BEYOND WALLS

Classroom to the Streets



Discover the Dominican Republic and the Merengue with Angurria

Unit Guide for Teachers

About this Unit Guide

This document is meant to act as a unit guide for teachers and instructors. This document contains in depth background information on unit topics, questions and pointers to help guide class discussions, links to videos and PowerPoints to show in class, and lesson worksheets, among other things.

This unit guide contains individual lesson plans that can be taught either in the context of, or independently from, the unit guide.

You can find all related documents to this unit, the individual lesson plans, and the virtual student worksheets on the Beyond Walls webpage.

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Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

History and Social Studies

Central America and the Caribbean Islands

- On a physical map of the world, use cardinal directions, map scales, key/legend, and title to locate Central America, the Caribbean Sea. On a map of the region, identify important physical features of the region. (HSS.6.T5A.1)
- Demonstrate knowledge of political geography by locating the current countries and major cities of Central America and the Caribbean Islands on a political map; use knowledge of maps to complement information gained from text about a country or region. (HSS.6.T5A.2)
- Explain how absolute and relative locations, climate, major physical characteristics and natural resources influenced settlement, population size, and the economies of regions and countries in Central America and the Caribbean Islands. (HSS.6.T5A.3)
- Describe the culture and way of life of the indigenous populations of the region. (HSS.6.T5A.4)

English Language Arts

Text Types and Purposes

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured sequences. (W.6.3)

Production and Distribution of Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (W.6.4)

Comprehension and Collaboration

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (SL.6.1)
- Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study. (SL.6.2)

Knowledge of Language

- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. (L.6.3)

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (L.6.5)

Music

- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. Identify influential music from different periods and how they impacted music at the time and potentially today. (5-6.M.Co.11)

Extensions for Visual Arts curriculum frameworks are listed below



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Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to...
1. Identify the location of the Dominican Republic using nearby countries and geographical features
2. Discuss the indiginous and colonial history of the Dominican Republic
3. Use art to identify cultural traditions and trends of the Dominican Republic
4. Effectively use rich poetic language

Vocabulary

1. Taíno
2. Merengue
3. Tambora
4. Guira

Materials



Pen/Pencil
Paper
Computer with internet access

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Lesson Plan Procedures

Intoduction

To start this lesson, gauge the classroom on their knowledge of the Dominican Republic. See if any students have heard about, been to, are from, or know anyone from the island.

For this lesson, students will learn about the physical and political geography, as well as the indigenous culture, of the Dominican Republic. Specifically, students will learn about the style of dance and music called merengue and its importance to Dominican culture using the work of the street artist Angurria.

Geography of Dominican Republic



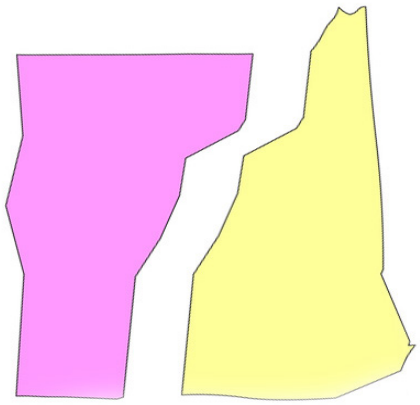
The Dominican Republic, whose main language is Spanish, is located southeast of the United States in an area called the Carribean Islands. The country shares the island of Hispaniola (located between Puerto Rico and Cuba) with Haiti. The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the island and Haiti occupies the western portion. To the north is the Atlantic Ocean and to the south is the Caribbean Sea.

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Using either a physical map or the image provided on the PowerPoint, show the students a map of the Dominican Republic. Rather than pointing out the geographical markers around the Dominican, ask the students to identify land markers. Questions that can guide this discussion include:

What cardinal direction is the Dominican Republic in reference to the United States?
What is the name of the body of water to the north of the Dominican? What is the name of the body of water to the south?
What is the name of the country to the left of Hispaniola? What is the name of the country to the right?

