



A-Z Puerto Rico

Language Arts / Social Studies

Reading Level: ★★

Learning Objectives

- **Reading/Literary Analysis Strategy:** Analyze text that uses proposition and support patterns.
- **Writing/Presentation Strategy:** Deliver persuasive presentations; provide a clear statement of the position, include relevant evidence; offer a logical sequence of information; engage the listener and foster acceptance of the proposition or proposal.
- **Connect to Social Studies:** Understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.

Before Reading (15 minutes)

Summary

The Caribbean island of Puerto Rico is a colorful country of beautiful sandy beaches and hills covered with rich rain forests. Nearly four million people live in Puerto Rico. Proud of their rich heritage, most have ancestors who were Spanish or a mixture of European, African, or Taíno Indian. In many ways, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is like any state in the United States. In other ways, it is very different.

Vocabulary

- **commonwealth (KAH-mohn-welth)** a partnership between two countries; The commonwealth of Puerto Rico does not pay taxes, but it receives money for schools, roads, and other things that the country needs.
- **endangered (en-DYN-jerd)** at risk of disappearing; The Puerto Rican parrot is an endangered animal.
- **heritage (HER-i-tej)** all of the things from our past that make us who we are, especially our ancestry; Puerto Ricans are proud of their rich heritage.
- **historic site (his-TOR-ik SIGHT)** a place set aside and protected because something important happened there; Part of Old San Juan is a protected historic site.
- **plazas (PLAH-zahz)** large open areas of courtyards often used as public gathering places; Buildings with courtyards and plazas were built by the Spanish who came to the island.



- Taíno Indians (TAN-yoh) a group of Indians who lived on Puerto Rico and neighboring islands; When Columbus arrived, many thousands of Taíno Indians lived on Puerto Rico.
- Trigueños (tree-GAYNG-yohs) Puerto Ricans of mixed European, Taíno, and African ancestry; Trigueños make up the majority of Puerto Rico's population.

Parts of the Book

- Ask students to look at the contents page and skim the alphabetical listing for topics specific to Puerto Rico (Only in Puerto Rico and Zemi).
- Ask students to turn to the Spanish and English Words on page 39. Assist students with the vocabulary listed above. If time allows, ask students to find words that pertain to categories, such as animals, clothing, crops, or history.
- Point out the Let's Explore More suggested books and websites.
- Have students explore the topics listed in the index on page 40. Ask students to look at the listing under the letter M to find the name of a well-known Puerto Rican musician and his early band (Martin, Ricky, and Menudo).

Pre-Reading Discussion (5 – 10 minutes)

You may wish to list students' responses to these questions on a K-W-L chart to show what students already know and want to learn.

- What do you know about Puerto Rico?
- Where is Puerto Rico?
- What do you know about the country's history?
- What type of relationship does its government have with the United States?
- What do you expect to learn about Puerto Rico by reading this book?

Reading (Group or Silent)

- Ask students to turn to page 20 to look at the map of Puerto Rico. Explain that it is an island country in the Caribbean Sea. Point out the coastline of the United States and the surrounding countries of Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.
- Ask students to look at the flag of Puerto Rico on page 21. Bandera is the Spanish word for flag. Discuss the similarities to the U.S. flag. Read aloud Nation on page 21 and mention that there is a debate about Puerto Rico becoming the 51st state of the United States.
- Read aloud with students about the land (isla means island, in Spanish) of Puerto Rico on pages 18-19 and the people on pages 24-25. Then read about the history of



Puerto Rico on page 13 and pages 32-33. Lead a brief discussion about the land and its history to provide background for further reading.

- You may wish to divide the student silent reading into three sessions; Session 1: pages 4-12 and 14-17, Session 2: pages 22-23 and 26-27, and Session 3: pages 28-31 and 34-38. As students read, they should to look for information about what they learned to complete the K-W-L chart.

After Reading Activities

Reading Strategy: Facts and supporting details (20 minutes)

- Complete the K-W-L chart with students. Discuss with students what new information they learned about Puerto Rico.
- Have students choose a partner and write the letters of Puerto Rico vertically on the left side of a sheet of paper. Ask partners to create a list of terms or phrases to show facts and supporting details from their reading. For example, next to the letter C, students might write Cities: San Juan, Ponce, Caguas, Carolina, and Bayamón.
- Copy the **Famous Facts about Puerto Rico** reproducible. Students may work alone or with a partner and may use their books to complete the activity.

Connect to Social Studies (30 minutes each)

- Have students work together in small groups to plan a skit about Puerto Rico's history, such as the discovery of the island by the Spanish, lives of the Taíno Indians, or discovery of the Treasure of Mona Island. Students can conduct online research while preparing for their skit by following the path below:

Go to: <http://goafterschool.grolier.com>.

Click on the **Passport to Fun** button.

Type **Puerto Rico** in the Find it Fast box and click on **GO**.

Click on the links displayed to show the articles.

- Have students work to plan a Puerto Rican festival. Students may enjoy creating costumes, illustrating or creating colorful vejigante masks (see next activity), preparing limbers (page 11), and other tropical treats, and playing and dancing to salsa music.
- Handmade masks are used in many Puerto Rican festivals. Brightly colored and decorated, the masks are a wonderful symbol of celebration. Traditional vejigante masks are made from papier mâché and most have at least two horns. If materials for creating a traditional mask (mask form, newspaper, wheat paste, paints) are not available, have students design a mask from cardboard. Using a heavy cardboard for the base, they can cut a circle or oval shape with holes for the eyes, then glue on



horns, a nose, mouth, etc. They should decorate the mask with paint or markers. Have students display their masks when complete.

- If online resources are available, let students explore Puerto Rico online by following the path below:

Go to: <http://goafterschool.grolier.com>.

Click on **Grolier Online Kids** button under Look It Up!

In the Find it Fast box, type **Puerto Rico** and click on **GO**.

When search results are displayed, click on the **Websites** button at the top.

Click on the link [Welcome to Puerto Rico!](#)

Explore by clicking on one of the topics on the right.

Writing/Presentation Strategy (30 minutes)

- Debates give students the opportunity to communicate facts, ideas, and opinions. Students learn to listen, understand, and respect each other's opinions.

Divide students into two teams for a debate. Flip a coin to decide the position for each team in debating whether Puerto Rico should become the 51st state. Remind students to stand to present their positions and for all to be courteous while speaking and listening.

- Allow time for teams to gather information and list facts and evidence to support their positions. Sources may include the book and other references, including the Internet.
 - Using a collaborative approach and the **Puerto Rico 51st State Debate** reproducible (copy and distribute to students), teams will agree on position statements (assertions), and list the reasoning and evidence to support them.
 - The spokesperson for each team will present the team's position in 3 minutes, beginning with the pro team.
 - Teams will have 5 minutes to plan their rebuttals.
 - Allow two minutes for each team for rebuttal. Ask the whole group to discuss which team presented the most persuasive argument.
 - Allow teams 2 minutes to plan closing statements. Present closing statements.
 - Allow time for members of the audience to ask questions.
- The author chose three photographs for the cover of the book *A-Z Puerto Rico*: a coquí, children in traditional dress, and a round watch-tower at El Morro. What three photos would you choose to represent Puerto Rico? Tell why.



Assessing the Learning Experience (10 minutes)

- Use the **Activity Assessment Grid** to record how well students presented their debates and skits, and contributed to the celebration plans and K-W-L chart. Use the grid to record how well students completed the **Famous Facts** reproducible and facts and supporting details activity.
- **Assessment Questions**
How does Puerto Rico honor its past and preserve its future?
Tourism is important to Puerto Rico's economy. If you took a trip to Puerto Rico, what would you like to do and see there?
Describe three ways that Puerto Rico is like other states in the United States; describe three ways that it is different.