

“FOREIGN IN A DOMESTIC SENSE”:**HISPANIC AMERICANS IN CONGRESS DURING THE AGE OF U.S. COLONIALISM AND GLOBAL EXPANSION, 1898–1945****RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL:** Grades 7 to 12**OVERVIEW**

This activity is designed to accompany the contextual essay “Foreign in a Domestic Sense’: Hispanic Americans in Congress During the Age of U.S. Colonialism and Global Expansion, 1898–1945,” from the *Hispanic Americans in Congress* website, history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/HAIC/Hispanic-Americans-in-Congress/. Students have the opportunity to learn more about the Hispanic Americans who served in congress from 1898 to 1945. Students are encouraged to analyze the role Hispanic-American Delegates, Representatives, Resident Commissioners, and Senators played in Congress during the era, as well as the ways in which they may have changed the institution.

**CURRICULUM CONNECTION**

- U.S. History, American Government, Social Studies, Latino Studies
- Great Depression, New Deal, World War I, World War II, Spanish-American War

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students should be able to identify the Hispanic Americans who served in Congress from 1898 to 1945.
2. Students should be able to recognize the ways in which Hispanic Americans won elective office from 1898 to 1945.
3. Students should be able to identify important issues and trends surrounding the Hispanic Americans who served in Congress during this era.

**LESSON PLAN**

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. What were some of the important issues and events in the United States from 1898 to 1945?
 - b. If asked to describe an average Member of Congress during this period, how would you answer?
 - c. Have there been many Hispanic Americans who have served in Congress? (Ask students to compile a quick list.) Why or why not?
2. Ask students to read the contextual essay “Foreign in a Domestic Sense’: Hispanic Americans in Congress During the Age of U.S. Colonialism and Global Expansion, 1898–1945,” either independently or in groups. Encourage students to take notes and to write down any unanswered questions they encounter during the reading.
3. Once students have completed the reading, have them answer the **Comprehension Questions**. Review the answers as a class.
4. Next have students answer the **Critical Thinking Questions**. Review the answers as a class.
5. Choose one of the options listed under the category **Main Exercise** (Cooperative or Hypothetical). If necessary, students can use the online resources listed at the end of the activity to complete the **Main Exercise**.
6. Time permitting, conduct one of the **Suggested Extended Activities**.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ON THE SURFACE

1. Who was the first Hispanic-American Resident Commissioner to serve in Congress? When did he serve? What state or territory sent the largest number of Hispanic-American Members to Congress during this period?
2. Who was the first Hispanic American elected to the United States Senate? How and why was he elected?
3. What were some of the similar backgrounds shared by Hispanic Members? How did Hispanic-American Congressmen of this era differ from the average Hispanic citizen?
4. What were some of the major legislative issues affecting Hispanic Members during this era? Describe two issues that affected a number of Hispanic Members.
5. Territorial representation is similar to, yet different from, the roles that U.S. Representatives and Senators play in the United States Congress. How did territorial representation develop within Congress? What actions did territorial representatives take to successfully represent their constituents?



CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS DIGGING DEEPER

1. Describe some of the political and demographic changes in New Mexico during this period. How did these changes affect the political careers of Hispanic Members? Provide two specific examples.
2. How did Puerto Rico's territorial status affect the legislative interests of Hispanic Members of Congress? Provide two examples of legislation that addressed the island's territorial status.
3. List the names of the Hispanic Members elected from Puerto Rico from 1898 through 1945. Why were there so many more Hispanic Members from Puerto Rico than from any other territory or state?
4. What effects did the Great Depression have on the careers of Hispanic Members of Congress? Provide two examples of Hispanic Members who tried to alleviate the effects of the Great Depression on their constituents.



MAIN EXERCISE OPTION 1: COOPERATIVE

Working in small groups, choose a Hispanic Member of Congress from this era and follow the directions below:

- a. Read the profile for your Member.
- b. Write down any important notes.
- c. Scenario: You have been assigned the task of designing a museum exhibit to describe the life of your Member. The exhibit should include information on all aspects of his life, but should focus on the Member's congressional service.

What should be included:

- Original title of exhibit that helps explain his legacy
- 50-word exhibit label that summarizes his congressional career
- Three artifacts chosen by you that best represent the Member's legacy
- A creative teaching tool for museum visitors that covers the highlights of his career in Congress (committees, key legislation, state or district he represented, etc.)

OPTION 2: HYPOTHETICAL

1. You are a Hispanic candidate for Congress from New Mexico Territory in the 1910s. You were born in the territory and enlisted in the U.S. Army to fight in the Spanish-American War. Since the war's end, you have worked as a journalist and briefly served in the territorial legislature. How will you get elected? What is your campaign slogan? What are the local and national issues on which you will campaign?
2. You are a Puerto Rican Resident Commissioner serving on the Committee on Insular Affairs in the 1910s. You are sponsoring a bill that will provide funding for improving the railroad networks on the island. However, opponents of the bill will pass it only if a portion of the funding is allocated toward other states at the expense of halting development on Puerto Rico's harbors. Will you accept the compromise? Write a one-page editorial to submit to your hometown newspaper defending your position.

11

SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Design a timeline of significant events for the Hispanic-American Members of Congress who served during this era.
2. Write a 100-word obituary for one of the Hispanic Members who served during this era.
3. Design a campaign poster for a Hispanic candidate for Congress during this period.
4. Draft language for a resolution sponsored by a Hispanic-American Member of Congress in the 1930s on one of two hypothetical topics:
 - a. Celebrating the contributions of constituents who served in World War I
 - b. Appropriating relief funds for rebuilding transportation infrastructure in the wake of a natural disaster



ONLINE RESOURCES

History, Art & Archives | U.S. House of Representatives

A collaborative project between the Office of the Historian and the Clerk of the House's Office of Art and Archives. Together, the offices serve as the House's institutional memory, and a resource for Members, staff, and the general public.

history.house.gov

[@USHouseHistory](#)

Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

bioguide.congress.gov

Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Congress.gov | Library of Congress

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

congress.gov

GPO Federal Digital System

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

gpo.gov/fdsys