



GeoCivics Lesson: *Evaluating US Democracy*

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Teacher(s): Parag Bhuva	Unit Title: Imperialism and US Territories Lesson Title: Evaluating US Democracy	Grade Level: 11/12 Grade
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Notes: This is lesson 2 of 3 lessons focused on Imperialism and U.S. Territories.

Pre-existing Knowledge: Students should have already learned about Manifest Destiny and Westward expansion. They should also understand the greater context of the 19th Century, namely the imperialization by industrialized nations around the world (Western Europe, Japan, USA, and Russia). Students would benefit from understanding the ways that Indigenous societies resisted Westward Expansion and Manifest Destiny and created spaces of autonomy for themselves. This will help students to understand the interactions between the US and its colonial subjects in the early 1900s. Finally, the hook for this class assumes that at least one student would be able to identify Pearl Harbor as the reason for the US' entry into WWII from popular culture. In a chronological class, students will not have learned about WWII until after this unit on Imperialism. Students will also have learned from the previous lesson in this sequence about US imperialism and the relationship between the US and its territories in the past.

Overview of Content:

Democracy is a system of government in which laws, policies, leadership, and major undertakings of a state or other polity are directly or indirectly decided by the “people,” a group historically constituted by only a minority of the population...but generally understood since the mid-20th century to include all...adult citizens. The hallmark of democracy is that it permits citizens to participate in making laws and public policies by regularly choosing their leaders and by voting in assemblies or referenda. If their participation is to be meaningful and effective—if the democracy is to be real and not a sham—citizens must understand their own interests, know the relevant facts, and have the ability to critically evaluate political arguments. Each of those things presupposes education. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

[education.https://www.britannica.com/question/What-is-democracy](https://www.britannica.com/question/What-is-democracy)

One of the legacies of imperialism today is the relationship between the US and its territories. The territories currently do not have representation on a federal level, so while they are self-governing, they have little voice on federal policies that impact them.

Purpose: Students will learn the meaning of a democracy and how the principle of democracy can be translated into a governmental structure. They will learn about the concept of a representative democracy. Students will evaluate the extent to which the US can be called a representative democracy given its relationship to its territories. It is important that students know how institutions are formed, what controls and influences them, how they control and influence individuals and culture, and how institutions can be maintained or changed.

National & State Social Studies Standard(s):

National Social Studies Standards:

- Common Core State Standards- History/Social Studies Grades 9-10: D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

National Social Studies Standards- Themes:

- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: Institutions are the formal and informal political, economic, and social organizations that help us carry out, organize, and manage our daily affairs. It is important that students know how institutions are formed, what controls and influences them, how they control and influence individuals and culture, and how institutions can be maintained or changed.
- Power, Authority, and Governance: The development of civic competence requires an understanding of the foundations of political thought, and the historical development of various structures of power, authority, and governance. It also requires knowledge of the evolving functions of these structures in contemporary U.S. society, as well as in other parts of the world.

D.C. Social Studies Standards

- US2.34: Assess the modern political, social, and economic impacts of American imperialism on different territories and governments (e.g., the Philippines, Marshall Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa).

National & State Geography Standard(s):

National Geographic Geography

- Standard 6: The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

D.C. Geography Standards: N/A

ELA Standards:

6-12 Literacy Standards in History/Social Studies:

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

ISTE Teacher and/or Student Standard:

Student:

- Students communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively by creating or using a variety of digital objects such as visualizations, models, or simulations.

Language Functions:

- **Comparing & Contrasting:** Students use language to describe similarities and differences in objects or ideas.
- **Analyzing:** Students use language to separate whole into parts, identify relationships and patterns.
- **Justifying & Persuading:** Students use language to give reasons for an action, decision, point of view, convince others.