The island of Hispanolia is rather small, with the Dominican Republic being roughly the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined. Despite the size, the Dominican Republic is the second largest nation in the Caribbean by population with approximately 10.5 million people.



At this point, the teacher should point out to students the size vs. population disparity in the Dominican. For example, while the Dominican is about the same size as Vermont and New Hampshire, the population of the two states combined is just under 2 million, while the population of the Dominican is 10.5 million.

Ask students how they think this fact affects the daily lives of the Dominican people. What problems do they think this could cause?

Next, ask students to go to Google Maps and type in Dominican Republic. Based on the map, ask students what they think are the two largest cities in the Dominican and why.



The country is divided into 31 provinces and one district, in which Santo Domingo, the capital, is located. The city of Santo Domingo is the first European settlement of the Americas and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1990. The city of Santiago de los Caballeros is the country's second largest city.

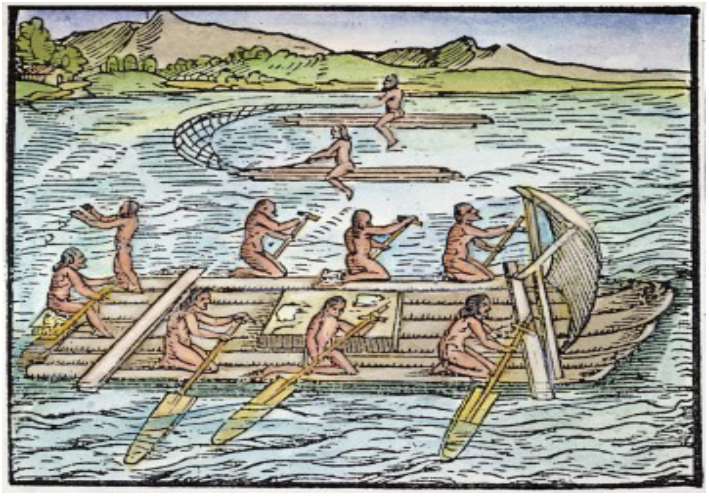
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At this point, ask students to go to Google Images and search "Dominican Republic." Using the images from Google, have the students, either in teams or individually, come up with a list of geographic features of the Dominican Republic. Afterwards, discuss as a class what the students think the climate of the Dominican is based on their list of geographical features.

The Dominican Republic has a semitropical climate, with an average yearly temperature of 78°F. So it feels like a warm summer's day almost all year round! Across the island, one can find an extensive amount of beaches, thick rainforests, tall mountain peaks separated by vegetation heavy valleys, even desert zones with sand dune formations.

Brief History of Dominican Republic

To start this section of the lesson, ask students if they have ever gone canoeing or if they have seen a canoe. What about a hammock? Have they tasted barbeque? If students said yes to any of these, then inform them that they have paid tribute to the Taíno, indigenous people who inhabited the Caribbean Islands long before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the 15th century.



"Taino Fisherman - Historia del Mondo Nuovo" by ollie.s.mason is marked with CC BY 2.0.

Before European colonization, the Caribbean islands were inhabited by an indigenous people called the Taíno. The Taíno were inventive people who learned to strain cyanide from yuca crops, developed pepper gas for warfare, built oceangoing canoes large enough for more than 100 paddlers and played games with a ball made of rubber, which fascinated Europeans seeing the material for the first time.

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In 1492, the island of Hispaniola became the site of the first European settlement in the New World. While it was Christopher Columbus who landed on the island first, it was Columbus' brother who built the city of Santo Domingo in 1493. Under Spanish rule, Hispaniola became the site of numerous sugar cane plantations which were manned by enslaved Taíno Indians and Africans imported to the island. Today, sugar cane remains one of two main agricultural resources for the Dominican Republic, the other being rice.

