**The Way to Venezuela Lesson Plan**

**From the New York Times**

**Overview of Lesson Plan:** In this lesson, students will investigate various facets of Venezuelan culture, politics, history and current events to develop an introductory chapter of a guidebook to the country. They then speculate on how the recent ousting and reinstatement of President Hugo Chávez might affect the information provided in their guidebook introduction.

**Author(s):**  
Annissa Hambouz, The New York Times Learning Network  
Yasmin Chin Eisenhauer, The Bank Street College of Education in New York City

**Suggested Time Allowance:** 1 hour

**Objectives:**  
Students will:   
1. Consider both legal and illegal procedures by which elected officials are removed from office; speculate on how the removal of a leader impacts a country.   
2. Discuss and analyze the political unrest in Venezuela following the ousting and reinstatement of President Hugo Chávez by reading and discussing “In Speech to Venezuelans, Chávez Changes Tone.”   
3. Investigate in groups the culture, economy, geography, political history, religious practices, relationships with the United States, and current events of Venezuela.   
4. Create a class-wide introductory chapter to a guidebook on Venezuela for the current year based on group research; assess how the recent events surrounding the presidency in Venezuela might impact the topics explored in the book.

**Resources / Materials:**  
-student journals  
-pens/pencils  
-paper  
-classroom board  
-copies of “In Speech to Venezuelans, Chávez Changes Tone” (one per student)   
-a minimum of seven introductory chapters to travel guides from various countries or regions other than Venezuela or Latin America to use as examples in the main activity (the Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, and Let’s Go! series all provide comprehensive introductory chapters and are accessible to younger students)   
-resource materials with current and historical information on Venezuela (periodicals, computers with Internet access, global history and geography texts, encyclopedias, and other reference books)

**Activities / Procedures:**  
1. WARM-UP/DO-NOW: Students respond to the following questions, written on the board prior to class: “How might an elected official be removed from office, in your country and in other countries? Which of these methods are legal, and which are illegal? What examples can you think of in which this change of power happened, and what were some of the causes and results? What would you do if the leader of your country were suddenly ousted from his or her position? How do you think this would affect your country?” Allow students to share responses briefly. This is a good opportunity to review terms such as “impeachment,” “vote of no confidence,” “depose,” “oust,” “abdicate,” “coup” and “putsch” with students.  
2. As a class, read and discuss the article “In Speech to Venezuelans, Chávez Changes Tone,” focusing on the following questions:   
a. What happened to Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in the week in which this article was written?   
b. How did his style of speech change after regaining power?   
c. Who are most of Chávez’s critics, and why?   
d. What were some of Mr. Chávez’s political goals when he was elected in 1998?   
e. How has he criticized the Venezuelan elite in the past?   
f. How has he referred to the Catholic Church in the past?   
g. How does he refer to both groups now?   
h. What position did the United States take regarding Chávez’s ousting, according to the article?   
i. Who is Pedro Carmona Estanga?   
j. Who was killed in the protests that led to Mr. Chávez’s removal from office, according to the article?   
k. Who was responsible for those deaths?   
l. What role does the Petroleos de Venezuela Company play in the recent events?   
m. Who have lost their jobs or been arrested since Mr. Chávez’s return to office?   
n. What does Chávez mean when he refers to the uprising leaders as “oligarchs”?  
3. Divide students into seven small groups. Explain that they will be creating an introductory chapter for a current travel guidebook on Venezuela for American travelers. Assign each group one of the following chapter subcategories: “Culture and Ethnicity,” “Economy,” “Geography and Climate,” “Political History,” “Religion and The Church,” “Relationship with the United States,” and “Recent Developments.” Give each group the introductory chapter of a guidebook to examine and use as models for their subsections of the chapter. Each group should brainstorm different topics within their assigned subcategory to address through research. Then, using all available classroom resources, each group thoroughly researches their topic. Remind the “Recent Developments” group that their research should cover changes and events in Venezuela over the last several months and should be reported in as non-biased and general a style as possible. Students should also find photographs and maps to illustrate their chapter subsections.  
4. WRAP-UP/HOMEWORK: Once groups complete their research, each compiles their work into one page for the class’s comprehensive typed “introductory chapter.” Photocopy enough copies of the completed chapter for all students. Students then respond to the following question in their journals, written on the board for easier student access: “Think about the recent overthrow and reinstatement of President Chávez. How do you think these events might affect each of the categories covered in the class’s travel guide chapter? Write a two to four sentence response to each of the categories.” Student should share their responses in a future class and follow the developments in Venezuela to see how further changes might continue to affect the cultural, social, and political landscape there. You may wish to create an amended travel guide chapter one month or more after creating the original book to reflect the changes that have occurred since the “first publication.”

