

Puerto Rico Government Fact Sheet

From 1493 until 1898, Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony. In 1898, during the course of the Spanish American War, the island was invaded by the United States. The invasion began on July 25, 1898, and was completed by the end of August that same year. The Treaty of Paris in 1898 officially gave Puerto Rico to the United States. A period of military rule thus began. During this time, the United States dollar became the official currency, the US Postal System was extended to the island, and Puerto Ricans were granted the First Amendment rights of freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly. This military rule lasted until 1900.

On April 2, 1900, Congress passed the Foraker Act which created a civil government in Puerto Rico. This government consisted of a governor and executive council (both appointed by the US President), and an elected one-house legislature. Spanish and English were made the official languages. A judicial branch was created consisting of federal and local courts. Puerto Ricans also began electing a Resident Commissioner. The Resident Commissioner may speak on behalf of Puerto Rico in the US Congress but cannot vote. Puerto Ricans, however, were not considered US citizens. This changed somewhat in 1902. In that year, Isabel Gonzalez was denied entry into the United States by an immigration law that said Puerto Ricans were aliens. She fought this law, and the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Gonzales vs Williams* that Puerto Ricans were noncitizen nationals and could not be denied entry to the United States. Gonzalez continued the fight for citizenship for Puerto Ricans, which finally happened in 1917.

The Jones Act of 1917 made Puerto Rico a United States territory and granted Puerto Ricans US citizenship. It also created changes in the government. The governor was still appointed by the President, and a non-voting Resident Commissioner still represented the island in Congress. The legislature was changed to a bicameral, or two-house, legislature consisted of an elected Senate and House of Representatives. The judicial system remained much the same except English was made the official language of all the levels of courts. Puerto Ricans, for the first time, were allowed to create a Bill of Rights. Over the next thirty years, Puerto Ricans continued to work for further autonomy and rights both on the local and federal level.

In 1947, the first of several major changes occurred in how Puerto Rico was to be governed. In that year, Congress passed a law allowing Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor. The first governor,

Luis Munoz Marin, was elected in 1948. In 1950, President Truman signed Public Act 600 which created the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Under this act, a Constitution was written, Spanish became the official language of local Commonwealth agencies, and English remained the official language of federal agencies. In 1952, the flag of Puerto Rico was displayed publicly for the first time and voters approved the Constitution which created the government that exists today.

Today, the government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico consists of three branches. The head of the executive branch is the Governor who is elected to a four-year term with no limit on how many terms he/she may serve. The legislative branch consists of an elected Senate and Chamber of Representatives who serve a four-year term. The judicial branch consists of a seven member Supreme Court (appointed by the Governor), federal courts (appointed by the President), and local courts. Criminal law is based on the US legal system while civil law is based on the Spanish legal system. Local governments, called municipios, are elected. An elected Resident Commissioner continues to represent Puerto Rico in Congress as a non-voting member. As US citizens, Puerto Ricans pay and receive Social Security, receive welfare benefits, are eligible to serve in the armed forces, and enjoy most of the same rights and privileges as mainland citizens. They cannot, however, vote for President and have no voting representation in Congress. Whatever changes occur in the future will depend on the people of Puerto Rico as the United States Constitution has no provision for how to incorporate a commonwealth into the federal state system.

Name _____ **Scoring Guide for Puerto Rico Government Time Line**

Directions: Based on the reading, **Puerto Rico Government Fact Sheet**, you will create a time line on the development of Puerto Rican government from 1898 to present. It needs to include the following components:

Requirements	Points Possible	Points Earned
Title	1	
Your name	1	
Appropriate starting date with correct label	5	
Appropriate ending date with correct label	5	
Appropriate intervals for dates (1880, 1890, 1900, etc)	5	
8 significant events are placed appropriately and labeled correctly	8	
Neatness	5	
Total Points	30	

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History of Puerto Rican Migration

Puerto Ricans began coming to the United States in the mid-1800s. It is estimated that 1,800 Puerto Ricans arrived between 1850 and 1900. Many settled in New York City in the borough of Manhattan. Because steamship was the only way to travel from Puerto Rico to the United States, it was an expensive trip. These early immigrants (Puerto Ricans were not US citizens) fell into two groups: wealthy families and political exiles. Wealthy families came to escape the political unrest on the island. Political exiles were those the Spanish had banished from Puerto Rico because of their activities promoting Puerto Rican independence.