Culturally Responsive Lesson Strategies:

- **Higher Order Thinking:** This lesson creates many opportunities for higher-order applications and creative thinking, in several ways as originated from the students.
- **Voice:** This lesson allows places for students to work together cooperatively or share their learning experiences, strengths, backgrounds, interests, and needs with the instructor and each other.
- **Differentiation:** The lesson's assignment provides several different opportunities for individual learners to express their learning in various ways.

Objective(s):

- Students will be able to describe the Insular Acts
- Students will be able to identify and explain political, economic and social impacts of statehood/independence for the various US territories and DC
- Students will evaluate the impact of the Insular Acts on the concept of US Democracy

SIOP

	SIOP Elements	
Preparation Adapting content Linking to background Linking to past learning Strategies used	Scaffolding Modeling Guided practice Independent practice Comprehensible input	Grouping Option Whole class Small groups Partners Independent
Integrating Processes Reading Writing Speaking Listening	Application Hands-On Meaningful Linked to objectives Promotes engagement	Assessment Individual Group Written Oral

Evidence of Mastery (Measurable):

Formative: Students will use the video *American Empire by CGP Grey* to complete a graphic organizer on the various rights of territories and their abilities to self-govern. They will turn in their completed graphic organizers for the teacher to use as a formative assessment.

Summative: Students will write a paragraph response answering the question: Given political resistance to statehood amongst the federal government, identify three challenges to a lack of representation and propose a way to address each. The teacher will use the Paragraph Response Rubric below to evaluate students' responses to the question, with a score of 3 or higher demonstrating mastery.

Paragraph Response Rubric

Exceeds Expectations	Student demonstrates an understanding of three challenges to a lack of representation and writes a detailed proposition to address each.	4
Meets Expectations	Student demonstrates an understanding of three challenges to a lack of representation and writes a brief proposition to address each.	3
Approaches Expectations	Student demonstrates an understanding of two challenges to a lack of representation and writes a proposition to address each.	2
Fails to Meet Expectations	Student demonstrates an understanding of zero to one challenge to a lack of representation and writes a proposition to address it.	0 - 1

Key vocabulary:

- **Unincorporated territory:** A territory in which [fundamental](#) rights of the Constitution apply, but not all such as voting representation in the federal government.
- **Incorporated territory:** A territory in which all rights of the Constitution apply
- **Organized Territory:** A territory that has a local self-government
- **Unorganized Territory:** A territory that does not have a local self-government
- **Insular Acts:** A series of US Supreme Court cases dating back to the early 1900s that

Materials:

- Google Slides: *US Territories and Governance:* (Link in Sources)
- Student notebooks for writing down their responses to questions.
- Video: CGP Grey's - *American Empire:* (Located on Slide #3 of Google Slides: *US Territories and Governance* - --Link in Sources)
- Laptops for each student or for each pair of students
- Online NPR Article: *Supreme Court declines to consider challenge to racist citizenship laws* (Link in Sources)

addressed the rights under the US Constitution of people living in US colonies (territories)

- Student access to computers/laptops to read an online article and conduct research.
- Online Article: *U.S. Territorial Citizenship Today* (Link in Sources)
- Copies of US Territorial Rights Graphic Organizer - one per student (in Lesson Materials Document)
- Paragraph Response Rubric (above in lesson plan)

Sources:

- Google Slides: US Territories and Governance: [US Territories and Governance](#)
- Video: CGP Grey's - *American Empire*: [American Empire](#)
- Online NPR Article; *Supreme Court declines to consider challenge to racist citizenship laws*: [Supreme Court declines to consider challenge to racist citizenship laws : NPR](#)

Engage

Teacher Will:

(NOTE) Support ELLs/SPED and Gifted students by strategically grouping them to provide language and/or learning support as needed.

