

Google Arts & Culture

Learn Together: Puerto Rican Heritage and the Arts



Using the lesson plan and Google Arts & Culture resources

This lesson plan is designed to support you as you explore Google Arts & Culture stories and exhibits related to the lesson topic. The images you will see here are just a sample of the media—texts, images, audio, and video—available to you on the Google Arts & Culture website. A parent or teacher might be guiding you through the lesson, or you might choose to complete it on your own.

All you need to access the lesson is an internet connection and a web browser. You may want to take notes, whether you do that digitally or with paper and pen.

The lesson plan has an **introduction**, which will describe the topic and provide some background information that will help you understand what you are seeing, hearing, and reading. Then the lesson will take you on a journey from one **Story** or **Exhibit** to another, fill in some details along the way, and pose **questions** that will help you focus on important ideas. Some lesson plans include a **project** related to the lesson topic. All end with a **quiz** and some **ideas for exploring the topic further**.

The lesson plan includes **questions** about the main stories and exhibits, and there is also a **quiz**. You will want to write answers to the questions in a notebook or on a piece of paper. Then you can check all your answers when you've finished the lesson.

Resources on the Google Arts & Culture website include Themes, Stories, Museum Views, items, and images.

- ❖ **Themes** bring together stories, exhibits, collections, images, audio, and video files that relate to a topic.
- ❖ In a **Story**, clicking on the arrow on the right side of a slide will move you forward. The arrow on the left side takes you back. Sometimes, clicking on the right arrow will zoom you in on an image. Just keep clicking to keep moving forward. Audio and videos on slides will play automatically. Clicking on an image title will take you to a page with more information about it.
- ❖ In **Museum Views**, you move through a 3D space. Click to move forward. Click, hold, and move the cursor left or right to turn.
- ❖ An **item** will take you to an individual **image**, where you can zoom in and sometimes read more about the artefact.



Rio Piedras, Cayey, Bayamón and Border Areas, Rodríguez Vallés 2003, Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico

In this lesson, you will learn about:

- ❖ the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States.
- ❖ the rich culture and history of Puerto Rico.
- ❖ how Puerto Rican artists express their heritage through art.
- ❖ how Puerto Rican artists in the United States honor and celebrate their heritage.

You will:

- ❖ view some stories and exhibits about Puerto Rican Art and Artists.
- ❖ answer some questions about what you have seen and read.

This lesson will take **30–45 minutes** to complete.



