

# Cuba at the Crossroads

## Lesson 3

### Superheroes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

#### 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 magnificos* 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 magnificos* 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

"American Poet, Blanco, Urges U.S., Cuba "to Breathe Together, to Heal Together" Reuters. *YouTube*. 19 July 2016. Retrieved: <https://youtu.be/M1GqJURaTI0>.

"Richard Blanco comparte su poema Cosas del mar." *Martí*. Retrieved: [www.martinoticias.com/a/richard-blanco-poema-cosas-del-mar/102165.html](http://www.martinoticias.com/a/richard-blanco-poema-cosas-del-mar/102165.html)

Borges, Pablo. *Los tres magnificos*.

Goodman, Amy and Juan Gonzalez. *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. Retrieved: [http://www.democracynow.org/2014/12/18/cut\\_loose\\_the\\_shackles\\_of\\_the.%20](http://www.democracynow.org/2014/12/18/cut_loose_the_shackles_of_the.%20). (Note: Click on *Watch Full Show*).

Internet Access to: Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University, Council on Foreign Affairs, Council of Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), *el País*, *Granma*, North American Council on Latin America (NACLA), Yoani Sanchez/14ymedio [http://www.14ymedio.com/blogs/generacion\\_y/](http://www.14ymedio.com/blogs/generacion_y/) and Upsidedown World.

US Department of State. Richard Blanco reads his poem, "Matters of the Sea," on the occasion of the flag-raising ceremony at the U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba on August 14, 2015. Retrieved: <https://soundcloud.com/statedept/richard-blanco-matters-of-the-sea>

#### Activity Sheets

Activity 1 Superheroes  
Activity 2 *Los tres magnificos*  
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

Acosta, Dalia. “Raúl Castro’s Challenges.” *Upside Down World*. 19 Feb 2008. Retrieved:  
<http://upside-down-world.org/main/cuba-archives-43/1140-cuba-raastros-challenges>  
Baer, James. “President Obama’s Challenge in Cuba.” *Council of Hemispheric Affairs* 21. Mar 2016. Retrieved:  
<http://www.coha.org/president-obamas-challenge-in-cuba/>  
“Charting a New Course on Cuba: Cuba Policy, Failed Approach, Next Steps.” The White House. Retrieved:  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy/cuba>  
Goodman, Amy and Juan Gonzalez. *Democracy Now: Cuba*. Retrieved:  
<http://www.democracynow.org/topics/cuba>  
Renwick, Danielle. U.S.-Cuba Relations Council on Foreign Affairs. 24 Mar 2016. Retrieved:  
<http://www.cfr.org/cuba/us-cuba-relations/p11113>  
Siegel, Robert. Poet Richard Blanco On U.S., Cuba: 'We All Belong To The Sea Between Us' National Public Radio. 13 Aug 2015. Retrieved: <http://www.npr.org/2015/08/13/432122602/poet-richard-blanco-on-u-s-cuba-we-all-belong-to-the-sea-between-us>  
Statement by the President on Cuba Policy Changes. The White House Office of the Press Secretary Dec 17, 2016  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/17/statement-president-cuba-policy-changes>

### 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.
  - Cobo, Leila. “Why Gloria Estefan Won't Perform In Cuba For Now.” *Billboard*. 20 May 2016.  
<http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/latin/7378241/gloria-estefan-wont-perform-in-cuba>
- Watch “The Crossroads: Cuba”. GED New Perspectives on Global Economic Dynamics. 20 July 2015 English with Spanish subtitles
  - News from Cuba - A country in Transition - The Crossroads Cuba Pt. 1 (3:31)  
[https://youtu.be/IghryTTAdiY?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd\\_gKx](https://youtu.be/IghryTTAdiY?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd_gKx)
  - Cuba's Economy - More Money New Problems? - The Crossroads Cuba Pt. 2 (3:35)  
[https://youtu.be/BTIJLpliPTA?list=PL1uxfpsZZK-ysnQdcQlayfPHaStmd\\_gKx](https://youtu.be/BTIJLpliPTA?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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 rescue, 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

Distribute student response sheet for homework assignment; 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](http://www.democracynow.org/2014/12/18/cut_loose_the_shackles_of_the) (58:56) Click on *Watch Full Show*.

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.