Following the Spanish-American War (after 1900), Puerto Ricans began coming to the United States in larger numbers. The economy of Puerto Rico was devastated by a series of hurricanes that destroyed most of the agricultural industry. Puerto Rican migrants came to New York City and settled in the boroughs of Brooklyn, the Bronx, and East Harlem. These enclaves became cultural havens known as barrios. Because of the language barrier, lack of work skills, and discrimination; the only jobs open for men were in the factories or the military. In fact, about 20,000 Puerto Rican men, both living in the mainland US and in Puerto Rico, served in World War I. Many of those soldiers later became immigrants to the United States after the war ended. It is estimated that 13,000 Puerto Ricans arrived between 1900 and 1920.

From 1920 to 1950, an estimated 211,000 Puerto Ricans came to the United States. One reason was the granting of US citizenship to Puerto Ricans which meant they could enter the United States more easily. Another reason was the Great Depression. The island's economy crashed and poverty was widespread. Puerto Ricans were encouraged to migrate to the United States where they found work in factories, on the ship docks, and in the military. These migrants brought with them their culture, turning the barrios in the South Bronx, Spanish Harlem (East Harlem), Brooklyn, and Manhattan's Lower East Side into Little Puerto Ricos. Here they could enjoy their language and culture free from the discrimination they faced in the outside world. Following World War II, Puerto Rican men took advantage of the GI Bill to come to the United States to receive a college education or work training.

Beginning in 1950, the Great Migration to the US began. By 1970, an estimated 684,000 Puerto Ricans had migrated to the United States. Cheap air travel made this trip easier than in the past. Since Puerto Rico's economy could not support its growing population, factory owners in the US actively

recruited workers from the island. This influx in immigration also brought with it a backlash in anti-Puerto Rican feelings in the US. Puerto Ricans were denied access to housing and well paying jobs. Some restaurants even refused to serve Puerto Ricans, posting signs that read, “No dogs or Puerto Ricans allowed”. Puerto Ricans were stereotyped as gang members and drug dealers. In spite of this, Puerto Rican culture flourished. The Nuyorican Movement and Puerto Rican Day Parades were created to address the problems the Puerto Rican community faced and encourage pride in Puerto Rican culture. Groups like ASPIRA have worked to empower the Puerto Rican and Latino communities through the education and leadership development of youth. The results have been positive, and Puerto Ricans have contributed much to the United States.

Since 1970, Puerto Rican migration has slowed greatly. Much of this is due to the increased jobs opportunities and reduced poverty in Puerto Rico. Two interesting trends resulted. One is the return of Puerto Ricans to the island to invest in homes and businesses. The other is the movement of Puerto Ricans to new areas within the United States. Leaving the barrios, they moved to parts of Queens and Long Island, New York; Newark, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; Orlando, Florida; and Los Angeles, California. The Pew Research Center reported 5.1 million Hispanics of Puerto Rican origin reside in the US in 2013.

Name _____

Migration History Chart

Time Period	Push Factors-Reasons to Leave Puerto Rico	Pull Factors-Reasons to Come to the United States

Since 1970, how has Puerto Rican migration changed?

Name _____

Migration History Chart

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Migration History Chart **Answer Key**

Time Period	Push Factors-Reasons to Leave Puerto Rico	Pull Factors-Reasons to Come to the United States
1850-1900	political unrest exile	freedom peace
1900-1920	hurricanes agricultural industry destroyed	jobs
1920-1950	great depression poverty	citizenship jobs barrios
1950-1970	no jobs	cheap transportation jobs GI bill

Since 1970, how has Puerto Rican migration changed? Puerto Ricans have moved out of the New York areas to other areas of the United States; some Puerto Ricans have returned to Puerto Rico to live

Movie Lyrics to “America” (from musical West Side Story 1956)

by Bernstein and Sondheim

http://www.westsidestory.com/site/level2/lyrics/america_movie.html

Girls: Puerto Rico, my heart’s devotion

Let it slip back on the ocean

Always the hurricanes blowing

Always the population growing

And the money owing

And the sunlight streaming

And the natives steaming

I like the isle of Manhattan

Smoke on your pipe and put that in

I like to be in America

OK by me in America

Everything free in America

Boys: For a small fee in America

G: Buying on credit is so nice

B: One look at us and they charge twice

G: I have a new washing machine

B: What will you have though to keep clean?

G: Skyscrapers bloom in America

Cadillacs zoom in America

Industry boom in America

B: Twelve to a room in America

G: Lots of new housing with more space

B: Lots of doors slamming in our face

G: I’ll get a terraced apartment

B: Better get rid of your accent

G: Life can be bright in America

B: If you can fight in America

G: Life is all right in America

B: If you’re all white in America

G: Here you are free and you have pride

B: Long as you stay on your own side

G: Free to be anything you choose

B: Free to wait tables and shine shoes

Everywhere grime in America

Organized crime in America

Terrible time in America

G: You forget I’m in America

B: I think I go back to San Juan

G: I know a boat you can get on

B: Everyone there will give big cheer

G: Everyone there will have moved here

Name _____

Lyrics Analysis Chart

Pros to Life in America	Cons to Life in America

Name _____

Lyrics Analysis Chart

Pros to Life in America	Cons to Life in America

Lyrics Analysis Chart **Answer Key**

Pros to Life in America	Cons to Life in America
climate buying on credit appliances skyscrapers Cadillacs industry new housing terraced apartments freedom pride opportunity	being overcharged crowded living conditions discrimination dirty organized crime limited job opportunities

Name _____ **Friendly Letter Prompt and Scoring Guide**

You have recently arrived in New York City from Puerto Rico. Select one of the four migration periods and use the information from the History of Puerto Rican Migration reading, Migration History Chart, and Lyrics Analysis Chart to write a two paragraph, friendly letter to a friend in San Juan, Puerto Rico. In your first paragraph, discuss why you left Puerto Rico. In your second paragraph, discuss the positive and negative aspects of life in America. Use the Scoring Guide below to guide your writing.

Requirements	Points Possible	Points Earned
Correct heading for a friendly letter	5	
Appropriate salutation for a friendly letter	5	
First paragraph explains your reasons for leaving Puerto Rico	10	
Second paragraph explains the positive and negative aspects of living in America	10	
Appropriate closing for a friendly letter	5	
Your signature	5	
Neatness	5	
Total Points	45	

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Appropriate closing for a friendly letter	5	
Your signature	5	
Neatness	5	
Total Points	45	

List of Notable Puerto Rican-Americans

Adam Rodriguez	Jesus Maria Sanroma
Alexis Cruz	Enrique Martin
Alicia Bibiloni	Tony Orlando
Ana Ortiz	Joseph M. Acaba
Antonio Fargas	Dr. Richard H. Carmona
Chita Rivera	Dr. Antonia Coella Novello
Erik Estrada	Dr. Alfonso Eaton
Frankie Muniz	Dr. Orlando Figueroa
Irene Cara	Dr. Fernando E. Rodriguez Vargas
Freddie Prinze	Elizabeth Vargas
Jennifer Lopez	Geraldo Rivera
Jimmy Smits	Sonia Sotomayor
Jose Ferrer	PFC. Fernando Luis Garcia
Marquita Rivera	Colonel Hector Andres Negroni
Raul Julia	Captain Linda Garcia Cubero
Rita Moreno	SPC. Lizbeth Robles
Sonia Manzano	Isabel Gonzalez
Edwin Torres	Major General Luis R. Esteves
Jesus Colon	Herman Badillo
Marie Teresa Rios	Butch Lee
Angel Ramos	Hector Camacho
David Alvarez	Juan "Chi-Chi" Rodriguez
Jose Feliciano	Roberto Clemente
Herman Santiago	Ron Rivera
Howie Dorough	Edgardo Diaz

Name _____ **Poster Scoring Guide**

Directions: Select one of the names from the **Notable Puerto Rican-Americans** list. Research this person and create a poster telling about him or her. Use the Scoring Guide below to help you make the poster.

Poster Requirements	Points Possible	Points Earned
Name of person	5	
Birth year of person	5	
Year of death (if applicable)	5	
Place of birth	5	
Image of person	5	
Paragraph describing his/her accomplishment(s)	10	
Image illustrating his/her accomplishment(s)	10	
Neatness	5	
Creativity	5	
Extra Credit: Statement of why this person or their family left Puerto Rico to settle in the U.S.	5	
Total Points	55	

Comments: