

# PIER Summer Institutes 2014 Lesson Plan for Classroom Teachers

Based on the SEED Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Effective Teaching

**Title of Lesson:** Perspectives on American Involvement in the Civil War in El Salvador.

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**Subject Areas:** History

**Grade Level:** 11<sup>th</sup> grade

**Time Frame to Allow for Lesson:** Double-block (110 minutes)

## **Introduction:**

During the 1970s and 1980s there was a civil war in El Salvador. The U.S. government provided political, economic and military support to the government as it sought to defeat the Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN). U.S. President Ronald Reagan portrayed the struggle as the El Salvadoran government defending itself against a communist-inspired and Soviet-funded insurgency.

Students will look at the history of U.S. involvement in El Salvador during the 1970s and 1980s. Their examination will consist of various readings from different perspectives on this topic. Readings and other sources will discuss U.S. military and economic support for the El Salvadoran government, especially under the Reagan administration (1981-1989). Group work will consist of choosing texts to examine, discussing the texts, and presenting group findings to the class as a whole.

## **Geographic Connections:** Related to Global Cultural Themes

D2.Div.2.9-12 Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.

- Students will examine the Reagan administration's policies with regard to El Salvador.
- Students will examine opposition to U.S. policy in El Salvador.
- Students will examine how such opposition evolved over time and how it manifested itself (via interviews, protests and other means).

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

- Students will analyze how the role of communism and ideology shaped the Reagan administration's view of El Salvador and its portrayal of America's support for the government.

## **Vocabulary:** Terms, Concepts and Actors

- President Ronald Reagan
- Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)
- El Salvadoran President José Napoleón Duarte
- Communism
- Guerilla warfare

**Content Standards:** Identify one or two *specific* Common Core content standards this lesson is designed to help students attain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

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- Students will be exposed to texts from various viewpoints, including those of the U.S. government, opposition figures in the U.S. and in El Salvador.
- Students will discuss these texts in small groups and then report back from their small groups to the class as a whole. There will be an opportunity for a question and answer session so that students can critique and support various positions using the texts they have examined.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

- Through independent reading and then discussions in small groups, students will work on ascertaining the central point of the texts examined.

**Essential Question:** To what extent and for what reasons did the United States influence the civil war in El Salvador?

**Literacy through the Content Area:** Collaborative interpretation and critical thinking of texts and supporting with evidence

**Placement of Lesson within Broader Curriculum/Context:** This lesson is part of a thematic unit on U.S. imperialism beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and continuing to the present. Prior to this lesson, students will look at the war with Mexico in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish American War and subsequent occupation of the Philippines, as well as various U.S. invasions of Central American and Caribbean countries in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, including involvement in the coup in Guatemala in the 1953 and the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

This lesson will fall near the end of the unit as it will be asking students to take a critical look at the impact of U.S. actions in Central America. The goal is to provide specific details of U.S. involvement in El Salvador, as an example of U.S. actions in many countries in the region.

The impact of this lesson will be to have students look critically at U.S. actions in foreign policy and the U.S. government's justifications for those actions.

**Learner Background:** This lesson is prepared for an 11<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. history class. By this time, students will have completed a chronological study of U.S. history from early settlement through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Students will have done multiple short and more extensive research projects involving the use of contrasting perspectives, including primary source materials, and they will be comfortable taking a position on key issues and supporting their opinions with relevant research.

**Objectives for Lesson:** *Students will be able to:*

- Offer a nuanced reading of different perspectives on U.S. involvement in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s.
- Identify bias and perspective in readings and analyze the extent to which these color the arguments they examine.
- Draw and analyze cause-effect connections between historical actions and present events.

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## Integration of 21st century skills:

- Students will be asked to defend their opinion on policy decisions made by the American government in the 1980s, placing themselves in the role of those responsible for creating and implementing American policy. This involves much more than simply saying that this or that policy is the “right” one; it requires that students empathize with the myriad factors administration policy makers had to engage with.
- Students will have to work together in groups, offering contrasting opinions and supporting their ideas while interacting respectfully and productively with their peers.

## Assessments:

*Summative Assessment:* Students will present their findings and arguments in support of the position they take. Assessment will involve written comments on each student’s performance during each aspect of the lesson. Additionally, students will complete a self-reflection.

*Formative Assessment:* Written comments and self-reflection.

**Materials/Resources:** See appendix at the end of this lesson (including video clips and handouts).

**Lesson Development/Instructional Strategies** (This is the step-by-step part of your lesson. Think about following a recipe – what happens first? Where are the transitions? etc.)

Identify the instructional grouping/s (whole class, small groups, pairs, individuals) you will use in each lesson segment and approximate time frames for each.

1. *Students will have done the textbook reading on the Reagan administration which provides a very brief overview of the 1980s and U.S. involvement in Central America. The textbook provides particular focus on Nicaragua, the Contras and the Iran-Contra controversy. They will also have read Allen Wells essay on Latin America in the Cold War (listed below).*
2. *I will provide a brief background as to why we are focusing in class on El Salvador. I will explain that El Salvador to some extent provides a more nuanced aspect of U.S. policy. With regard to Nicaragua, the Reagan administration was “caught” in the Iran-Contra controversy and there were hearings in Congress. Administration figures were punished for their actions, although Reagan himself avoided any serious consequences. I would like the students to avoid the Congressional and political issues relating to Nicaragua and focus on El Salvador, which was more of a “forgotten” war [in the U.S. that is], although the U.S. played a major role.*
3. *After a brief introduction on the history of the country and its civil war during the 1970s and 1980s, students will be divided into four groups. (10 minutes)*
4. *Since class size is roughly 14, there will be 4 groups of either three or four students. As a group, students will choose three or four texts to examine. They will then have roughly 30 minutes to examine the texts, either individually or as a group. This phase will involve mostly quiet reading/listening and note-taking, as students interact with the texts, noting the main idea(s), key supporting arguments, bias/viewpoint, and other relevant information. (30 minutes)*

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*Note: I have listed some possible texts at the end of the document. I am using a broad definition of text to include films and other media.*

5. *Students will then have another 20 minutes to discuss the texts within their group. (20 minutes)*  
*Questions to Consider:*
  - a. *What is the viewpoint of the text?*
  - b. *What types of bias exist in the text?*
  - c. *What light does the text shine upon the issue of U.S. involvement in El Salvador?*
  - d. *Does it help to determine blame/causation for the events in El Salvador?*
  - e. *How does the text portray U.S. motivations with regard to its actions in El Salvador?*
6. *After a short break, students will return to prepare a brief (3-5 minute) presentation of their readings and the group's reactions/conclusions to them. The purpose of this is to share the content as well as the group's ideas on these texts. (15 minutes preparation; 20 minutes for presentations)*
7. *Finally, after all groups have presented, there will be 15 minutes for an overall discussion on U.S. involvement in the civil war in El Salvador. This will be facilitated by the teacher, but should consist of students interacting with each other, responding to one another's points, or asking questions to further clarify points from the readings. (15 minutes)*
8. *For homework, students will write a self-assessment, consisting of what they learned, their own position on U.S. involvement in the civil war in El Salvador and an honest appraisal of their own performance. This will be due at the beginning of the next class.*

Describe what instructional strategies you will use, and the learning activities in which students will be engaged in order to gain the key knowledge and skills identified in the student learning objective(s). This may also include a description of how you will initiate (set expectations for learning and purpose) and close (understanding the purpose) the lesson.

### **Students Needing Differentiated Instruction:**

*In my classroom, the biggest challenge is generally English Language Learners as we have many non-native speakers. Generally, I have found that by encouraging these students to work in groups with other native speakers, most of the questions are resolved.*

How will you differentiate instruction in this lesson for students you may anticipate struggling with the content/learning objectives?

*I may subtly encourage students who I know struggle to choose an easier reading.*

How will you provide opportunities for enrichment/higher level of challenge for students?

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*Conversely, I may encourage these students to choose may challenging texts. I will also spend time with each group, and may push these students to go beyond the more superficial conclusions.*

The following is a preliminary list of texts for groups to choose from. Teachers may wish to add or subtract other texts.

1. Asange, Julian. *U.S. Special Forces counterinsurgency manual analysis*, WikiLeaks. Oct. 8, 2008. [https://wikileaks.org/wiki/US\\_Special\\_Forces\\_counterinsurgency\\_manual\\_analysis](https://wikileaks.org/wiki/US_Special_Forces_counterinsurgency_manual_analysis).
2. *El Salvador: Another War Falls out of Fashion*, The Economist Intelligence Unit. Jan. 11, 1992. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/224165410?accountid=12304>.
3. *El Salvador's Turmoil, U.S. Presence is Potent*, New York Times, Jul 8, 1981, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/424147703?accountid=12304>.
4. *El Salvador's 9-to-5 War*. New York Times, March 9, 1983. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/424585724?accountid=12304>.
5. Godsell, Geoffrey. *Reagan Uses El Salvador to test Kremlin . . . before Soviets test him*. The Christian Science Monitor. March 2, 1981.
6. Goshko, John M., *Reagan Administration Accused of Lies*, Washington Post Digital. March 17, 1993. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/307612257?accountid=12304>.
7. *In the Name of the People: El Salvador's Civil War*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHO-WiiZba0>.
8. Mason, T. David, *The civil war in El Salvador: A retrospective analysis*. Latin American Research Review; 1999; 34, 3; ProQuest Research Library pp 179.
9. PBS Interview with former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador (<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/elsalvador2>).
10. President Reagan: Address on Central America, April 27, 1983 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_aCYBF5rIY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_aCYBF5rIY).
11. Schwartz, Benjamin. *Dirty Hands*. Atlantic Monthly, December 1998. <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/98dec/elsalv.htm>.
12. Shaw, Jonathan Imber. *Evil Empires: Blood Meridian, War in El Salvador, and the Burdens of Omniscience*. Southern Literary Journal: Spring 2008, 40, 2 ProQuest Research Library, pp 207.
13. Sullivan, Kevin and Jordan, Mary. *In Central America, Reagan Remains A Polarizing Figure*. Washington Post Foreign Service. Thursday, June 10, 2004; Page A08.
14. *Truth slips out about U.S. involvement*. National Catholic Reporter. Nov. 17, 2000. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/215318783?accountid=12304>.
15. Wells, Allen. *Latin America during the Cold War*. Primary Source. <http://resources.primarysource.org/content.php?pid=86804&sid=645699>
16. *12 Years of Tortured Truth on El Salvador; U.S. Declarations During War Undercut by U.N. Commission Report*. Washington Post. March 21, 1993. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/307604544?accountid=12304>.

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17. *1000 Protest Role of U.S. in El Salvador*. Washington Post, 1988,  
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/307076824?accountid=12304>.