

## **Cuba: Pre-Travel Learning**

Our travels through Cuba will be enriched by a thorough understanding of Cuban history, culture, and political transformations. Read Cuba: A History by Sergio Guerra Vilaboy & Oscar Loyola Vega. Please answer the Essential Questions in complete sentences. Chapter Summary Challenge questions may be assigned by your lead teacher as extended writing.

### **Chapter 1: Original Inhabitants to Slave Plantations:**

- In what way does the early history of Cuba's indigenous people compare to the early Native American experience of the U.S. colonial period?
- What were the main industries and products upon which Spanish settlers built their fortunes in Cuba during the late 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries?
- Explain the introduction and expansion of slavery during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. How is it connected to the State monopoly and plantation systems of production?
- How could nationalist Cubans justify independence from Spain while maintaining slavery?
- Chapter Summary Challenge: Imagine you are an 18<sup>th</sup> century slave-owning Cuban who wishes to assert Cuban independence from Spain and yet maintain the plantation slave system. Make an argument which advances your nationalist cause for independence from imperial domination while contradicting the abolitionist freedom movement.

### **Chapter 2: The Wars of Independence:**

- How did the United States influence Cuba's shift towards capitalism in the late 1800s?
- Who was Jose Marti? How did he contribute to destabilizing Spanish control of Cuba?
- The War of 1895 had significant consequences for the United States' role in Cuba. Why did the United States enter the fight between Cuba and Spain?
- What did Maximo Gomez (Commander in Chief of the "Mambi" army) mean when he said that Cuba was neither "free nor independent" after the war?
- What were the terms of the Platt Amendment?

- Chapter Summary Challenge: Describe the Latin and North American respective reactions to Cuba's independence movement from Spain. How did each region view the idea of an independent Cuba?

### **Chapter 3: Republic and Sovereignty**

- In what ways did Cuba's sugar economy create unstable dependencies upon U.S. markets?
- What were the goals of the Cuban resistance movement in the 1920's and 1930's?
- Who was Fulgencio Batista? How did he position himself in the 1930's power struggle in Cuba and during World War II?
- What was the U.S. response to the 1933 instability in Cuba?
- Chapter Summary Challenge: Make an argument that U.S. support of Fulgencio Batista was a reasonable application of the FDR's "Good Neighbor Policy."

### **Chapter 4: Prelude to Revolution**

- In what ways did Batista influence Cuba's political future through the Constitutional Assembly? How did Batista become a dictator?
- Who were the leaders of the 1940's and 1950's resistance movement? What were their strategies?
- What is the significance of July 26, 1953?
- What happened to Fidel Castro after the Moncada incident?
- How was the Moncada failure replaced with success in 1959?
- What were the main highlights of the Revolution?
- Chapter Summary Challenge: Read Fidel Castro's *Historia Me Absolvera* (History Will Absolve Me) (1956). Read Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter From Birmingham Jail* (1963). Compare and contrast the two primary sources authored from prison. In what ways are they making the same arguments for social justice?

### **Chapter 5: Revolutionary Government**

- How did Cuba transition to Socialism under the leadership of Fidel Castro?
- What was the U.S response to the shift to socialist leadership and ideology in Cuba?
- Discuss the Cold War relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union.
- What was the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1960?
- What was the Bay of Pigs incident planned by the Eisenhower regime, and executed under JFK's watch?
- What was the Cuban Missile Crisis?
- Chapter Summary Challenge: Assess the actions of the Castro, Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations in 1959-61. Do you agree with their policies? Explain.

### **Chapter 6: From Institutionalization to the Special Period and Beyond**

- How did the U.S. embargo take shape over the course of eleven U.S. Presidential administrations?
- What was "The Special Period During a Time of Peace?"
- What was the Elian Gonzalez ordeal? Explain how Elian became a symbol for people on both sides of the Florida straits.
- What was the significance of the "Cuban Five?"
- What events inspired the gradual normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba?
- Chapter Summary Challenge: Long after the Cold War was over, the U.S. treated Cuba as an enemy nation in the Western hemisphere. In your well-substantiated opinion, why did the U.S. maintain an adversarial posture against Cuba for 60 years?