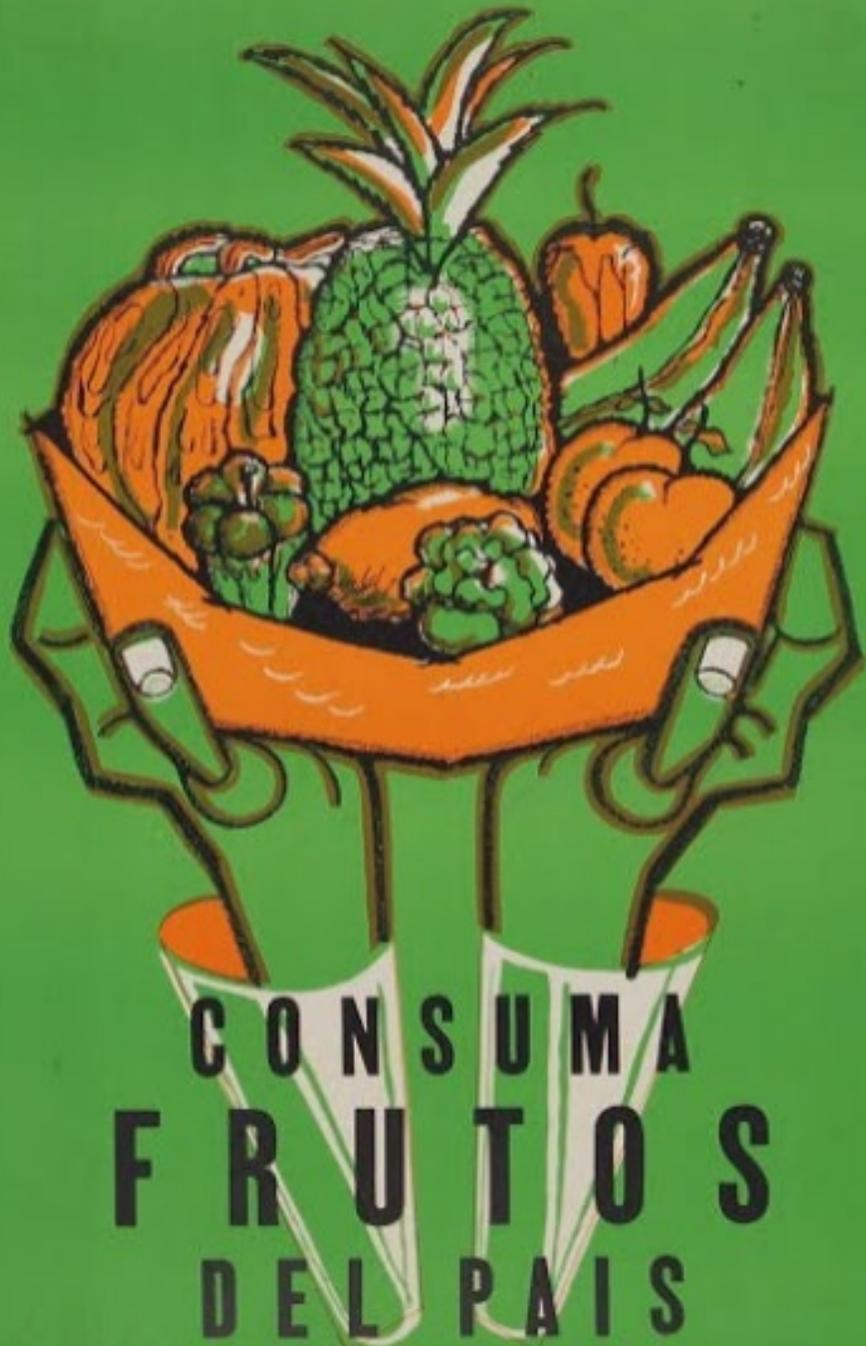
Learn Together: Puerto Rican Heritage and the Arts

Puerto Rico is a large island in the Caribbean Sea. It was ruled by Spain for hundreds of years but became a territory of the United States after the Spanish-American War in 1898. Although the people of Puerto Rico are considered citizens of the United States, they are not represented in Congress and cannot vote in presidential elections. In fact, Puerto Rico has often been neglected by the United States government. Puerto Ricans have experienced other challenges as well, including devastating hurricanes and other extreme weather events. These experiences have influenced Puerto Rico's distinct culture.

Creating art has been an important way for Puerto Ricans to document their history, express their anger and suffering, and call for political change. Celebrating art from Puerto Rican artists, both on the island of Puerto Rico and in the contiguous United States (the 48 states on the continent of North America), is a wonderful way to recognize and honor the rich and diverse Puerto Rican heritage.

As you view the exhibits and stories in this lesson, think about these questions:

- ❖ How does Puerto Rican art reflect Puerto Rican heritage?
- ❖ How does art keep Puerto Rican heritage alive in the United States?
- ❖ What does Puerto Rican art tell you about the diversity of Puerto Rico?



