

# Images of Cuba: Bringing Cuba to Life in Your Classroom with Photographs

By Jamie Lee Marks November 2016 Workshop – Cuba: Histories of the Present

Target Audience: Grades 6-16 (adaptable)

## RELATED CONTENT AREAS

**Spanish Language** description, cultural exploration, literature, poetry

**English Language** visual literacy, rhetorical analysis, poetry, author intention vs. audience interpretation

**Social Studies** World Geography, World History, Human Geography, photojournalism, social diversity in Cuba, cultural diversity in Cuba

**Fine Arts** photography

## INSTRUCTIONS

### Overview

This curriculum guide highlights the role that photojournalism and/or portrait photography can play in our understandings of other places and persons. In this case: Cuba. Whether part of lesson plans in Spanish, English, History, or Social Studies classrooms, photographs fosters curiosity, and creates a more direct, visual connection between learners and the persons and places that they learn about. Furthermore, photographs allow educators to emphasize visual literacy, or on the constructed nature of visual images, and the components that lend to a mood or emphasis of a photograph.

### Standards

#### **Common Core Standards (Examples of Standards Met for Particular Grades)**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10 By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

[Lesson Extension B]

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and

	<p>quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2</u> Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.</p> <p><u>CCSS.WHST.11-12.5.</u> Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.</p> <p><b>National Foreign Language Standards</b></p> <p>Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions</p> <p><u>1.3</u> Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.</p> <p><u>3.2</u> Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures</p> <p><u>4.2</u> Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.</p> <p>[If this lesson is implemented with <i>With Eyes and Soul: Images of Cuba</i> in order to teach Nancy Morejon’s poetry]</p> <p><u>2.2</u> Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.</p> <p><u>4.1</u> Demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and one’s own</p>		
<b>Objectives</b>	Explore Cuba through photographs, engage student interest in Cuban society Develop a more nuanced understanding of human and cultural diversity in Cuba over time (1980s/2000s) Understand photos as arguments or texts—that photographs are not merely reflections of reality but mediated images that convey meanings Consider a photographer’s emphasis or point of view Understand the importance of the context in which a photo was taken, and the elements of a photograph that contribute to its mood	<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">With Eyes and Soul: Images of Cuba</a> (available through CLAS Lending Library)</li><li>• Cuba: Histories of the present photographs (below)</li><li>• Free List Handout (below)</li><li>• Photo Discussion Questions Handout (below)</li><li>• Pairing with a Reading (below)</li><li>• Sample instructions for Instagram Account curation (below)</li></ul>

<b>Time</b>	3 class periods	<b>Vocabulary</b>	See below
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## PROCEDURE

This lesson could be implemented in a high level Spanish or English classroom with a focus on descriptive language, point of view, and/or rhetorical techniques/visual rhetoric. It could also be adapted to focus on describing the photos and speculating about the nature of everyday life in Cuba in a lower level Spanish classroom. In a social studies classroom, this could be part of a unit on Cuba and Cuban-U.S. relations and/or part of a unit on the importance of photojournalism to transnational understandings of culture, history, etc. The end result of this largely depends on whether the instructor chooses to teach it in conjunction with *With Eyes and Soul: Images of Cuba*, which contains both portrait photographs and poetry in Spanish or English that explores Afro-Cuban experiences and history OR with photographs from the series “Cuba: Histories of the Present” by David LaFevor (below). This lesson can be adapted to work with either resource.

Things to Consider:

### **How much do students know/have studied regarding Cuba?**

If this is an introductory lesson, or part of an introductory unit on Cuban history and culture, this might be a nice way to end the unit. These photographs offer a nuanced representation of racial and cultural inequality within Cuba, as well as of cultural diversity within Cuba. By their nature, photographs and poetry remind students that every understanding of a place, or of a people, is situated/comes from a source rather than being objective.

### **What kind of technology is accessible?**

Do you want your students to engage in a creative photography project (LESSON A) or would you rather have them find something in the photos they'd like to explore further through creative research projects (LESSON B)?

## Part 1

### **Engage**

#### **Imagining Cuba: Free List Activity**

Tell students they will be participating in a free form listing activity. Either use the free list sheet attached (Appendix I) or have them use a blank sheet of paper. Tell them not to write their names.

Free listing activities usually go more smoothly if you pick a more familiar word like “lunch” or “Summer” and do a few in Open Class before telling them what word you're going to be doing for the official listing warm up activity (ex: Summer: pool, no school, hot). Once students get the hang of it tell them to list every word or phrase they think in 60 seconds of when they hear the word **Cuba**.

When 60 seconds is up collect the papers from the students. Have students get into groups of 5-6. Shuffle papers and hand them back out to students at random. Ask the groups to review the responses of their classmates using the following questions:

Which words came up the most? Why do you think that is?