Around 1520, after the Spanish conquered the Aztecs and Incas, Spain turned its attention away from the Caribbean. As a result, the sugar plantation economy declined. Not only did agriculture dwindle, but new imports of slaves ceased and white colonists, free Africans, and slaves alike lived in poverty. Soon the social hierarchy of Hispaniola deteriorated and individuals left behind began intermixing, resulting in a population of predominantly mixed Spaniard, Taíno, and African descent. It is this fusion of European, African and Taíno traditions and customs that contributed to the development of present-day Dominican culture.



"Happy Columbus Day, America!" by oriana.italy is marked with CC PDM 1.0.

Angurria and the Merengue



Angurria is a Dominican graphic designer, with more than 20 years of experience in the advertising industry. He has distinguished himself nationally and internationally in the area of design, art direction, digital retouching, typography, and lettering. In his murals, angurria typically shows women in hair rollers because they are typically something women wear behind closed doors. Angurria knew about them from spending time in the hair salon that his mother owns. Through his art, Angurria gives hommage to his mother and all of the women of the Dominican Republic.

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Start this step of the lesson plan by showing students an image of the mural "Sound of my Patria" by the Dominican artist Angurria. Have students fill out the Lesson Form (located below and on the Beyond Walls webpage) as they examine the mural.

Afterwards, discuss everyone's responses as a class.

Students should notice that the woman seems to be caught in a moment of euphoria as she pounds away at the drum while singing at, what the viewer can assume is, a loud volume. The woman, shown in curlers, does not show signs of self-consciousness, rather she exudes pride.

At this point, ask students to imagine what the music sounds like that the woman is playing. Quiet or loud? Fast or slow? What makes them think this? Afterwards, inform students that there are a few types of music and dance that originated from the Dominican Republic that we can assume the woman in the mural is playing. The one they will be learning about is called the merengue.

Merengue is the musical genre most often associated with the Dominican Republic–it is considered part of the national identity of the community. It plays an active role in various aspects of people's daily lives – from their education to social gatherings and celebrations, even political campaigning. Merengue festivals are held in cities in the Dominican Republic like Santo Domingo every year.

There are two stories about the origins of the genre:

The first origin story states that the dance came from enslaved Africans working in the sugar cane plantations. Slaves were chained together and were forced to keep a constant work pace set by drums. Because they were chained, the slaves could only manage small, rhythmic steps.

The second story alleges that a man was wounded in the leg during one of the many revolutions in the Dominican Republic. A party of villagers welcomed him home as a hero and, out of sympathy, celebrated by having everyone dance with a limp.



"Merengue" by garryknight is marked with CC BY 2.0.

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The merengue attracts people of different ages and social classes, which helps to promote respect and coexistence among individuals, groups and communities. In the 1960's, when Dominicans began migrating to New York City, immigrants brought their native music to American shores, adding to merengue's widespread popularity. With nearly two million Dominicans now living in the United States, merengue has influenced—and been influenced by—other American music genres, such as rock n' roll.

At this point, have students watch the below video which provides some context on the evolution of merengue and also exposes students to the sounds and dances of the genre.

https://youtu.be/fautemcgU48

(Watch until at least the 6:00 time stamp, or the whole video if there is time)

Afterwards, ask students what they noticed about merengue music and dance. What kinds of instruments did they notice? Was the dancing fast or slow? What about the music? Ask students if they like or dislike the merengue music and to explain their answer.

Danced in pairs, the merengue is a lively, fast-paced dance that utilizes the accordion as well as the tambora (a two-sided drum) and güira (a metal scraper), two instruments unique to the Dominican Republic.

If students are interested in the güira and how it is played, show them the below video:

https://youtu.be/GQT42c1gpLo

Show students the below video which provides an easy, step-by-step walkthrough of dancing the merengue. Have students follow along and see if they can perform the steps!

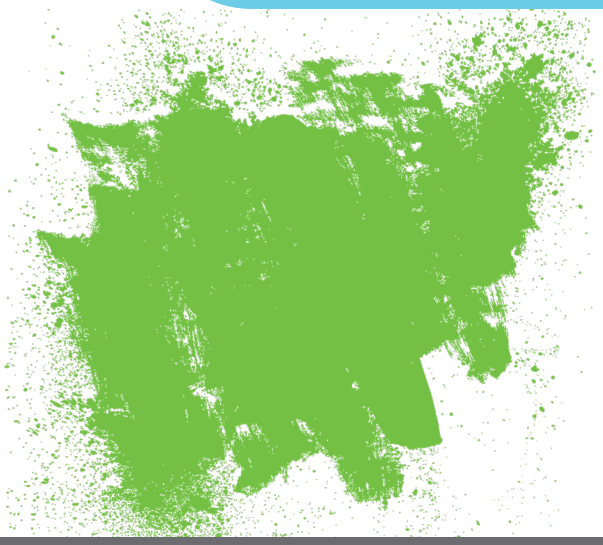
https://youtu.be/daaHi0jtHlw

Whether students are from the Dominican or not, they learn from Angurria and the above videos that there is much pride amongst the Dominican community. Hopefully students will take away pride in their own cultural heritage.



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Activity



After completing the lesson on the Dominican Republic and the merengue, students will write a poem using Angurria's "Sound of my Patria" as inspiration. This is a "free verse poem", meaning there are no constraints on length, pattern, rhyme, etc. For their poems, students can choose any topic that the painting inspires in them. For instance, they could write the poem from the woman's perspective, or as a bystander listening to the woman sing and play the drum.

Students must write a poem that meets the following criteria:

- Strong lead—Does the poem start inside an experience, feeling, observation, or memory?
- Strong ending—Does the poem leave the reader with a feeling, idea, image or question?
- Line breaks and stanzas—Are lines/stanzas of the poem broken on nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs?
- Cut to the bone—Is the poem elegant shorthand? Are all the words used necessary?
- Use repetition (optional)—If repetition is used in the poem, does it stress an important word, phrase, idea or theme? (Repetition should not sound awkward.)

Visual Arts (5-6.V.Cr.01 - 03)

In his art, Angurria pulls from his cultural heritage, celebrating the pride of the Dominican people. For this activity, students will create a self portrait of themselves engaging in an activity that is meaningful to them and their life, family, and/or culture. Students will write a paragraph explaining their drawing.

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Differentiation



This lesson plan accommodates each of the four learning styles: visual, auditory, reading and writing, and kinesthetic.

This lesson plan engages visual learners by having them engage with and analyze art examples and by watching lesson-related videos.

This lesson plan engages auditory learners by having them listen to the lesson lecture and by watching lesson-related videos.

This lesson plan engages reading and writing learners by having them fill out the Lesson Form that accompanies this lesson and by writing the assigned poem.

This lesson plan engages kinesthetic learners by providing a tactile experience in which students get to practice merengue dance steps, create their own work of art, and/or write their own poem.

Assessment

Assessment is conducted regularly throughout this lesson through group discussions.

For alternatives, the link below will take you to a document with a comprehensive list of assessment options. Though they are geared more towards Visual Arts, they can be altered or used for other curriculums, such as ELA and Science/Technology.

https://uploads.theartofeducation.edu/2016/03/Ultimate-Assessment-Guide.pdf

Exit slips are also a great strategy for assessment at the end of a lesson. For these slips, have students respond to the following questions:

1. Write one thing you learned today
2. Write one question you have about today's lesson
3. Did you enjoy the lesson activities?

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Contact Us

This lesson plan was created as a tool to help teachers inocroprate street art into their curriculum. If there is anything you liked or wish to see added, email us at admin@beyond-walls.org

Visit Us At

@beyondwallslynn

@beyondwallslynn

Or at our website beyondwalls.org

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Lesson Form

Name:

Date:

1. What is the first thing you notice when you look at this mural? Why is your eye being drawn there?

2. How would you describe the woman in the mural? What is her mood? What is she doing?

3. What are some other objects in the mural?

4. Based on your answers to the above questions, what do you think the mural represents?