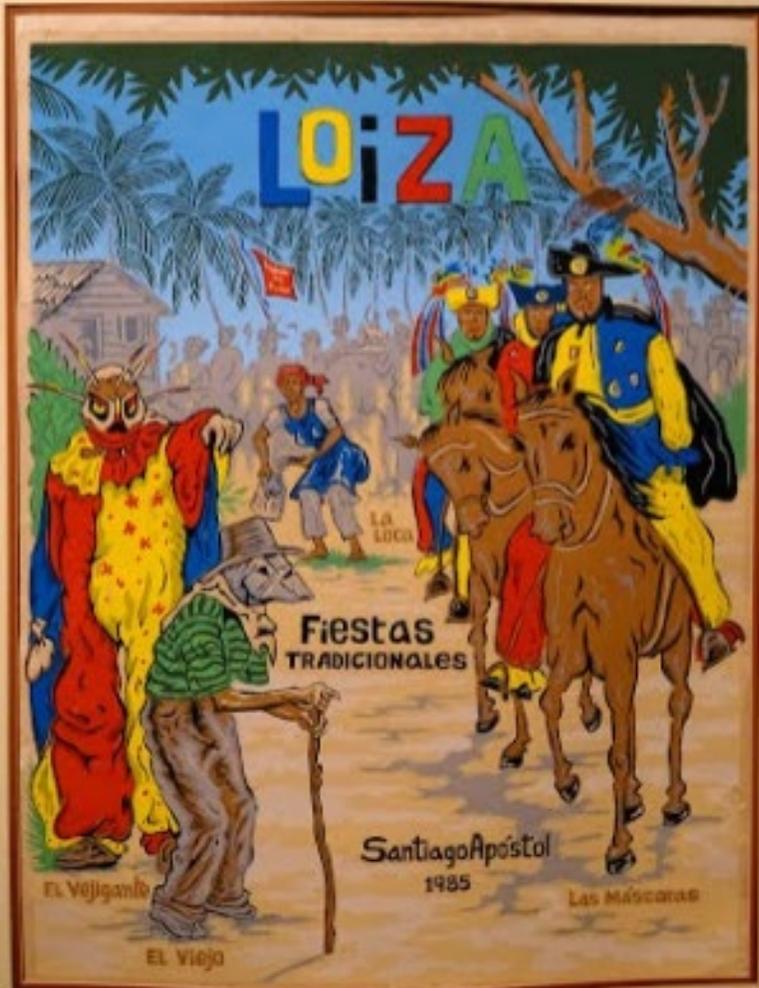
Puerto Rico Plural

As with many cultures and ethnicities, no one person or family can stand as a representative of Puerto Rican heritage. Instead, we must examine different historical periods, life experiences, and media portrayals to fully understand what it means to be Puerto Rican. The artwork displayed in the Puerto Rico Plural exhibit shows the vast history and rich culture of Puerto Rico across several generations.

Click [here](#) to learn about how Puerto Rican artists have expressed their diverse experiences and cultures.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. How did national identity emerge in Puerto Rico?
2. How has globalization impacted art in Puerto Rico?
3. How and why did Puerto Rican artists use their art as a form of activism?



Samuel Lind: Portales

The artist Samuel Lind was born and raised in Loíza, Puerto Rico. Loíza was settled in the 16th century by formerly enslaved members of the African Yoruba tribe. Lind's work is unique to Puerto Rican art, as he captures the Afro-Puerto Rican culture in a way many artists have not. In addition to reflecting his Afro-Puerto Rican heritage, Lind often uses his art to comment on social and political issues.

Click [here](#) to learn about Samuel Lind's art.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What political issues does Lind call attention to in his work?
2. How did Lind's heritage make his art different from other Puerto Rican artists?
3. How does Lind's art capture the culture of Puerto Rico?