**Further Questions for Discussion:**  
–How much did you know about Venezuela before this project?   
–Based on your research, do you think you would like to visit Venezuela if you had the opportunity? Why or why not?   
–How much do you think Venezuela’s political crisis was influenced by outside trade interests, and why?   
–Do you think the ousting of President Chávez would have had a different outcome if a majority, rather than an elite minority, had sought to remove him from office? Why or why not?   
–If you could write a travel guide about any country or region in the world, where would it be and why?

**Evaluation / Assessment:**  
Students will be evaluated based on initial journal response, participation in class and small group discussions, group research and written contributions to the Venezuela travel guide introductory chapter, and written speculation on how the recent events with President Chávez might impact different aspects of the country.

**Vocabulary:**  
oust, reconciliation, generated, popular, discontent, generated, anguished, grievances, dissident, subversives, paratrooper, intervene, polarized, dialogue, vestments, populist, riled, quell, reunification, autonomous, pillar, deride, oligarchs, allegiance, skittish

**Extension Activities:**  
1. One of the most famous historical figures born in Venezuela was Simon Bolivar, credited with helping to break Latin America away from Spanish colonial powers. Write a mini-biography or create a documentary of this man, known as “The Liberator.”  
2. Known as “coup d’etat” in French and “putsch” in German, the notion of overthrowing the government has had a long history throughout the world. Make a timeline of “Coups of the Past 100 Years,” and note key figures, events, and outcomes. Illustrate with photographic evidence.  
3. In the article, President Chávez compares the Venezuelan elite to conservative Cuban-Americans by calling them “‘subversives’ who should move to Miami.” Research the Miami Cuban community and compare this population to the influential Venezuelan upper classes. Is this an apt comparison? Write an editorial piece responding to the Chávez quotation.

**Interdisciplinary Connections:**  
American History- Did the United States live up to the anti-imperialist message of the Monroe Doctrine in Latin America? Research United States involvement in Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Guatemala and Honduras in the first three decades of the twentieth century, and write a persuasive essay to address this question. How might historical ties between the United States and Latin America affect relations today?  
Economics- Make a map of the world’s top ten oil-producing countries, and then list each country’s GNP, average income, and level of unemployment. What do your statistics demonstrate?  
Media Studies- Presidential polls tend to change when a country is in crisis. Track the United States presidential approval ratings over the past twelve months, as reported in the media. Then, poll your friends, family, and neighbors to compare findings.

**Other Information on the Web:**  
U.S. Library of Congress Country Study – Venezuela ([//lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/vetoc.html](https://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/vetoc.html)) is a good starting point for learning about the country. The site includes a country profile and sections on geography, history, society, economy, and government.  
Political Database of the Americas: Venezuela ([//cfdev.georgetown.edu/pdba/Countries/countries.cfm?ID=35](https://cfdev.georgetown.edu/pdba/Countries/countries.cfm?ID=35)) from Georgetown University includes information about the constitution, the electoral system and election results, office holders and appointees, political parties, and more.  
**Related Times Article**  
[Bush Officials Met With Venezuelans Who Ousted Leader (4/16/02)](https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/16/international/americas/16DIPL.html)

