



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2026 Volume II: Latinx Histories, Cultures, and Communities

Identity in Motion: Passport of Caribbean Culture & Community in America

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Introduction:

... “The Latino migrant flows were directly connected to the growth of the U.S. empire and responded closely to its needs, whether it was the political need to stabilize a neighboring country or to accept its refugees as a means of accomplishing a broader foreign policy objective, or an economic need, such as satisfying the labor demand of U.S. industries.”

-Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*[1]

Migration is the movement of people to a new country or place in search of work or a better way of life. The stories and cultural influences of migration from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic resonate deeply with me, as someone who grew up in New Jersey. Imagine walking through a neighborhood in New York City and hearing Puerto Rican salsa music playing from a storefront, or Dominican music blasting from a passing car. You see restaurants serving food that contains recipes originating from over a thousand miles away in the Caribbean. As people from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic migrated to the United States, they brought their languages, traditions, music, foods, and stories with them. Over time, these migrant communities shaped American culture. As they continued to preserve the important connections to their heritage, many Puerto Rican and Dominican families began to create a future for their families in America.

Throughout this unit, students will explore three key concepts: (1) geography, (2) migration, and (3) cultural identity by exploring the experiences of Puerto Rican and Dominican people migrating to America. Through map exploration, oral histories, reading excerpts from novels, online photographs, and primary sources, students will investigate how people adapt to new environments while maintaining their cultural traditions and sense of belonging across generations. By studying migration patterns and experiences in Puerto Rican and Dominican communities, students will discover how place (geography), movement (migration), and culture shape an individual’s identity and the communities they build.[2]

Guided by the compelling question

“How do geography, migration, and culture shape the identities of Puerto Rican and Dominican communities in the United States?” the goal of this unit is to help students understand that identity is shaped by one’s geographic makeup, one’s migration story, and the preservation of one’s culture and traditions. The three main concepts

of this unit are guided by the following questions: (1) How does geography shape identity and create a sense of place? (2) How do migration experiences influence identity, belonging, and community? (3) How do people preserve culture and traditions while adapting to new environments? [3]

Concept One: "Geography Shapes Identity"

A person's identity is influenced by the places in which they live and the environments that surround them. Within this concept, students will explore how geography affects the daily lives and opportunities of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in their homeland and America. Through an analysis of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, students will examine maps, climate, natural resources, and settlement patterns to understand how geography induces a sense of place. Students will investigate how people interact with their environments and how those interactions influence the development of communities over time.

Concept Two: "Migration Shapes Identity"

Through migration, people see how communities evolve alongside their own development. In this section, students will examine the migration experiences of Puerto Rican and Dominican communities and explore the factors that encourage people to move. Through reading excerpts from novels, listening to narratives, and using other primary sources, students will investigate family migration routes, the push and pull factors that drove their movement, and the opportunities and challenges they encountered. Students will investigate how migration can influence family and community relationships, shaping a person's sense of identity and belonging.

Concept Three: "Culture Connects Identity Across Generations"

People's culture helps maintain their connection to their heritage as they assimilate into new experiences and environments. In this section, students will examine how Puerto Rican and Dominican communities have preserved cultural traditions while living in the United States. Through case studies, online artifacts, music, food traditions, and community stories, students will investigate how culture can change over time while staying connected to its origins. Students will explore how family customs and community celebrations help people maintain their identities across generations and borders.

Culminating Performance Task:

Students may create a Caribbean Culture Museum exhibit, a Caribbean News Report, a Digital Story Map Adventure, or a Migration Suitcase Project. Using maps, migration narratives, primary sources, and secondary sources, students will develop a claim and use evidence to explain how geography, migration, and culture shape the identities of Puerto Rican and Dominican communities in the United States. Students will compare Puerto Rican and Dominican experiences and conclude the project by writing a Letter Home Refl

ection from the perspective of a migrant who left home.

Classroom Context and Rationale:

I teach sixth-grade World Geography at an urban public school in Southeast Washington, DC. My students come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and bring a wide range of experiences and perspectives to the classroom. We are a public middle school serving approximately 223 students in grades 6-8. The student population is predominantly Black (about 90%), with a growing Hispanic/Latino population (about 8%). As a Title I school, we serve students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Many students have personal or family experiences with relocation, making the themes of geography, migration, and cultural identity relevant to their lives.[4]

This unit, “Identity in Motion: Passport to Caribbean Culture & Community in America,” uses the experiences of Puerto Rican and Dominican communities to help students understand how geography, migration, and culture shape identity. Students will explore how people maintain cultural traditions by adapting to new environments and keeping a sense of belonging across generations. Students will also investigate how movement influences individuals while recognizing that one’s culture is ever-changing. In doing so, their discovery will reveal how Puerto Rican and Dominican cultures evolve in response to new challenges while preserving important traditions and customs connected to their heritage.[5]

The unit is aligned with the District of Columbia Grade 6 World Geography framework, which emphasizes the relationship between geography and human experiences.[6] Students will analyze maps and migration routes. They will then investigate what gives a location a sense of place and examine how geography influences opportunity.

Content Objective:

This unit is centered around research about geography, Latinx history, and cultural studies. Using case studies of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, students will investigate how geography, migration, and culture influence one’s identity. They will examine interactions between people and their environments and how communities maintain cultural traditions while adapting to change.

Geography, Place, and Daily Life

Geography plays a big role in shaping where people live. It also affects the kinds of opportunities people have, and how communities grow. Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic are both located in the Caribbean and have tropical climates, but each has unique physical features that influence daily living. Puerto Rico’s mountains and coastal plains give access to the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea. This supports industries like farming, manufacturing, and tourism. The Dominican Republic has rich valleys, mountain ranges, and coastlines that shape its agriculture, trade, and tourism, allowing people to settle across the island. Students

will explore how geography presents both opportunities and challenges, including access to resources and natural disasters. They will look at maps and geographic data to see how places can influence a country's economic growth and identity.[7]

Historical Oppression, Colonization, and Government

To understand migration from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, students must examine the historical forces that shaped each society. Prior to European colonization, both islands were home to Indigenous Taíno communities.[8] The Taíno people of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic were of the indigenous Arawak-speaking people, who lived in organized villages led by chiefs.[9] Spanish colonization brought major changes, including the displacement and exploitation of Indigenous populations and the forced migration of enslaved Africans to provide labor on plantations. These systems created racial hierarchies and economic inequalities that continue to influence both societies today.

Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States following the Spanish-American War of 1898 and remains a U.S. territory. Although Puerto Ricans are United States citizens, residents of Puerto Rico do not have full voting representation in Congress and cannot vote in presidential elections while living on the island.[10] The island's relationship with the United States has influenced its economy, government, and migration patterns for more than a century.

The Dominican Republic has faced many challenging times due to foreign political instability throughout its history. A particularly notable period was the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, who ruled from 1930 to 1961. During his time in power, Trujillo kept control through violence and repression, which limited political freedoms for many people.[11] Today, although the Dominican Republic is a democratic country, the effects of past political struggles and economic inequality still shape migration patterns and opportunities for its people.[12]

Economic Opportunities, Jobs, and Living Conditions

Economic conditions have played a significant role in migration from both Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. While both places offer strong family networks and beautiful natural environments, many residents have also faced economic challenges. In Puerto Rico, employment opportunities have historically been tied to agriculture, government services, and tourism, to name a few. Economic declines, government debt crises, natural disasters, and rising costs of living have contributed to migration to the mainland United States in search of educational and employment opportunities.

In the Dominican Republic, jobs in tourism, agriculture, construction, and service industries provide employment for many residents. However, economic inequality and limited opportunities in some regions have encouraged migration to the United States. For many families, migration has been viewed to improve economic stability, educational opportunities, and overall quality of life.[13]

Students will examine how economic opportunities and living conditions influence migration decisions and help explain why families sometimes leave their homeland to pursue better opportunities.

Race, Identity, and Community

The histories of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic have been shaped by the blending of Indigenous, African, and European cultures. Both societies reflect the legacies of colonization and slavery. Students will investigate how race and identity have shaped social experiences and community development throughout Caribbean history.

At the same time, students will explore how communities have shown resilience in their unique cultures as they face discrimination and inequality. Puerto Rican and Dominican communities are closely connected to their heritage and family traditions. Learning about these stories helps students appreciate the value of identity.[14]

Migration and Identity

Migration serves as a central theme in this unit because movement has played a major role in shaping Puerto Rican and Dominican communities in the United States. Researchers have noted that migration is often influenced by a combination of political, economic, social, and environmental factors rather than a single cause.[15] Students will investigate push and pull factors, migration routes, and personal migration stories through oral histories and demographic data.

