



**Lesson Plan:**  
**Exile: Cuba and the United States**

**Grade Level**  
9-12

### **Objective**

Understand the events of the Cuban revolution and their effect on U.S.-Cuban relations and U.S. foreign policy.

### **National History Standards**

Historical Thinking Standards, 5-12

- Standard 1: Chronological Thinking
- Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities
- Standard 5: Historical Issues Analysis and Decision-Making

Content Standards, 5-12

- Era 9: Postwar United States
  - Standard 2B: The student understands United States foreign policy in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Evaluate changing foreign policy toward Latin America.

### **Time**

Two class periods

### **Background**

Over the course of a career that spanned six decades and took her from humble beginnings in Havana, Cuba, to acclaim as a world-renowned artist, **Celia Cruz** became the undisputed Queen of Latin Music. Combining a piercing and powerful voice with a larger-than-life personality and stage costumes, she was one of the few women to succeed in the male-dominated world of *salsa* music.

The 1950s were a time of great turmoil in Cuba. The political landscape had changed dramatically with the imminent revolution, and musicians faced constant changes that affected various aspects of their lives. **Celia Cruz** had traveled to the United States and Latin America often during the 1940s and 1950s. At the end of 1959, the manager of the Sonora Matancera (the band with which Cruz had been performing) secured a one-year contract to perform in Mexico. Cruz

decided to go with the band; they left on July 15, 1960, six months after Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba, and never returned.

### **Materials**

- *¡Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz* exhibition website, [americanhistory.si.edu/celiacruz](http://americanhistory.si.edu/celiacruz)
- Handout 1: Telegram to **Celia Cruz** telling of her mother's death (attached)
- World map

### **Lesson**

#### ***Warm-up***

Have students prepare by looking over the exhibition website to get an overview of the life of **Celia Cruz**.

Explain to students that seeing the effect of global events on individuals' lives can make the events less abstract and more understandable. Show the image of the telegram, and explain that the telegram was sent to **Celia Cruz** after she emigrated to the United States. The telegram informed her that her mother had died. Explain that Cruz was not allowed to return to Cuba for her mother's funeral. Ask students why they think she may not have been allowed to go back to her home country.

#### ***Student Activity***

Tell students that there was a political revolution in Cuba that culminated in its leader, Fidel Castro, coming to power in 1959, and that this revolution had an impact on relations between the United States and Cuba. Have students locate Cuba on a world map. Where is Cuba in relation to the United States? Why would the United States have an interest in the political situation in Cuba? Divide the class into small groups, and have them research the Cuban revolution. Have each group prepare a story about the revolution as if the group members were a television news team reporting on the events at the time.

Have students present their reports in class. Discuss the impact that these events had on the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Then return to a discussion of **Celia Cruz**, emphasizing how global events can have very personal consequences.

#### ***Follow-up Activities***

Have students research cold war–era defectors and exiled persons. What other artists, performers, and musicians permanently left their home countries to come to the United States? Why? Where are they now? What artists, performers, and musicians chose to stay in their home countries?

Have students research current relations between Cuba and the United States. What economic and political implications has this situation had on both countries?

<p style="text-align: center;">CLASS OF SERVICE</p> <p style="font-size: small;">This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">WESTERN UNION</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">TELEGRAM</h2> <p style="font-size: x-small;">W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SYMBOLS</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">DL = Day Letter</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">NL = Night Letter</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">LT = International Letter Telegram</p>
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The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is LOCAL TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is LOCAL TIME at point of destination

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CELIA CRUZ  
102 WEST 75 ST APT 61 NYK (VIA WUC)

GRACIAS A DIOS OLLITA DESCANSO ESPERO TENGAS VALOR SE HIZO  
TODO POR ELLA TE QUIERE TU FAMILIA  
NENITA

RPT 102 75 61 OLLITA

*Courtesy of The Celia Cruz Foundation*

Telegram from **Celia Cruz's** cousin Evangelina (Nenita) informing her of her mother's death in Cuba on April 7, 1962.