**Academic Content Standards:**  
Grades 6-8  
World History Standard 44- Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world. Benchmarks: Understands influences on economic development around the world; Understands instances of political conflict and terrorism in modern society; Understands the emergence of a global culture; Understands the motivations, moral imperatives, and goals of specific separatist movements around the globe and the potential impact on the affected populations   
(CTSS – ‘social’, ‘6-8’, ‘wh10’)   
Geography Standard 17- Understands how geography is used to interpret the past. Benchmarks: Knows how physical and human geographic factors have influenced major historic events and movements; Knows historic and current conflicts and competition regarding the use and allocation of resources; Knows the ways in which the spatial organization of society changes over time; Knows significant physical features that have influenced historical events  
(CTSS – ‘social’, ‘6-8’, ‘geo6’)   
Historical Understanding Standard 1- Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns. Benchmarks: Knows how to construct and interpret multiple tier time lines; Understands patterns of change and continuity in the historical succession of related events  
(CTSS – ‘social’, ‘6-8’, ‘hu1’)   
Historical Understanding Standard 2- Understands the historical perspective. Benchmarks: Understands that specific individuals and the values those individuals held had an impact on history; Analyzes the influence specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history; Analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history   
(CTSS – ‘social’, ‘6-8’, ‘hu2’)   
Language Arts Standard 1-Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process. Benchmarks: Uses a variety of prewriting strategies; Uses a variety of strategies to draft and revise written work; Evaluates own and others’ writing; Uses style and structure appropriate for specific audiences and purposes; Writes persuasive compositions  
(CTSS – ‘english’, ‘6-8’, ‘1’)   
Language Arts Standard 7- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational texts. Benchmarks: Applies reading skills and strategies to a variety of informational texts; Knows the defining characteristics of a variety of informational texts; Identifies techniques used to convey viewpoint (e.g., word choice, language structure, context)   
(CTSS – ‘english’, ‘6-8’, ‘7’)  
Grades 9-12   
World History Standard 44- Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world. Benchmarks: Understands rates of economic development and the emergence of different economic systems around the globe; Understands the role of political ideology, religion, and ethnicity in shaping modern governments; Understands the role of ethnicity, cultural identity, and religious beliefs in shaping economic and political conflicts across the globe; Understands how global political change has altered the world economy  
(CTSS – ‘social’, ‘9-12’, ‘wh10’)   
Geography Standard 17- Understands how geography is used to interpret the past. Benchmarks: Understands how the processes of spatial change have affected history; Understands how people’s changing perceptions of geographic features have led to changes in human societies; Understands the ways in which physical and human features have influenced the evolution of significant historic events and movements  
(CTSS – ‘social’, ‘9-12’, ‘geo6’)   
Historical Understanding Standard 1- Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns. Benchmark: Understands historical continuity and change related to a particular development or theme  
(CTSS – ‘social’, ‘9-12’, ‘hu1’)   
Historical Understanding Standard 2- Understands the historical perspective. Benchmarks: Analyzes the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history; Analyzes the influences specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history and specifies how events might have been different in the absence of those ideas and beliefs; Analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history and studies how things might have been different in the absence of those decisions; Understands that the consequences of human intentions are influenced by the means of carrying them out   
(CTSS – ‘social’, ‘9-12’, ‘hu2’)   
Language Arts Standard 1-Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process. Benchmarks: Uses a variety of prewriting strategies; Uses a variety of strategies to draft and revise written work; Evaluates own and others’ writing; Writes compositions that are focused for different audiences; Writes compositions that fulfill different purposes; Writes persuasive compositions that evaluate, interpret, and speculate about problems/solutions and causes and effects; Writes descriptive compositions  
(CTSS – ‘english’, ‘9-12’, ‘1’)   
Language Arts Standard 7- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational texts. Benchmarks: Applies reading skills and strategies to a variety of informational texts; Knows the defining characteristics of a variety of informational texts; Determines the effectiveness of techniques used to convey viewpoint  
(CTSS – ‘english’, ‘9-12’, ‘7’)

*This lesson plan may be used to address the academic standards listed above. These standards are drawn from Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education; 3rd and 4th Editions and have been provided courtesy of the*[*Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning*](https://www.mcrel.org/)*in Aurora, Colorado.*