Migration from Puerto Rico to cities like New York increased significantly during the twentieth century as families looked for jobs and educational opportunities. Dominican migration increased in the latter half of the century, driven by the pursuit of political stability and economic opportunities. Today, both communities remain influential in shaping neighborhoods, economies, and cultural scenes across the United States.[16]

Culture, Adaptation, and Preservation

A central concept of this unit is that culture is simultaneously preserved and transformed over time. Students will investigate how Puerto Rican and Dominican communities keep strong ties to their heritage while adapting to new environments. Traditions related to language, food, music, dance, religion, and family celebrations continue to link communities to their histories, even as they evolve to reflect new experiences.[17]

For example, Puerto Rican and Dominican migrants helped shape neighborhoods such as East Harlem and Washington Heights in New York City, where Caribbean traditions blended with urban American life. Musical styles such as salsa, bachata, and merengue gained new audiences, while community festivals, restaurants, cultural organizations, and family businesses helped preserve ties to the Caribbean.[18] Using oral histories, photographs, literature, and artifacts, students will analyze how these communities preserve their identities while contributing to American culture.

Unit Sequence:

Days 1-3: Building Background Through *Esperanza Rising* Excerpt Reading

Before examining the migration experiences of Puerto Rican and Dominican communities, students must first develop an understanding of immigration, adaptation, identity, and belonging. Immigration serves as an important foundation for the unit because it introduces students to the human experiences behind migration

and helps them understand how movement can affect individuals, families, and communities over time.

Using Pam Muñoz Ryan's *Esperanza Rising*, students will explore the journey of a young girl who leaves Mexico and immigrates to California. Through Esperanza's experiences, students will examine how migration can influence opportunities, relationships, culture, and identity. Key vocabulary throughout this section includes migration, immigration, immigrant, identity, culture, belonging, community, adaptation, resilience, and tradition. As students analyze Esperanza's story, they will make connections between historical and contemporary migration experiences while reflecting on how family, culture, and community help people navigate change.

Day 1: Why Do People Move? Geography Focus: Movement and Human Migration

- Supporting Question: *Why do people leave one place and move to another?*

Students begin by reading an excerpt from "Los Higos (Figs)"[19], which introduces Esperanza's departure from Mexico and her journey toward California. Students participate in a Think-Pair-Share activity and analyze online artifacts and photographs of migration experiences to explore why people relocate and the emotions associated with leaving home. Through discussion, students identify push and pull factors and consider how moving can affect a person's sense of identity, security, and belonging.

Learning Objective: Students will define migration and immigration, identify push and pull factors, explain reasons people migrate, and connect migration stories to their own experiences.

Lesson Outcome: Students can explain why people migrate and identify factors that influence movement.

Check for Understanding: Cool Down Reflection Question: *Why do people migrate?*

Guiding Reflection Questions

- How does immigration shape a person's identity and sense of belonging?
- What connections can I draw between Esperanza's experiences and those of people in my own family, community, or culture?
- How do family, culture, and traditions help people adapt to change?

Day 2: Adapting to a New Place Geography Focus: Human Adaptation and Settlement

- Supporting Question: *How do people adapt when they arrive in a new place?*

Students read a selected excerpt from "Las Guayabas (Guavas)"[20] that highlights Esperanza's arrival in California and her initial experiences in a migrant-worker camp. Through class discussion and a T-chart activity, students examine the challenges and opportunities that accompany migration while exploring how family, community, and support systems help people adapt to unfamiliar environments. Students also consider how changes in social status, language, and surroundings influence a person's identity and sense of belonging.

Learning Objective: Students will analyze challenges immigrants experience, explain adaptation and belonging, identify community support systems, and evaluate how migration impacts relationships.

Lesson Outcome: Students can explain how people adapt while maintaining important aspects of their

identity.

Check for Understanding: Quick Write: *How did Esperanza adapt to her new life?*

Guiding Reflection Questions

- How does immigration shape a person's identity and sense of belonging?
- What connections can I draw between Esperanza's experiences and those of people in my own family, community, or culture?
- How do family, culture, and traditions help people adapt to change?