THE Nuyorican Poets Cafe

The Nuyorican Poets Cafe

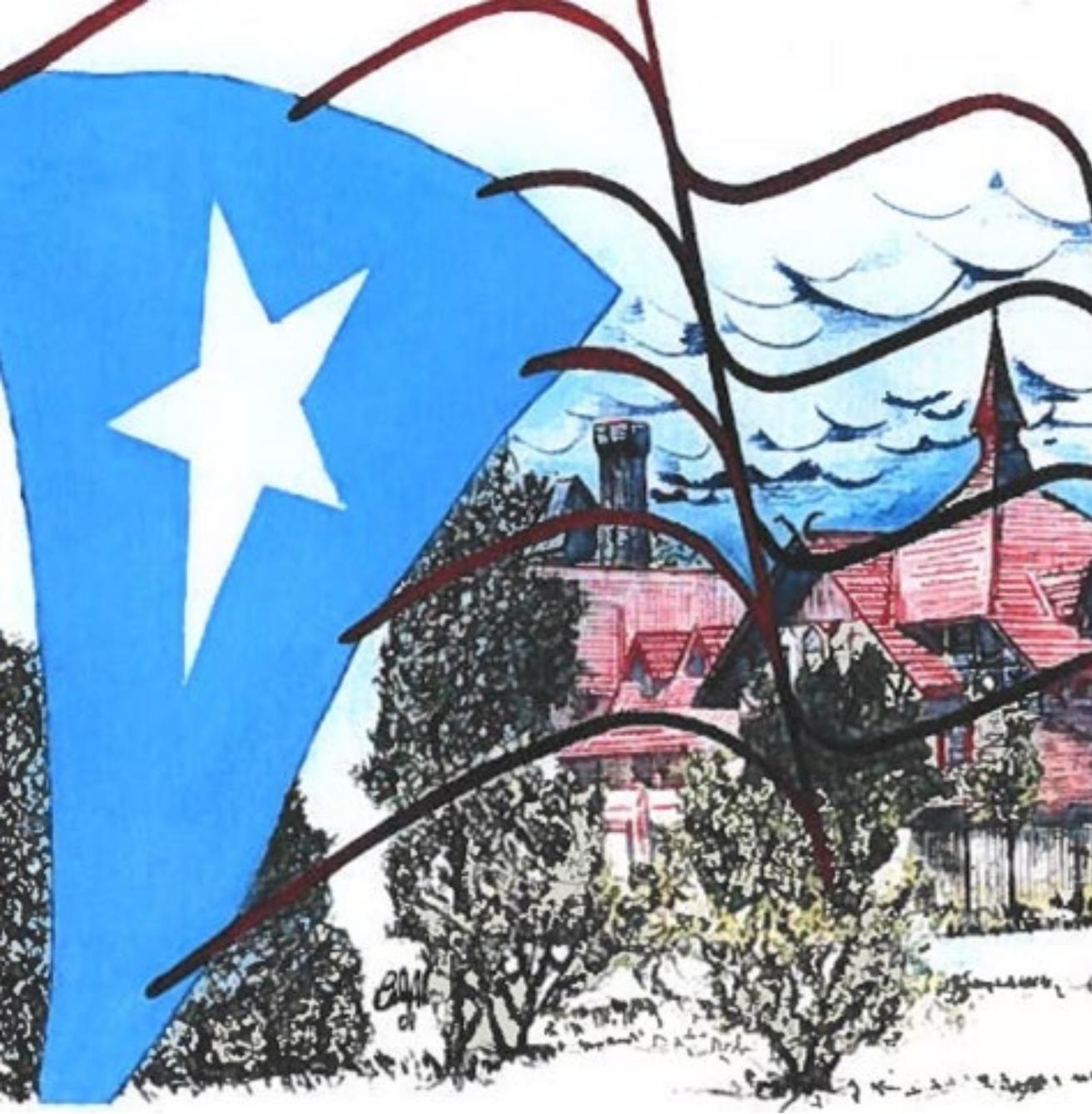
The term “Nuyorican” refers to people of Puerto Rican descent who live in New York City. Many Puerto Rican artists who came to New York in the 1960s and 1970s were not accepted in the mainstream art world, and so they formed their own group with other Latinos and people of color—writers, poets, artists, and musicians. This group eventually became the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

Click [here](#) to learn about how the Nuyorican Poets Cafe allowed people of different backgrounds to express their heritage and culture through art.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What has become the main attraction of the cafe?
2. How did the Nuyorican Poets Cafe become known as “the most integrated place on earth”?
3. Why is the Nuyorican Poets Cafe important to the New York community as a whole?

To learn about the art performed and displayed at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, click [here](#).



The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture: Anniversary

For over a century, Chicago has been a major destination for immigrants from all over the world. This has been especially true for Puerto Ricans settling in the contiguous United States. Today, over 100,000 people of Puerto Rican descent live in the Chicago area. The Puerto Rican community in Chicago is so strong that in 1995, organizers in the Latino community formed the Paseo Boricua, or Puerto Rican Promenade. The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture is located on the Paseo Boricua and celebrates the rich heritage of Chicago's Puerto Rican community.

Click [here](#) to learn about the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What is unique about the Paseo Boricua and the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture?
2. How are the *banderas* on Paseo Boricua related to the museum?
3. Why was the creation of the museum important to preserving the heritage of Puerto Ricans living in the contiguous United States?

Quiz

Read the questions and write your answer in your notebook or on a piece of paper.

