**Alec T. Smith**

**U.S. History**

**Sixth Grade**

**The Creation of the Panama Canal**

**Three Class Periods**

**Essential Question:** The United States was instrumental in the Panamanian people revolting against the country of Columbia. Due to the intervention of the U.S., Panama declared itself an independent country from Columbia. Did the U.S. really care about helping the people of Panama create their own country, or did the U.S. only care about the economic and financial gain in building the Panama Canal?

**WV CSOs:**

**SS.6-8.L.7**

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, photographs, or maps)

**SS.6.G.2**

Compare and contrast historical maps and identify the changes in political boundaries as a result of conflicts

**SS.6.G.5**

Locate the major waterways of North America and South America, and examine their impact on transportation and trade

**SS.6.H.CL6.2**

Describe the role geopolitics played in historical events

Objectives:

 1. The United States built the Panama Canal in the early 1900s.

 2. The Panama Canal linked the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

 3. Theodore Roosevelt changed U.S. policy toward Latin America.

The Panama Canal is one of the most extraordinary engineering achievements of the 20th Century. Today, 13,000 ships pass through the canal every year. In the beginning of the 20th Century, the country of Colombia controlled the Isthmus of Panama (the site where the Panama Canal would be built). As History.com stated, “When a proposed treaty over rights to build in what was then a Colombian territory was rejected, the U.S. threw its military weight behind a Panamanian independence movement, eventually negotiating a deal with the new government in 1903 that gave them rights in perpetuity to the canal zone”(2015). Once Panama became its own nation, free from Colombian rule, the United States held control of the Canal Zone. As History.com mentioned, “In 1964, Panamanians rioted after being prevented from flying their nation’s flag next to a U.S. flag in the Canal Zone. In the aftermath of the violence, Panama temporarily broke off diplomatic relations with the U.S.”(2015). Eventually, the United States transferred control of the canal to Panama in 1999.

The teacher will show a short video titled *Deconstructing the Panama* *Canal* which will take a few minutes:

<http://www.history.com/topics/panama-canal/videos/deconstructing-history-panama-canal?m=528e394da93ae&s=undefined&f=1&free=false>

After the video, the teacher will give students western hemisphere map showcasing the Panama Canal. **There will a detailed map attached to this lesson plan.** **The following is an example map.** The purpose of this assignment is to show how the Panama Canal revolutionized the shipping business around the world. As History.com mentioned, “The Panama Canal proved a vital component to expanding global trade routes in the 20th century” (2015). The Panama Canal affected the shipping transportation of goods by shortening the trip from many U.S. ports to Europe, Asia, and Africa; the canal also led to increased exports of agricultural and manufactured goods.



**Part I: Using Maps Assignment**

1. To help students understand the scale of the map on their handout, they will use the mileage legend provided on their worksheet.
2. Ask them to place the edge of a paper below the mileage legend for the Panama map. Have them copy the mileage marks for 10 and 20 miles, and move the paper to the left, copying the markers again, creating an extended measuring tool of 100 miles. Ask them to measure the length of the Panama Canal from Colon to Panama City.
3. Next, have students copy and extend the mileage legend for the map of the Americas. Have them use their extended scale to measure the distance from San Francisco to New York City by land.
4. Have students use the correct mileage legend to measure the distance from their town to the Panama Canal. This assignment will be due the next class period.

**Part II: Construction of the Panama Canal**

A construction project of this magnitude faced many problems from the beginning. As History.com states, “The canal builders had to contend with a variety of obstacles, including challenging terrain, hot, humid weather, heavy rainfall and rampant tropical diseases” (2015). Mosquito-carrying diseases such as malaria and yellow fever were the first problem to solve in the canal construction. As History.com mentions, “”Chief sanitary officer Dr. William Gorgas assisted in wiping out yellow fever and mosquitoes, fumigated homes and cleansed pools of water”(2015). In addition, engineer Lt. Colonel Goethals oversaw the addition of facilities to improve the quality of life for workers and families.