Day 3: Immigration and Identity Geography Focus: Migration and Identity

- Supporting Question: *How can migration change a person's identity and sense of belonging?*

Students revisit key moments from both excerpts and discuss how Esperanza's experiences shape her identity. They analyze how family, culture, and traditions help people maintain a sense of belonging during times of change and reflect on Esperanza's resilience as she adapts to her new life while preserving important aspects of her heritage.

To demonstrate their understanding, students will complete an Immigration Journey One-Pager. In this mini-project, students will create a visual summary of Esperanza's experience by developing a timeline of five to seven key events and incorporating symbols representing migration, culture, and identity. Students will use vocabulary from the unit and write an explanation of how migration affected Esperanza's life. They will conclude by reflecting on how Esperanza's experiences connect to the lives of migrants today.

Learning Objective: Students will examine the impact of migration on identity, organize information chronologically, use textual evidence, and reflect on resilience and belonging.

Lesson Outcome: Students can describe how migration influences identity and belonging.

Check for Understanding: Immigration Journey One-Pager

To demonstrate understanding, students will complete an *Immigration Journey One-Pager* mini-project. In this mini-project, students will create a visual summary of Esperanza's experience. They will create a timeline of 5-7 important events, with symbols that represent Esperanza's journey to America. The timeline should depict her culture and identity, connecting her to her roots in Mexico and America. Students will also write an explanation of how the events on their timeline connect to the effects of immigration on Esperanza's life and conclude by explaining how Esperanza's experiences connect to people's lives today.

Puerto Rico Case Study

Day 4: Puerto Rico Geography (Geography Focus: Place and Human-Environment Interaction)

- Supporting Question: How does Puerto Rico's geography influence the way people live?

On Day 4, Geography and Place, students will explore how geography influences the way people live, work, and interact with their environment through an in-depth study of Puerto Rico. Students begin by locating Puerto Rico on a map and examining its position in the Caribbean. Using maps, atlases, satellite imagery, and

Google Earth[21], students investigate Puerto Rico's climate, landforms, natural resources, and major cities. As they analyze geographic features, students discuss how factors such as location, weather patterns, and access to resources influence settlement patterns, transportation, economic opportunities, and daily life. Throughout the lesson, students examine the relationship between people and their environment while considering how geography contributes to culture and identity. To demonstrate their learning, students create a **Puerto Rico Geography Profile** that highlights key geographic features and explains how geography shapes life on the island.

Students will identify Puerto Rico on a map, analyze its geographic features, explain how geography influences settlement patterns, and examine the relationships between people and their environment.

Lesson Outcome: Students can explain how geography influences culture, opportunities, and daily life.

Check for Understanding: To demonstrate student learning, students will create a *Puerto Rico Geography Profile*, a one-page visual summary that highlights the island's key geographic features and explains how geography influences daily life. Students will include a labeled map of Puerto Rico, important landforms and bodies of water, climate information, major cities, and natural resources. They will also explain how geography affects where people live, work, travel, and interact with their environment.

Students will answer the cool down questions in 3-5 sentences:

- How does Puerto Rico's geography influence the culture, opportunities, and daily lives of the people who live there?

*The Geography Profile will serve as a reference for future lessons as students connect Puerto Rico's geography to migration patterns, culture, and identity.

Resources: National Geographic Kids: *Puerto Rico*; Britannica School; Library of Congress Maps Collection; Google Earth.

Day 5: Puerto Rican Migration to the United States (Geography Focus: Migration and Human Movement)

- Supporting Question: Why have Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States?

On Day 5, Puerto Rican Migration to the United States, students explore the migration experiences of Puerto Rican communities and examine why people move from one place to another. Students read selected excerpts from Chapter 10, "Dreams of a Better Life," and Chapter 11, "Angels on the Ceiling," from *When I Was Puerto Rican* by Esmeralda Santiago.[22] These excerpts highlight the hopes, challenges, and adjustments that come with moving to a new place while maintaining connections to family, culture, and home. Students also analyze oral histories from Puerto Rican migrants[23] and identify the push and pull factors that influenced migration from Puerto Rico to the mainland United States. Through maps, timelines, and discussion, students investigate how migration affects opportunities, relationships, identity, and belonging. To demonstrate their learning, students create a Migration Timeline and Reflection that traces a migrant's journey and explains how migration shapes a person's life and sense of community.

Students will analyze migration narratives, identify migration routes, examine push and pull factors, and explain how migration influences identity.

Lesson Outcome: Students can explain how migration influences identity, family, and community.