1. How did the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico develop the art in the Puerto Rico Plural exhibition?
2. What themes are present in the artwork in the Puerto Rico Plural exhibition?
3. What spiritual elements does Samuel Lind capture in his artwork?
4. How did Lind incorporate Loíza culture into his artwork?
5. How did the Nuyorican Poets Cafe begin?
6. In what way did slam poetry allow for collaboration among artists of different cultures?
7. Why was the establishment of the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture significant to Puerto Ricans living in Chicago?
8. Why was the day on which the *banderas* were installed significant to the Puerto Rican community?

Explore Further

This lesson has given you some vocabulary to talk about Latino cultures in the United States. It has also introduced you to some basic ideas that are relevant to this topic. To learn more about Latino cultures in the US, click [here](#).



It's Your Turn!

In this lesson, you learned about how Puerto Rican heritage is expressed and preserved through art and institutions. Now it's your turn to do something. Here are some ideas for projects that you can do at home or in the classroom.

- ❖ Do some research about an artist from Puerto Rico. You can choose an artist mentioned in this lesson or another artist you are aware of. Write an essay about the artist that answers these questions: How is his or her experience different from that of Samuel Lind's? How is a different heritage reflected in his or her artwork?
- ❖ Look up a Puerto Rican holiday, and make a poster advertising a celebration for the holiday. Use styles and elements from the artwork you saw in this lesson to reflect Puerto Rican culture.
- ❖ Explore the online exhibits at the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture. What else can you learn about Puerto Rican heritage from the artwork you see? Create a slide show presentation of works of art by Puerto Rican Artists. Introduce your audience to each artist and say something about their work.

Answers

Puerto Rican Plural

1. People in Puerto Rico began to feel a national identity after being taken over by the United States following the Spanish-American War.
2. Due to globalization, styles of art from other cultures, such as expressionism and abstract art, have influenced Puerto Rican artists, but they still incorporate their own personal styles and values into their work.
3. Many Puerto Rican artists saw how unfairly the poor were treated and how badly the cities were managed as more people migrated to them. They made art to depict and spread awareness about these problems.

Samuel Lind: Portales

1. Lind used his work to call attention to the issues of gentrification, preserving the environment, and racial inequity.
2. In his art, Lind tried to express his Afro-Puerto Rican heritage. He depicted themes prevalent in both Puerto Rican and African cultures.
3. Lind's art focuses a great deal on the natural beauty of Puerto Rico, traditional Puerto Rican customs, and on the social, political, and environmental problems facing his country.

The Nuyorican Poets Cafe

1. Slam poetry has become the main attraction of the cafe.
2. The Nuyorican Poets Cafe was not only open to people of Puerto Rican or Latino descent, but also to artists of every ethnicity who could not find a place in the mainstream. The cafe would also present free concerts and events, which allowed more people to be part of the experience.
3. The Nuyorican Poets Cafe encourages artists to experiment and bring new forms of art to the New York community.

The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture: Anniversary

1. The Paseo Boricua is the only recognized Puerto Rican neighborhood in the US, and the museum is the only one focused on Puerto Rican arts and culture.
2. The *banderas* were installed 5 years prior to the establishment of the museum and were a key part in paving the way to the establishment of the only museum of its kind.
3. The museum is the only place in the contiguous United States where people can see and learn about Puerto Rican arts and culture, so it is an important institution for keeping Puerto Rican heritage alive.

Answers

Quiz

1. The museum conducted focus groups with diverse populations in Puerto Rico and created art based on what they had to say.
2. Themes include migration and coming and going, machismo, fighting oppression, and the beauty of landscapes.
3. Lind created statues of African gods who could act as healers as well as fertility goddesses, showing his connection with African culture.
4. Bomba music and dance are key traditions specific to Loíza, and Lind depicts music and dance in many of his paintings.
5. When artists of Puerto Rican heritage had nowhere else to present their work, they joined together to share their artwork.
6. Slam poetry sometimes requires poets, writers, and musicians to work together, using elements from their own cultures.
7. The establishment of the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture was an acknowledgement of the importance and prominence of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago.
8. The *banderas* were installed on Día de Los Reyes, which is an important holiday in Latino culture.



[900-50-80, Olga Albizu 1978](#), Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico