

Cuban Inspiration: Background for *The Old Man and the Sea*

1. Question & Research Task

By the time Ernest Hemingway settled in Cuba in 1939, he was already a well-traveled man. While in Cuba from 1939 to 1960, Hemingway enjoyed fishing extensively on his boat, *Pilar*, as well as writing, including his Pulitzer Prize-winning work *The Old Man and the Sea*. Hemingway loved Cuba so much that he may have never left for Idaho in 1960, had it not been for deteriorating U.S./Cuban relations at the time.

In this Slam Dunk, you will explore several resources describing Cuba and Hemingway's Cuban experience. Through analysis of these resources, you will be able to answer the inquiry question below.



Your teacher will show or provide access to the video linked above, a tour of Ernest Hemingway's home in Cuba, Finca Vigía, meaning "lookout farm."

Image Source: YouTube

How did Cuban society and culture impact the writing of *The Old Man and the Sea*?

2. Information Sources

You will choose several of the information sources linked here to complete the Student Activity on Slide 3.

- [Pre-Castro Cuba](#)
- [Before the Revolution](#)
- [Hemingway, Castro & Cuba](#)
- [Hemingway's Cuba](#)
- [The Real Old Man and the Sea](#)
- [Hemingway in Cuba](#)
- [Baseball in the 1940s](#)



Hemingway's fishing boat, *Pilar*.

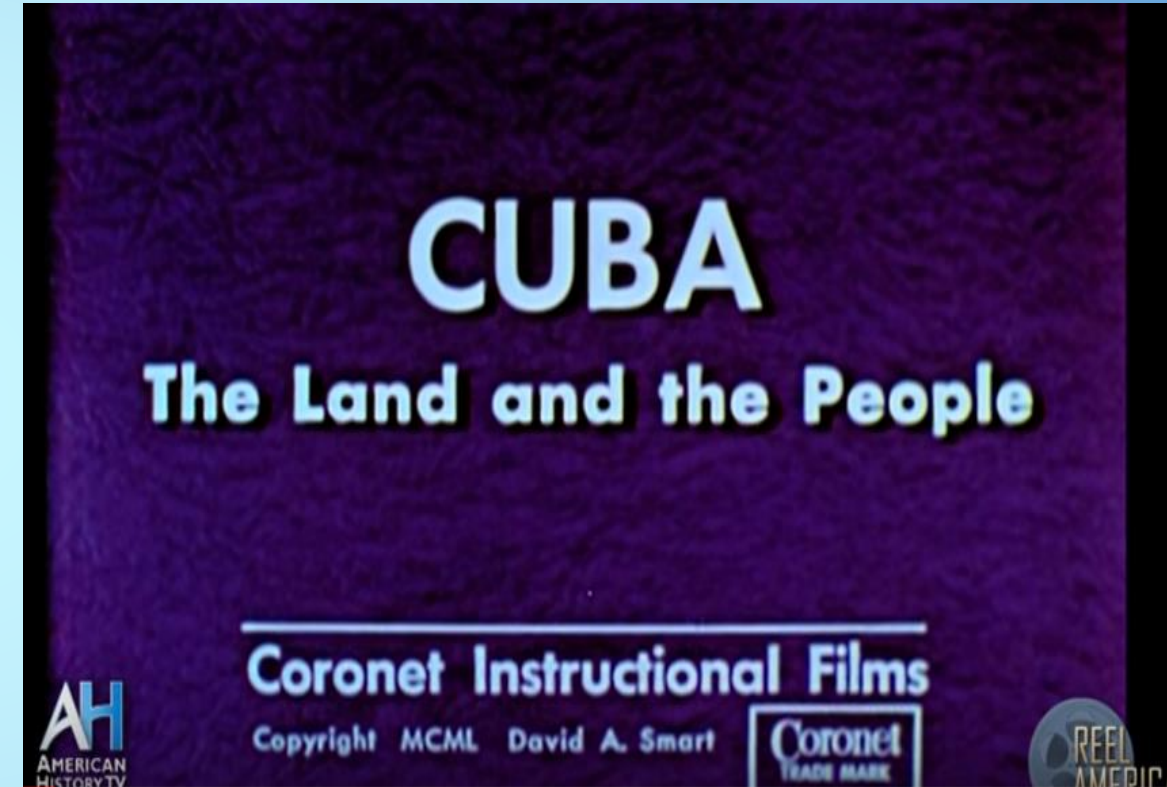
Image Source: Wikimedia Commons

3. Student Activity

Use the information sources on Slide 2 to complete the [inquiry chart](#).

For each resource, analyze these topics which will inform your assessment on the Slide 4.

1. Inspiration for *The Old Man and the Sea*
2. Fishing/Food & Cuisine/Sports
3. U.S. Tourism/Relations
4. Hemingway's Life in Cuba



Your teacher will show or provide access to this short informational video from the 1950s about Cuba.

4. Assessment Activity

How did Cuban society and culture impact the writing of *The Old Man and the Sea*?

Now that you have read and analyzed resources describing life in Cuba during Hemingway's time there, you can create a postcard from the perspective of someone in Hemingway's village. While you will not include all the information you discovered, you should allow your new learning to inspire your thinking and creation. Be sure to include details about baseball, fishing, food/cuisine, and U.S. tourism, relations, and increasing tensions leading up to the Cuban Revolution, as well as a visually appealing postcard image or illustration.

You can use create your postcard using **Google Slides** or another technology tool or paper and pen/markers.

Use the [postcard rubric](#) to guide your creation.



Postcard for tourism from Cuba in 1950.

Image Source: Jim Heimann Collection/Getty Images

5. Enrichment Activities



Because Cuba was under a U.S. embargo for more than 50 years, much of Cuba's infrastructure is completely frozen in time. PBS outlines how Cuba is roughly much the same as it was when Hemingway lived there in this article, [Cuba: A Place Frozen in Time Yet Full of Potential](#).

Your Assignment:

Imagine a world in which Cuba never experienced its Castro Revolution and consequent loss of U.S. relations and support. How might Cuba be different today? What would it look like? What about U.S. tourism? Describe this alternate reality and create an opposing postcard to contrast with the first postcard you made.

Cuba is located just 90 miles south of Florida.

6. Teacher Resources

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
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Learning Standards Alignment

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

Reading: 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading: 6. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Writing: 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners - Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by:

I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:

I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:

I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:

I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

Grade 9 English: Unit 1 – The Hero’s Journey

Objective: Students will analyze information from multiple sources in order to synthesize their learning into the creation of a postcard.

Time Frame: 1 90-minute class period

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Have students use learning supports provided in BCPS Digital Content found in the [Apps Portal](#). Refer to [Digital Content Snapshot/Support pages](#) as needed.

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- Provide students with login information as needed to authenticate BCPS Digital Content. Login information is on the **BCPS Digital Content** page in the [Apps Portal](#)
- Consider assigning organizers to students as a OneDrive Assignment using the [Schoolology Assignment App](#).
- For the YouTube videos on Slide 1 & 3, the teacher/librarian may screen videos for the class or can provide student access via VoiceThread. See: [BCPS Guide to VoiceThread Integration with Schoolology](#)