Check for Understanding: *Migration Timeline and Reflection*

Students will create a visual “Migration Timeline” highlighting key events in Esmerelda’s migration from Puerto Rico. The timeline should include important locations before and after migration

Reasons for migration

- Challenges and opportunities experienced along the way
- Significant events that shaped the migrant's experience
- A brief reflection explaining how migration influenced identity and belonging

Students will answer the cool down questions in 3-5 sentences:

- *How does migration influence a person's identity, family, and sense of belonging?*

Resources:

- *When I Was Puerto Rican* by Esmeralda Santiago (Chapter 10: "Dreams of a Better Life" and Chapter 11: "Angels on the Ceiling")
- Puerto Rican Diaspora Oral History Project
- PBS *Latino Americans*
- Migration maps of Puerto Rico and the United States

Day 6: Puerto Rican Culture and Identity (Geography Focus: Culture and Cultural Diffusion)

- Supporting Question: How has Puerto Rican culture been preserved and transformed in the United States?

On Day 6, Puerto Rican Culture and Identity, students explore how Puerto Rican culture has been preserved and transformed in New York City and other Puerto Rican communities throughout the United States. Through a cultural gallery walk[24], students examine photographs, music, food, language, celebrations, and community stories that highlight Puerto Rican traditions both on the island and in neighborhoods such as El Barrio (East Harlem) in New York City. Students discuss how cultural practices are passed down through generations while adapting to life in a new environment. As they move through each station, students gather evidence about how culture helps people maintain a sense of identity and belonging after migration. To demonstrate their learning, students complete a *Culture and Identity Comparison Chart* that compares life and cultural traditions in Puerto Rico and New York.

Students will identify important Puerto Rican cultural traditions, analyze how traditions are preserved over time, explain how culture adapts in a new environment, and compare cultural practices in Puerto Rico and New York City.

Lesson Outcome: Students can explain how culture changes while remaining connected to heritage.

Check for Understanding: *Culture and Identity Comparison Chart*

Students will compare:

- Music and dance traditions

- Food and family celebrations
- Language and communication
- Community traditions in Puerto Rico and New York
- Similarities and differences between life on the island and life in New York City

Resources

- Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino
- Puerto Rican community interviews from New York City
- Cultural photographs from Puerto Rico and New York
- Bomba, Plena, and Salsa music resources
- PBS *Latino Americans* segments on Puerto Rican migration to New York
- Puerto Rican Diaspora Oral History Project[25]

Students will answer the cool down questions in 3-5 sentences:

- *How do Puerto Ricans maintain their culture while adapting to life in New York?*

Dominican Republic Case Study

Day 7: Dominican Republic Geography (Geography Focus: Place and Human-Environment Interaction)

- Supporting Question: How does the geography of the Dominican Republic influence culture and daily life?

On Day 8, Dominican Migration to the United States, students examine the migration experiences of Dominican communities and investigate the factors that have influenced movement from the Dominican Republic to the United States. Students read selected excerpts from the last chapter of *Before We Were Free* by Julia Alvarez, which focuses on Anita's family's experiences living under the Trujillo dictatorship and the difficult decisions they faced as they sought safety, freedom, and new opportunities. These excerpts help students understand how political conditions, fear, and hopes for a better future influenced migration decisions.

Students also analyze Dominican oral histories that provide real-life accounts of migration experiences. Using migration maps, oral histories, and U.S. Census data, students explore the political, economic, educational, and family-related factors that encouraged migration. Through discussion and source analysis, students identify push and pull factors, trace migration routes, and consider how migration can affect identity, opportunity, family relationships, and belonging.

Students will analyze migration narratives, examine oral histories, identify push and pull factors, and explain migration patterns from the Dominican Republic to the United States.

Lesson Outcome: Students can explain how migration affects individuals, families, and communities.

Check for Understanding: *Migration Route Map and Push-Pull Factor Analysis*

Students will create a map that traces migration from the Dominican Republic to the United States and includes:

- Major locations along the migration journey
- Push factors that encouraged people to leave
- Pull factors that attracted people to the United States
- Evidence from oral histories and migration narratives

Students will conclude by responding to the question:

How do migration experiences shape a person's opportunities, identity, and sense of belonging?

Lesson Guiding Questions:

- What factors encouraged families to leave the Dominican Republic?
- Which reasons were push factors and which were pull factors?
- How might migration affect family relationships and community connections?
- In what ways does migration shape a person's identity and sense of belonging?
- How are Dominican migration experiences like and different from Puerto Rican migration experiences?

Resources

- *Before We Were Free* by Julia Alvarez (selected excerpts describing Anita's family under the Trujillo dictatorship and their hopes for freedom and opportunity)
- Dominican Migration Oral Histories[26]
- PBS *Latino Americans*
- S. Census Migration Data
- Migration maps of the Dominican Republic and the United States

Day 9: Dominican Culture and Identity (Geography Focus: Culture and Cultural Diffusion)

Supporting Question: How do Dominican communities maintain cultural traditions while adapting to life in the United States?

On Day 9, Dominican Culture and Identity, students explore how Dominican communities have preserved cultural traditions while adapting to life in the United States. Through a cultural gallery walk, students examine photographs, music, dance, food, baseball traditions, oral histories, and community stories that highlight Dominican culture both in the Dominican Republic and in communities throughout the United States. As students move through each station, they gather evidence about how cultural traditions are maintained across generations and how they evolve in response to new environments.

Students also compare Dominican and Puerto Rican experiences, identifying similarities and differences in migration patterns, cultural traditions, family life, language, music, and community connections. By revisiting what they learned throughout the unit, students begin synthesizing their understanding of how geography, migration, and culture influence identity and belonging.

Students will identify important Dominican cultural traditions, analyze how culture is preserved and adapted after migration, compare Puerto Rican and Dominican experiences, and synthesize learning from the unit.

Lesson Outcome: Students can explain how migration contributes to both cultural preservation and cultural change.

Check for Understanding: *Puerto Rican and Dominican Culture Comparison Chart*

Students will compare:

- Music and dance traditions
- Food and family celebrations
- Language and communication
- Community traditions
- Similarities and differences between Puerto Rican and Dominican experiences in the United States

Students will conclude by responding to the question: *How do Dominican and Puerto Rican communities preserve their culture while adapting to life in the United States?*

Resources

- Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino[27]
- Community interviews
- Oral histories
- Cultural photographs
- Dominican and Puerto Rican music and cultural resources

Day 10-11: Culminating Performance Task- “Passport to the Caribbean”

- Compelling Question: How do geography, migration, and culture shape the identities of Puerto Rican and Dominican communities in the United States?

Throughout the unit, students have explored the geography, migration stories, and cultural traditions of Puerto Rican and Dominican communities. Now, students will become geographers and cultural storytellers as they create a project that demonstrates how geography, migration, and culture influence identity and belonging. Using maps, oral histories, literature, photographs, and primary sources, students will answer the compelling question and share what they have learned about Caribbean communities in motion.

Students Will:

- Choose their project option
- Develop a claim that answers the compelling question.
- Compare Puerto Rican and Dominican migration experiences.
- Analyze how geography influences migration and culture.
- Use evidence from multiple sources to support their ideas.
- Explain how identity is shaped by migration, family, culture, and community.
- Present their learning in a creative and engaging format.

Choose Your Project....

Option 1: Caribbean Culture Museum

Become museum curators and create an exhibit titled "Passport to the Caribbean."

Your exhibit should include:

- Maps of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic
- Migration timelines
- Push and pull factors
- Cultural traditions, celebrations, music, and food
- Photographs and primary sources
- Explanations of how migration shaped identity and belonging

Bonus: Create artifact labels and interactive displays for visitors.

Option 3: Digital Story Map Adventure

Become travel guides and create a digital story map that follows migration journeys from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic to the United States.

Your story map should include:

- Geographic origins
- Migration routes
- Settlement patterns
- Cultural traditions
- Community contributions
- Identity development
- Images, captions, and explanatory text

Option 2: Caribbean News Report

Become journalists and create a video news report or digital presentation.

News Report Question: "How have Puerto Rican and Dominican communities shaped culture and identity in the United States?"

Your report should include:

- Migration stories
- Oral histories or interviews
- Maps and visuals
- Cultural contributions
- Evidence from unit sources
- Bonus: Record the project as a live news broadcast.

Option 4: Migration Suitcase Project

Imagine you are migrating from Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic to the United States.

Create a suitcase that includes:

- Five important items you would bring
- A map of your migration journey
- Push and pull factors
- Cultural traditions you want to preserve
- An explanation of how each item represents your identity

Bonus: Decorate the suitcase with symbols, images, and artifacts that represent your culture.

Day 12: Time to Present and Reflect- Passport to the Caribbean: Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic Student Project Checklist[28]

Use this checklist to make sure your project is complete before submitting.

Criteria	Yes	Not Yet
I included a claim that answers the compelling question.	☐	☐
I explained the geography of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.	☐	☐
I included migration routes.	☐	☐
I explained push and pull factors.	☐	☐
I used evidence from at least one anchor text.	☐	☐
I included at least two primary sources.	☐	☐
I included at least two secondary sources.	☐	☐
I described important cultural traditions.	☐	☐
I explained community contributions in the United States.	☐	☐
I compared Puerto Rican and Dominican experiences.	☐	☐
I explained how migration influences identity and belonging.	☐	☐
I included visuals (maps, images, artifacts, timelines, or graphics).	☐	☐
I included a Chicago-style bibliography.	☐	☐
My project is neat, organized, and easy to understand.	☐	☐

Project Rubric

Criteria	4 - Exceeds Expectations	3 - Meets Expectations	2 - Approaching Expectations	1 - Beginning
Claim & Compelling Question	Clear, insightful claim fully answers the compelling question.	Clear claim answers the compelling question.	Claim partially answers the question.	Claim is missing or unclear.
Geography	Thorough explanation of both locations and how geography influences life.	Accurate explanation of geography and its impact.	Limited explanation of geography.	Little or no explanation of geography.
Migration & Push-Pull Factors	Detailed explanation of migration routes and factors using strong evidence.	Explains migration routes and push-pull factors with evidence.	Some explanation but limited evidence.	Missing or inaccurate information.
Use of Sources	Uses anchor text, 2+ primary sources, and 2+ secondary sources effectively.	Meets source requirements.	Missing one required source type.	Missing multiple source requirements.
Culture & Community	Thorough explanation of traditions and community contributions.	Explains cultural traditions and contributions.	Limited explanation of culture.	Little or no cultural information included.
Comparison	Insightful comparison of Puerto Rican and Dominican experiences.	Clear comparison of both groups.	Basic comparison with few details.	Comparison is missing.
Identity & belonging	Strong analysis of how migration shape's identity and belonging.	Explains how migration influences identity.	Limited explanation.	Little or no explanation provided.
Presentation & Creativity	Highly engaging, creative, and visually appealing.	Organized and visually appealing.	Some organization and visuals.	Difficult to follow or incomplete.
Bibliography	Complete and correctly formatted Chicago-style bibliography.	Bibliography included with minor errors.	Bibliography incomplete.	Bibliography missing.

Total Points: ____ / 36

Reflection Component: Letter Home

After completing your project, write a Letter Home from the perspective of a Puerto Rican or Dominican migrant.

Prompt: Imagine you have recently migrated from Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic to the United States. Write a letter home to a family member or friend describing your journey and your new life. Explain why you left, what challenges and opportunities you have experienced, what you miss about home, and how your culture helps you stay connected to your family and community. Use evidence from the unit to explain how geography, migration, and culture have shaped your identity and sense of belonging.

Appendix on Implementing Academic Standards

The following standards are from the District of Columbia Public Schools. They address the subjects under the

heading of 6th grade World Geography, 6th grade ELA, and 6th grade Social-Emotional and Academic Development.

Given the integration focus of this unit, I have incorporated a few standards from each subject area the classes will cover, including ELA (Reading and Writing), Social Studies, and Social-Emotional Learning.

1. Social Studies

6.2 Analyze how the environment and physical geography shape human behaviors and identities.

6.37 Analyze the reasons for and consequences of the migration of people within, from, and/or to one region or country in South America and the Caribbean over time and assess the impact of migration on the region.

6.52 Analyze the reasons for and consequences of migration of people within, from, and/or to one region or country within North America over time and assess the impact of migration on the region.

6.6 Evaluate the strengths and limitations of different geographic tools, data sets, and primary sources for understanding the lived experiences of individuals in different parts of the world.

2. ELA

RL.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone

W.6.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

3. Social-emotional Academic Development

SL.6.4 Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Annotated Bibliography

Alvarez, Julia. *Before We Were Free*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. Historical novel from the perspective of a young Dominican girl that provides powerful insight into life under Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship and the factors that influenced Dominican migration.

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