1. Show the class Slide #1 of [Google Slides- US Territories and Governance](#), and have students write down their answer to the question presented on the slide in their notebooks: Do Now Question: The United States grew from 13 states to the present number of 50. What criteria do you think was used to determine if an area should become a state? Name at least three.
2. As a whole class, debrief on the Do Now question, and then ask students to write down their response to the questions: What is the importance of a democracy in world history?, and What are the advantages of living in one? and have students Think/Pair/Share their answers with the person next to them.
3. Show Slide #2 shows population patterns of US territories/states. Ask students: What are two patterns you notice?, and What

Students Will:

1. Students will view the slide presented by the teacher and write their answers to the Do Now question in their notebooks, which relies upon previous knowledge of a general definition of a democracy and the advantages of living in one.

(Grouping: Independent and/or Partners) (Preparation: Linking to Background/Linking to Past learning) (Integrating Processes: Listening/ Reading/ Writing)

2. Share their answers to the Do Now Question with the class, and then write their answers to the next questions asked in their notebooks. Students will then share with the person next to them their responses to the questions and share out their partner's responses to the class.

(Grouping; Whole class/Partners) (Preparation: Linking to Background) (Integrating Processes: Listening/Speaking/ Reading/Writing)

questions do you have about them? and have them write down their answers in their notebooks again

4. Debrief as a class by having students share out their answers and show the slide #2 again directing students' attention to the population size of Puerto Rico and D.C. - two areas that are not states but have larger population sizes than several states in the US.

(NOTE): Many students in the Do Now question activity may have named population size as a factor in statehood. Ask students to consider why these areas of land (D.C. and Puerto Rico) are not states when they have larger populations than several states.

5. Show Slide #3 and play the [CGP Grey's Video on American Empire](#) (located on slide #3) and have students write down their answer to the question: Identify three ways in which US territories differ from US States.
6. The teacher will then introduce the lesson vocabulary words to the class, writing them on the board: **Unincorporated territory; Incorporated territory; Organized Territory; Unorganized Territory;** and discussing with students the meaning of each one and have students connect the words to what they viewed and heard in the video just watched.

3. View and study Slide #2, using it to identify two patterns in populations of U.S. territories/states, and write down in their notebooks the two patterns they notice and also any questions they have about them.

(Grouping: Independent and/or Partners)

(Application: Promotes engagement)

4. Engage with the class in discussing the patterns observed on Slide #2 and reflect on how the population size of Puerto Rico and DC compare to other US states. Students will then reflect on why these areas of land are not states and share out their thoughts..

(Grouping: Whole class) (Integrating Processes: Listening/Speaking) (Application: Promotes engagement/Meaningful)

5. Watch the [video: American Empire](#) and identify three ways in which US territories differ from US States, and write these down in their notebooks.

(Grouping: Independent/Partners) (Integrating Processes: Listening/Writing)

6. Listen and read the vocabulary words presented by the teacher, and engage in a class discussion of each word's meaning and how it connects to what they viewed and heard in the video watched.

(Grouping: Whole class) (Integrating Processes: Reading/Listening/Speaking)

Explore

Teacher Will:

IQ: What are the challenges to granting federal voting rights to US citizens in the territories?

1. Introduce Inquiry Question #1 to the class, and tell students to reflect on it as they read the [NPR article](#) "Supreme Court declines to consider challenge to racist citizenship laws"

(NOTE) The teacher will partner ELLs/SPED students as needed to provide language and/or

Students Will:

1. Reflect on Inquiry Question #1 presented by the teacher, and then students will read the NPR article "Supreme Court declines to consider challenge to racist citizenship laws" using their computers/laptops.

reading support in reading and discussing the article.

2. After reading, introduce the lesson vocabulary word: **Insular acts**, writing it on the board and having students share what they have learned about it from the article they just read, and then engage the students in a discussion of the article content asking, “What does it mean to hold “birthright citizenship” and “What are the advantages of having such a right?” and have the students write down their answers to these questions in their notebooks. Then engage the class in a discussion explaining what they learned about this from the article read.
3. Ask students to search online for the challenges of granting federal voting rights to US citizens in the territories and DC today. The teacher can provide students with a link to an article that could be used in their research: [US Territorial Citizenship Today - Four Interpretations: \(linked here\)](#). and then have students work independently or with a partner if needed to conduct their research.

