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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2022 Volume II: American Global Power from Empire to Superpower

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## **Let's Go Bananas! U.S. Imperialism Through the Lens of a Fruit**

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by Sandy Alvarez

From the clothes we wear to the gas we use in our vehicles to the foods we eat, aspects of U.S. imperialism are visible in our everyday lives. As the title states, this social studies unit, intended for first graders, seeks to explore U.S. imperialism through the lens of a fruit. A study of bananas serves as a child-friendly, engaging, and applicable approach. Students will delve into the topic of bananas and understand where they come from, how much they cost, and how they reach our kitchen tables. Students will learn about the history of the banana and answer questions such as: “What is a banana?” and “How is a banana grown?” After establishing that bananas are imported overwhelmingly from Central and South America, students will be able to answer the question: “Where do bananas come from?” To that end, students will define the meaning of international trade and begin to understand how bananas arrive at one’s kitchen table (or lunchbox, for that matter). From plantation workers to U.S. companies to neighborhood store workers, students will discover the complexity of how this fruit lands in our hands for consumption. Lastly, students will write an opinion piece about how much they think a banana worker should get paid and why. If they purchase bananas, would they purchase Fairtrade or non-Fairtrade bananas? Why or why not?

(Developed for Social Studies, grade 1; recommended for History and Social Studies, all grade levels)

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