Another obstacle was the mountain range that had to be removed from the Canal Zone. The Culebra Cut needed 6,000 workers in order to remove the mountain range. Accidental deaths from landslides and dynamite explosions were associated with this project. As History.com states, “Altogether, some 3.4 million cubic meters of concrete went into building the locks, and nearly 240 million cubic yards of rock and dirt were excavated during the American construction phase. Of the 56,000 workers employed between 1904 and 1913, roughly 5,600 were reported killed” (2015). Even though the construction of the Panama Canal cost more than $350 million, annual shipping savings from the East coast to the West coast was over $32 million. In 10 years, the United States made their money back from the shipping savings alone.

**Job Poster Assignment:**

**Materials:** colored construction paper

1. Ask students to imagine that they work for the company overseeing the construction of the Panama Canal, which needs thousands of construction workers. Students will prepare posters to attract workers to apply for construction jobs.
2. Discuss the characteristics needed for each job and how to show that on a poster.
3. Tell students to sketch their ideas on notebook paper first. Instruct students to use large lettering and bright colors to attract attention, a description of job responsibilities, where the job is located, and the excitement of being part of the famous project.
4. Display posters, and if time permits, conduct a classroom “job fair” in which students take turns viewing each other’s work.

**Conclusion:**

The United States under Theodore Roosevelt liberated the country of Panama solely for personal gain. I don’t think T.R. really cared about the Panamanian people being independent from Colombia. The U.S. was unable to get the rights to the Isthmus of Panama while the land was under control of Colombia. So the creation of the country of Panama was the only way the U.S. could get access to build the Panama Canal.

However, the selfish interests of the U.S. led to one of the most amazing building achievements of the 20th Century. The creation of the Panama Canal revolutionized the sailing and shipping industry, and had a positive effect around the world. No longer did ships have to sail around the entire continent of South America in order to reach the West coast of North America, and East Asia. Eventually, the country of Panama gained control of the Canal Zone.

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| **Making A Poster : Panama Canal Jobs**Teacher Name: **Mr. Smith** Student Name:     \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

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| CATEGORY | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **Use of Class Time** | Used time well during each class period. Focused on getting the project done. Never distracted others. | Used time well during each class period. Usually focused on getting the project done and never distracted others. | Used some of the time well during each class period. There was some focus on getting the project done but occasionally distracted others. | Did not use class time to focus on the project OR often distracted others. |
| **Graphics - Originality** | Several of the graphics used on the poster reflect a exceptional degree of student creativity in their creation and/or display. | One or two of the graphics used on the poster reflect student creativity in their creation and/or display. | The graphics are made by the student, but are based on the designs or ideas of others. | No graphics made by the student are included. |
| **Graphics - Relevance** | All graphics are related to the topic and make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation. | All graphics are related to the topic and most make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation. | All graphics relate to the topic. Most borrowed graphics have a source citation. | Graphics do not relate to the topic OR several borrowed graphics do not have a source citation. |
| **Attractiveness** | The poster is exceptionally attractive in terms of design, layout, and neatness. | The poster is attractive in terms of design, layout and neatness. | The poster is acceptably attractive though it may be a bit messy. | The poster is distractingly messy or very poorly designed. It is not attractive. |
| **Grammar** | There are no grammatical mistakes on the poster. | There is 1 grammatical mistake on the poster. | There are 2 grammatical mistakes on the poster. | There are more than 2 grammatical mistakes on the poster. |
| **Mechanics** | Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the poster. | There is 1 error in capitalization or punctuation. | There are 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation. | There are more than 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation. |

**Bibliography:**

History.com Staff. Panama Canal. A&E Networks, 2015.

 <http://www.history.com/topics/panama-canal>

**Pictures used:**

<https://image.slidesharecdn.com/latinamerica-physicalgeography-141117205850-conversion-gate01/95/physical-geography-of-latin-america-15-638.jpg?cb=1416301219>

[file:///C:/Users/Alec%20T/Desktop/U.S.%20History%20Civil%20War%20to%20Present/data/unit07/chap22/mtrans4.pdf](file:///C%3A/Users/Alec%20T/Desktop/U.S.%20History%20Civil%20War%20to%20Present/data/unit07/chap22/mtrans4.pdf)