(Scaffolding: Guided Practice)

(Grouping: Whole class/Independent or Partners if needed) (Integrating Processes: Listening/ Reading)

2. View the vocabulary word written on the board and engage in class discussion about the meaning of the word and what they learned about when reading the article. Then reflect on the content of what they read in the article and write down their answers to the questions asked about what birthright citizenship means and the advantages of having such a right. Then engage in a class discussion of what they learned from the article.

(Grouping: Whole Class/Independent or Partners if needed) (Integrating Processes: Listening/ Speaking Reading/Writing) (Application: Meaningful/Promotes engagement)

3. Conduct research about the challenges for granting federal voting rights to US citizens in the territories and DC today, and write down the information they find in their notebooks.

(Grouping: Independent or Partners if needed) (Integrating Processes: Listening/Reading/ Writing) (Application: Hands-on /Meaningful /Promotes engagement)

Explain - Formative Assessment

Teacher Will:

1. After conducting their research, pass out copies and have students complete the [US Territorial Rights Graphic Organizer](#) (in Lesson Materials Document) where they are to record information about the similarities and differences across various territories and D.C. using knowledge they have researched and any new research done. Students will then turn in their completed Graphic Organizer and the teacher will use them as formative assessment of student learning.

Student Will:

1. Students will complete their copies of the US Territorial Rights Graphic Organizer using the information they have recorded and learned from their research and if needed, can conduct more research in order to complete the graphic organizer and then turn it in to the teacher for assessment.

(Assessment: Individual or Partners/Written)

Elaborate

Teacher Will:

IQ #2: *How do the challenges of granting federal voting rights compare and contrast for different territories and D.C.?*

1. Introduce Inquiry Question #2 to the class and tell students that they will select one territory and conduct research to find and record three challenges that would prevent the territory from gaining more rights. The teacher will write down a list of territories on the board and have students choose the one they will do research on, making sure that at least one student will research each territory. The teacher will then provide time for students to conduct their research and record the information they find in their notebooks, and will provide partner support or other teacher support for students who may need it.
2. When done, the teacher will have each student share out the 3 challenges they have found for the territory they researched and write these on the board and then the class will engage in a discussion comparing and contrasting the challenges of each territory listed.

Student Will:

1. Students will choose one territory from the list on the board that they will do research on to learn about three challenges that the territory faces that prevents it from gaining more rights, and will record the information they find in their notebooks.

**(Grouping: Independent or Partners if needed)
(Integrating Processes: Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing) (Application: Hands-on/
Meaningful/Promotes engagement)**

2. Share out and write on the board the 3 challenges they found for the territory they researched and then engage in a class discussion of comparing and contrasting the challenges of each territory researched.

**(Grouping: Whole Class/Independent)
(Integrating Processes: Listening/Speaking/
Reading/Writing) (Application: Meaningful/
Promotes engagement)**

Evaluate - Summative Assessment

Teacher Will:

1. Instruct the students to synthesize their research by writing a paragraph proposal identifying one major challenge the territory faces for gaining more rights and proposing what they believe the territory can do to address that challenge.
2. Before students begin their writing, the teacher will present to the class the Paragraph Proposal Rubric (found in the

Student Will:

- 1 & 2. Write a paragraph identifying one major challenge the territory faces for gaining more rights and propose what the territory can do to address that challenge, based on what they have learned from their research, and use the Rubric shown by the teacher as a guide for writing the proposal.

lesson plan above), highlighting the criteria that will be used to grade their proposal, and then have students work to write out their paragraph proposals using their research notes. When done the teacher will collect students' paragraphs and use the Paragraph Proposal Rubric to assess students' learning with a score of 3 or higher indicating mastery.

(Assessment: Individual/Written)

Extensions: For an extension activity, students can share the challenges they identified and the proposal that they created.