Did any words only come up once? Why? What do you think about them?

Use these questions as a springboard for a discussion of what the class, as a group, imagines when they think of Cuba. Ask follow up questions like: where have you learned about Cuba before? Where do we get these ideas?

### **Explore: Analyzing Images**

#### **Introducing images**

Ask your students to stay in their groups of 5-6. Assign each group an image of your choice from “Cuba: Histories of the Present” or *With Eyes and Soul: Images of Cuba*. Have them respond to the following questions (Appendix II)

Describe the photograph. What do you see in it? Be as detailed as possible about persons, objects, colors, etc.

Does the photograph look staged, or like a naturally occurring moment?

What does the photo tell you about the person(s) in the photo? What do you think the photographer wanted you to see?

What questions do you have about the photo, in general?

How does this photograph agree, or disagree with what you imagined about Cuba during the free list activity?

What questions about Cuba, or life in Cuba do you have after seeing this photo?

*Adaptations for language learning classrooms:*

#### Advanced:

*These questions/activities could be asked in Spanish*

#### Beginner/Intermediate:

*Have your students describe the pictures using a word bank of adjectives*

*Provide cut-outs of nouns and action verbs and cut them out. Let students place words on top of the photos like magnetic poetry*

*Create fill in the blank sentences about the picture. Use comparisons/opposites/superlatives to practice Target Language*

*Have students tell a simple story about the photograph*

### **Pair the image with a Reading (Appendix Item III)**

Ask all of your students to complete a reading before returning to the photograph. 1) a poem by Nancy Morejón about her experiences as an Afro Cuban Woman (freely available, Appendix 3) 2) another poem by a Cuban poet of your choosing 3) an article or paragraph about an aspect of Cuban culture or history you'd like to emphasize 4) An article by David LaFevor in which he shares his thoughts about his photographs: <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/afro-cuban-life-n321911>

Ask the students to discuss, or write a reflection on their own and then discuss:

Now, what do you see in the photograph? Did the reading change your viewpoint?

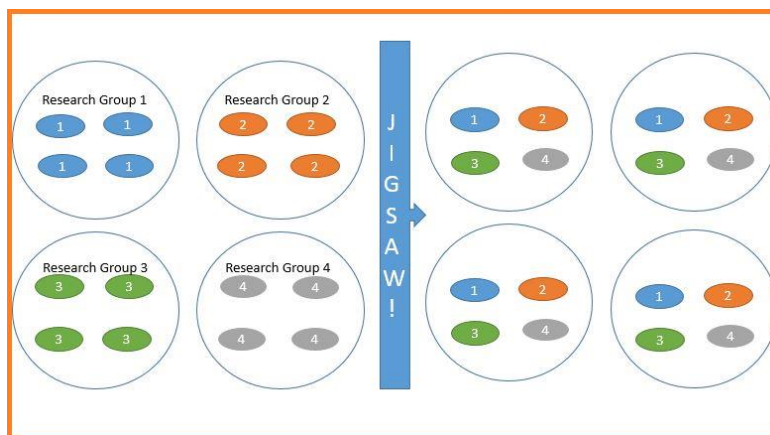
Do the reading and photograph contradict one another, show similar things?

What questions do you have about this photograph, now that you've done this reading?

What questions about Cuba, or life in Cuba do you still have?

### **Jigsaw Discussion Wrap Up:**

Have students jigsaw to share what their group thought about the content and meaning of the photograph, both before and after completing the reading exercise. A diagram of the jigsaw technique can be found below. In a jigsaw, each student acts as a representative for her or his original discussion group so each student gets an opportunity to check in about what each small group discussed:



## Day II

### Lesson Extension A: Images of Your Community

**Students plan, take, and share images of themselves, classmates, family members, or neighbors.**

#### Engaging existing knowledge.

Ask students to share their experiences taking photographs. Have they taken pictures on phones, digital cameras, and disposable cameras?

When they take photos, who is the audience?

**Share with the students that they will be planning, taking, and choosing photographs that they feel reflect something about their communities.**

#### Brainstorming

1. Ask students the following: If you could use photographs to something about your community to children in another country, what would you want to share?
2. How would this shift in audience change what you photograph?
3. What places, people, and experiences are part of your everyday, day to day life? (Think of what you do every single day vs. on special occasions).
4. Ask students to share their thoughts in groups and decide on a focus for their own photographic project.
5. Have students draft a "statement of intent" for their photographic explorations

#### Taking Photos

Depending on access to technology at home or at school, you could choose to instruct students to take photographs for homework, or have them work on taking photographs within your school communities. Allowing students to create

and curate an Instagram account for this project is another way for students to take a collection of photographs with a unifying theme (Appendix IV)

### **Photo or Photo Set**

Students will turn in a photo or photo set (no more than 5, or an Instagram feed of 5) along with a paragraph about what they chose to photograph and why. Ask students to use the following questions to guide their reflection

1. What did you choose to photograph? Describe your photo(s).
2. What choices did you make, as a photographer? Is this a candid shot or a staged shot?
3. What about your community or culture does this photo/do these photos reflect? What about everyday life does it reflect?
4. If someone from Cuba saw this photograph, what might they think or question about everyday life in the US?

Students share their photographs and discuss their choices either in open class or in small groups depending on educator preference.

### **Next Step: Images of My Community**

Plan a physical or online photo exhibit featuring your class' work. Have an opening night for students, families, neighbors, friends, and teachers during which students can stand by their work and answer questions about the photographs

### **Lesson Extension B: Researching Cuba from Multiple Perspectives**

Students use the photographs, poems/articles, and discussions from Part I to research an aspect about Cuban history, culture, and society through multiple academic and artistic perspectives/sources. They will choose one humanities representations/sources (photography, film, visual art, poetry) and 2 non-fiction sources to explore their topic. I suggest preparing an example of source pairing (such as Nancy Morejón's poetry with an academic text on race in Cuba, and a news article on race in Cuba)

Possible Topics:

- Cuban educational system
- Cuban health care
- Cuban race relations
- Gender in Cuba
- Cuban political system
- Cuba musicians, poets, photographers
- US-Cuban relations
- Other topics that students find interesting

Assist students in drafting a driving question about everyday life, culture, or history that 1) relates to Cuba 2) can be explored through a variety of sources.

### **Varied Sources**

For this lesson, it is important that students have access to and use a varied range of perspectives. Some examples:

- Documentary or fictional films
- News articles
- Archival Sources
- Academic/non-fiction sources (research databases)
- Photographic collections
- Poems/literature
- Interviews

## EVALUATION

Evaluating Sources (the project and process of seeking information and evaluating it IS the learning!)

Students will present their findings to the class or to a real audience (via presentations, charts, podcasts, etc.).

### Possible extension activity

Annotated bibliography (in MLA or APA format)

Annotations address the following aspects of a source:

What is the context (date, author, country of origin, etc.) of the text?

What perspective is being presented?

What is the author's relation to Cuba?

What does the source claim, depict, or argue?

What is NOT said or addressed?

How does the source compare to other sources?

What conclusions can be drawn from the source?

## I. Free List Activity

Do not write your name on this paper (data needs to remain anonymous!)

Free listing **practice round:**

List 3 words or phrases that come to mind when you hear the word “summer”

1.

2.

3.

Free list activity. Word: Cuba

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



## II. Analyzing Photographs

In your groups, respond to the following questions. Use this sheet to take notes.

1. Describe the photograph. What do you see in it? Be as detailed as possible about persons, objects, colors, etc.
2. Does the photograph look staged, or like a naturally occurring moment?
3. What does the photo tell you about the person(s) in the photo? What do you think the photographer wanted you to see?
4. What questions do you have about the photo, in general?
5. How does this photograph agree, or disagree with what you imagined about Cuba during the free list activity?
6. What questions about Cuba, or life in Cuba do you have after seeing this photo?

### III. Possible Readings/Videos for pairing

1) a poem by Nancy Morejón (*With Eyes and Soul: Images of Cuba*) or linked here:

- a. Images by Rogovin paired with poetry by Nancy Morejón: <http://www.miltonrogovin.com/morejon.html>
- b. Video of Nancy Morejón reading a poem in Spanish and English about Havana at the First International Festival of Poetry of Resistance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPMdP-XRuDU>
- c. 8 min Documentary on Nancy Morejón that contains the poem “Mujer Negra” and translation in English (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2ZZq8pgHXg>)

2) a poem by another Cuban poet of your choosing!

3) a film clip/documentary clip!

4) Article by David LaFevor in which he shares his thoughts about his photographs:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/afro-cuban-life-n321911>

### Discussion Questions:

Ask the students to discuss, or write a reflection on their own and then discuss:

1. Now, what do you see in the photograph? Did the reading change your viewpoint?
2. Do the reading and photograph contradict one another, show similar things?
3. What questions do you have about this photograph, now that you’ve done this reading?
4. What questions about Cuba, or life in Cuba do you still have?

### Urging Students to Curate Instagram Accounts

#### Example instructions:

For this project, you will take pictures for, and carefully choose (NUMBER, I suggest 4-8) photos for an Instagram feed by (DATE). Follow our class account, (CLASS ACCOUNT). Take, edit, share and tag photos as you wish, but make sure that they all explore an aspect of your everyday life you’d like to share with others. Think of your feed as an exhibit. You will be asked to comment on trends in your feed, why you posted particular images, how you edited them and why, how you tagged them.

















