Cuba began to ease the country’s economic woes by loosening restrictions on American remittances, creating economic and tourism deals with European and Latin American countries, diversifying agriculture and cooperating with Venezuela under President Hugo Chavez. In December, 2014 the White House announced that President Obama is “charting a new course on Cuba”.</p>
<p>Activity 1: What does it take to improve Cuban-US relations? According to <i>Los tres magníficos</i> by Cuban artist Pablo Borges Delgado, Pope Francis, Barak Obama and Raúl Castro are superheroes for opening a new era in Cuban- US relations. In small groups, answer the following questions about superheroes and share your ideas during class discussion.</p>
<p>1. What is a superhero?</p>
<p>2. What character traits does a superhero exhibit? Do you think it is the same in other cultures as it is in our own?</p>
<p>3. Name some popular superheroes in our culture.</p>
<p>4. Where is the evidence of superheroes in American pop culture?</p>
<p>5. What superhuman physical abilities does Superman possess?</p>
<p>6. What is the “Superman stance”? What does this body language mean?</p>
<p>7. What is the dress code of a superhero?</p>
<p>8. How can the average person identify with a superhero? Do we have common traits?</p>
<p>9. Did you have dreams of being a superhero when you were younger?</p>
<p>10. Name examples of real life heroes/ superheroes from historic and contemporary times.</p>



Los tres magnificos courtesy of Pablo Borges, Havana, Cuba

Activity 2:

Examine *Los tres magnificos* by Pablo Borges and write your impressions below.

1. What do you see in the image at first glance? Who are these men?

2. Why do you think they are wearing these clothes? Explain the colors and symbolism of the clothing.

3. Do you think there is a reason why the men are positioned this way? Consider stance and relation to each other.

4. What is the artist's message?

5. Do you think the following quote is appropriate in this context? Explain your answer.

Superman: Yes, I'm here to fight for truth, and justice, and the American way.

Activity 3:

Homework

Listen to *Democracy Now: Daily Show*, December 18, 2014

"Cut Loose the Shackles of the Past": U.S. and Cuba Announce a New Dawn in Diplomatic Relations.

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/12/18/cut_loose_the_shackles_of_the.%20 (58:56 start 0-4:00 then 11:30-24:00; 47-58) Click on *Watch Full Show*. Respond to the following questions and prepare for a class discussion of the Democracy Now analysis of President Obama's announcement.

1. What was President Obama's stunning announcement?

2. What role did Pope Francis play in this announcement?

3. What was Raul Castro's message to the Cuban people? Why is the opening of relations a victory for Castro?

4. What was the hip-hop case?

5. Who are Alan Gross and the Cuban 5? How do they fit into the Cuba-US deal?

6. What steps will President Obama take to facilitate new relations with Cuba.

7. How will this new relationship help Cuba?

8. How will this new relationship help the United States

9. Why does Florida Senator Marco Rubio believe that this is another concession to a tyranny by the Obama administration.	
10. Why did Senator Rubio say the US conceded? Why does he think this will not help the Cuban people?	
11. Why can't President Obama lift the embargo?	
12. Why did US- Cuban relations change at this point in time? What did President Obama gain? Castro? The Pope?	



Activity 5:

“ Matters of the Sea”

On August 14, 2015 Richard Blanco read his poem “ Matters of the Sea” at the opening of the United States Embassy in Habana Cuba. Blanco says “... the inspiration that first came to me was this idea of those 90 miles that everyone always sort of talks about that's almost at this point cliché - you know, the 90 miles between these two countries that might as well be 9,000 miles. So I started thinking about that and how to make that something not about separation, but about unification. And so it's the sea that separates us, but it's also the sea that unites us.”

Watch the video clip of Richard Blanco reading “Matters of the Sea” then analyze the poem to appreciate its meaning. <https://youtu.be/M1GqJURaTl0>.

The sea doesn't matter,
 What matters is this.
 We all belong to the sea between us,
 All of us.
 Once and still the same child who marvels
 at a starfish,
 Listens to hollow shells,
 Sculpts dreams into impossible castles.
 We've all been lovers,
 Holding hands,
 Strolling down either of our shores.
 Our footprints,
 Like a mirage ourselves,
 Vanish in waves that don't know their birth
 Or care on which country they break,
 They break.
 They bless us and return to the sea,

Our mothers teaching us how to read in Spanish or English,
 How to tie our shoes
 How to gather falls colors or
 Bite into a guava.
 Our fathers worn by the weight of clouds,
 Clocking in at factories
 Or cutting sugar cane
 To earn a new life for us.
 My cousins and I now scouting the same skies
 Above skyscrapers or farms,
 Waiting for time to stop
 And begin again.
 When rain falls,
 Washes its way to river or street
 Back to the sea.
 No matter what anthem we sing,
 We've all walked barefoot and bare soul

7. List words that refer to the sea.
8. Why do you think that Blanco says that the sea doesn't matter?
9. How does Blanco play with the word "matter"?
10. Listen to Richard Blanco read the poem again. What his is tone? List 4 adjectives that describe his voice, his interpretation of the poem. Was his tone fitting to the occasion? Explain your ideas.
11. What is Richard Blanco's message for Cuba and the United States?
12. Lagniappe- Why are there so many bare flag poles in front the US Embassy in Cuba?

Cosas del mar/Matters of the Sea by Richard Blanco

<p>"Cosas del mar" El mar no importa, Lo que importa es esto. Todos somos del mar entre nosotros, Todos nosotros. Una vez y aún ahora, el mismo niño Que se maravilla ante una estrella de mar, Escucha los caracoles vacíos, Esculpe sueños en castillos imposibles. Todos hemos sido amantes, De la mano paseando por cualquiera de nuestras orillas. Nuestras huellas, Como un espejismo de nosotros mismos, Se desvanecen en olas que no conocen su origen O no les importa en qué país se rompen, Se rompen. Nos bendicen y regresan al mar, Hogar de todos nuestros deseos silenciosos. Nadie es el otro para el mar, Seamos apartada isla o vasto continente. Recuerda a nuestros abuelos, Sus manos enterradas profundamente En la tierra roja o marrón Plantando árboles de arce o mango Que los sobrevivieron. Nuestras abuelas, Contando los años mientras desempolvan fotos del día de su boda, Esos desgastados rostros de familia todavía vivos, Ahora sobre nuestras cómodas.</p>	<p>Versión original, en inglés: "Matters of the Sea" The sea doesn't matter, What matters is this. We all belong to the sea between us, All of us. Once and still the same child who marvels at a starfish, Listens to hollow shells, Sculpts dreams into impossible castles. We've all been lovers, Holding hands, Strolling down either of our shores. Our footprints, Like a mirage ourselves, Vanish in waves that don't know their birth Or care on which country they break, They break. They bless us and return to the sea, Home to all our silent wishes No one is the other to the other, to the sea, Whether unhemmed island or vast continent. Remember our grandfathers, Their hands dug deep Into red or brown earth, Planting maple or mango trees That outlived them. Our grandmothers, Counting years while dusting photos of their wedding days, Those brittle family faces still alive On our dressers now. Our mothers teaching us how to read in Spanish or English, How to tie our shoes How to gather falls colors or</p>
---	---

<p>Nuestras madres, Enseñándonos cómo leer en español o inglés, Cómo atar nuestros zapatos, Cómo recolectar los colores del otoño, O morder una guayaba. Nuestros padres, Fatigados por el peso de las nubes, Marcando reloj en las fábricas O cortando caña de azúcar Para ganar una nueva vida para nosotros. Mis primos y yo ahora admirando los mismos cielos Sobre rascacielos o fincas, Esperando que el tiempo se detenga Y comience otra vez. Cuando la lluvia cae Limpia su camino hacia el río o la calle, De vuelta al mar. No importa qué himno cantemos, Todos hemos caminado descalzos y con el alma al desnudo, Entre los altibajos del llanto de la gaviota. Hemos proferido nuestras penas y esperanzas Al mar. Nuestros labios bendecidos por la misma rociadura de viento salado, Hemos acariciado memorias y arrepentimientos Como piedras en nuestras manos que no podemos arrojar. Pero, pero... Todos hemos apoyado caracoles a nuestros oídos Escucha de nuevo el eco. Hoy, el mar sigue diciéndonos El fin de todas nuestras dudas y miedos Es admirar a los azules lúcidos de nuestro horizonte compartido</p>	<p>Bite into a guava. Our fathers worn by the weight of clouds, Clocking in at factories Or cutting sugar cane To earn a new life for us. My cousins and I now scouting the same skies Above skyscrapers or farms, Waiting for time to stop And begin again. When rain falls, Washes its way to river or street Back to the sea. No matter what anthem we sing, We've all walked barefoot and bare soul Among the soar and dive of seagull's cries We've proffered our sorrows and hopes Up to the sea. Our lips anointed by the same spray of salt laden wind, We've fingered memories and regrets Likes stones in our hands that we can't just toss. Yet, yet We've all cupped seashells to our ears. Listen, again To the echo. Today the sea's still telling us The end to all our doubts and fears Is to gaze into the lucid blues of our shared horizon, To breathe, together, To heal, together.</p>
--	---

Para respirar, juntos, Para sanar, juntos.	
---	--