



## 5th Grade Puerto Rico Inquiry

# Should Puerto Rico Be a State?

	1967		1993		1998	
<b>Independence</b>	4,248	<b>0.60%</b>	75,620	<b>4.40%</b>	39,838	<b>2.54%</b>
Commonwealth	425,132	60.40%	826,326	48.60%	993	0.06%
Free Association					4536	0.29%
<b>Statehood</b>	274,312	<b>39%</b>	788,296	<b>46.30%</b>	728,157	<b>46.49%</b>
None of the above					787,900	50.30%
Electoral turnout	66%		74%		71%	

Chart showing the results of referendum votes in Puerto Rico in 1967, 1993, and 1998. Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status. December 2005. Public domain. [http://charma.uprm.edu/~angel/Puerto\\_Rico/reporte\\_status.pdf](http://charma.uprm.edu/~angel/Puerto_Rico/reporte_status.pdf).

## Supporting Questions

1. How did Puerto Rico become a United States territory?
2. What efforts has Puerto Rico made to obtain statehood or independence?
3. What are the arguments in favor of Puerto Rico's statehood or independence?
4. What are the arguments against Puerto Rico's statehood or independence?



## 5th Grade Puerto Rico Inquiry

Should Puerto Rico Be a State?	
<b>New York State Social Studies Framework Key Idea &amp; Practices</b>	<b>5.6 GOVERNMENT:</b> The political systems of the Western Hemisphere vary in structure and organization across time and place. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Geographic Reasoning</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Comparison and Contextualization</b>
<b>Staging the Question</b>	<b>UNDERSTAND</b> Discuss the 2012 vote on Puerto Rico’s statehood.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3	Supporting Question 4
Understand	Assess	Act	Act
How did Puerto Rico become a United States territory?	What efforts has Puerto Rico made to obtain statehood or independence?	What are the arguments in favor of Puerto Rico’s statehood or independence?	What are the arguments against Puerto Rico’s statehood or independence?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	
Write a paragraph describing how Puerto Rico became a United States territory.	Make an annotated timeline of events in Puerto Rican history related to efforts to obtain statehood and consider the next steps in the process.	Debate the issue of statehood/independence for Puerto Rico using arguments in favor of and against Puerto Rico’s statehood.	
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
<b>Source A:</b> Excerpt from the Treaty of Paris <b>Source B:</b> Map bank: Political evolution of Central America and the Caribbean from 1878 to 1898	<b>Source A:</b> Chart bank: Results of statehood referendum votes in Puerto Rico in 1967, 1993, 1998, and 2012	<b>Source A:</b> Excerpt from “What’s the Matter with Puerto Rico?” <b>Source B:</b> Excerpt from “Statehood Issues”	<b>Source A:</b> Excerpt from “Why Statehood Is Bad for Puerto Rico” <b>Source B:</b> Excerpt from “Caution Needed on Puerto Rico Statehood: The Costly, Confusing, and Contentious Repercussions of H.R. 856.”

<b>Summative Performance Task</b>	<b>ARGUMENT</b> Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources while acknowledging competing views. <b>EXTENSION</b> Prepare a brief from the debate summarizing the wide range of positions presented on the question of Puerto Rico’s statehood.
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## Overview

### Inquiry Description

This inquiry examines the historical and contemporary factors surrounding the debate over Puerto Rico’s statehood. The compelling question “Should Puerto Rico be a state?” provides students with an opportunity to participate in the debate by focusing on national and cultural identities and the economic arguments for and against Puerto Rico’s statehood. The inquiry embeds Taking Informed Action throughout the Staging the Compelling Question and formative performance tasks and culminates in students taking part in an informed debate.

In addition to the Key Idea expressed earlier, this inquiry covers the following Conceptual Understanding:

- (5.6c) Across time and place, different groups of people in the Western Hemisphere have struggled and fought for equality and civil rights or sovereignty.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take two to four 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

### Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Should Puerto Rico be a state?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument with evidence while acknowledging competing views.

## Staging the Compelling Question

The compelling question may be staged by having students discuss the 2012 vote in Puerto Rico on the question of statehood. Through this discussion, students initiate the Taking Informed Action sequence by beginning to *understand* the issues around Puerto Rico’s statehood.

## Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“How did Puerto Rico become a United States territory?”—opens the inquiry with an examination of the establishment of Puerto Rico as a territory in 1898. The formative performance task calls on students to draw on the information in the featured sources by writing a paragraph that describes how Puerto Rico became a part of the United States. Included in the featured sources are an excerpt from the 1898 Treaty of Paris,



which ended the Spanish-American War, and maps of the region in 1878 and 1898. Students continue their work to *understand* the issue of Puerto Rico’s statehood as the first part of the Tasking Informed Action tasks.

## Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question—“What efforts has Puerto Rico made to obtain statehood or independence?”—leads students to consider how Puerto Rico and its citizens have contributed to and/or resisted the nation’s long-standing political relationship with the United States. The formative performance task asks students to use the featured source, a table with results of the four recent referendums on statehood, in making an annotated timeline of events in Puerto Rican history related to efforts to obtain statehood. By working with the featured sources and completing the formative performance task, students move closer to Taking Informed Action by demonstrating the ability to *assess* the next steps in the process of Puerto Rico’s statehood.

## Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question—“What are the arguments in favor of Puerto Rico’s statehood or independence?”—gives students an opportunity to develop arguments that can be used in a debate about Puerto Rico’s statehood. This debate should take place after students investigate Supporting Question 4 and provide students with an opportunity to continue their Taking Informed Action work. Students should draw on the two featured sources in support of Puerto Rico’s statehood—an article from *Pacific Standard* magazine and a list of reasons to support statehood from the United States Council for Puerto Rico Statehood.

## Supporting Question 4

The final supporting question—“What are the arguments against Puerto Rico’s statehood or independence?”—invites students to examine the other side of the debate about Puerto Rico’s statehood and then engage in a debate over the issue. The debate may be staged before a grade-level, school-level, or community audience. This debate completes the Taking Informed Action sequence as students *act* on the issue of Puerto Rico’s statehood. Students can draw on the two featured sources for information against Puerto Rico’s statehood—an article from *La Respuesta* magazine and a research brief from the Heritage Foundation.

## Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined the history of Puerto Rico as a United States territory and the efforts to establish Puerto Rico as a state, and they have participated in a debate about Puerto Rico’s statehood. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and abilities to use evidence from



multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students are asked to construct an evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question “Should Puerto Rico be a state?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- Puerto Rico should be state because the people of Puerto Rico deserve representation in Congress, and the United States would benefit economically from Puerto Rico’s statehood.
- Puerto Rico should not be state because it will cost US taxpayers more than Puerto Rican citizens will contribute in tax revenue.
- It is unclear whether Puerto Rico should be a state because in recent referendums Puerto Ricans have been split on the question.

Students could extend these arguments by preparing a brief from the debate summarizing the wide range of positions presented on the question of Puerto Rico’s statehood.



## Staging the Compelling Question

### Featured Source

Source A: Charts showing the results from the 2012 vote on statehood, 2012

In the 2012 Puerto Rican referendum on statehood, 1,864,186 voted out of 2,402,941 registered voters (78% turnout). The referendum asked two questions.

### Should Puerto Rico continue its current territorial status?

Choice	Votes	%
No	970,910	53.97
Yes	828,077	46.03
Valid votes	1,798,987	95.74
Invalid or blank votes	79,982	4.26
Total votes	1,878,969	100.00
Registered voters and turnout	2,402,941	78.19

### Which non-territorial option do you prefer?

Choice	Votes	%
Statehood	834,191	61.16
Free Association	454,768	33.34
Independence	74,895	5.49
Valid votes	1,363,854	72.59
Invalid/blank votes	515,115	27.41
Total	1,878,969	100
Registered voters/turnout	2,402,941	78.19

Created for the New York State K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Binghamton University, 2015 based on data from the Comisión Estatal de Elecciones, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, 2012.



## Supporting Question 1

### Featured Source

**Source A:** William Day, Cushman Davis, William Frye, George Gray, Whitelaw Reid, Eugenio Montero Rios, Buenaventura de Aburzaza, José de Garnica, Wenceslao Ramírez de Villa-Urrutia, and Rafael Cerero, text from the treaty ending the Spanish-American War, “Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain” (excerpts), December 10, 1898

### **Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain**

Signed by the United States and Spain, December 10, 1898

#### **Article II.**

Spain cedes to the United States the island of Porto Rico and other islands now under Spanish sovereignty in the West Indies, and the island of Guam in the Marianas or Ladrones.

#### **Article V**

...Spain will, upon the exchange of the ratifications of the present treaty, proceed to evacuate the Philippines, as well as the island of Guam, on terms similar to those agreed upon by the Commissioners appointed to arrange for the evacuation of Porto Rico and other islands in the West Indies....

A Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain, US Congress, 55th Cong., 3d sess., Senate Doc. No. 62, Part 1. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899, 5-11. Public domain. The full text is available at the Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/sp1898.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/sp1898.asp).



## Supporting Question 1

Featured Source

Source B: Map bank: Political evolution of Central America and the Caribbean from 1878 to 1898



Map 1: Political evolution in Central America and the Caribbean in 1878 (before the Spanish-American War).

Created for the New York K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Agate Publishing, Inc., 2015. Based on public domain map by Esemono. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial\\_evolution\\_of\\_the\\_Caribbean#/media/File:Political\\_Evolution\\_of\\_Central\\_America\\_and\\_the\\_Caribbean\\_1878\\_na.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_evolution_of_the_Caribbean#/media/File:Political_Evolution_of_Central_America_and_the_Caribbean_1878_na.png).





Map 2: Political evolution in Central America and the Caribbean in 1898 (after the Spanish-American War).

Created for the New York K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Agate Publishing, Inc., 2015. Based on public domain map by Esemono. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Political\\_Evolution\\_of\\_Central\\_America\\_and\\_the\\_Caribbean\\_1898\\_na.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Political_Evolution_of_Central_America_and_the_Caribbean_1898_na.png) .



## Supporting Question 2

### Featured Source

**Source A:** Chart bank: Results of statehood referendum votes in Puerto Rico in 1967, 1993, 1998, and 2012

*NOTE: Referendums (a vote by an electorate on a single political question) on the question of Puerto Rico's political status have been conducted four times—1967, 1993, 1998, and 2012.*

**Referendums in 1967, 1993, and 1998**

	1967		1993		1998	
<b>Independence</b>	4,248	<b>0.60%</b>	75,620	<b>4.40%</b>	39,838	<b>2.54%</b>
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None of the above					787,900	50.30%
Electoral turnout	66.00%		74.00%		71.00%	

Chart 1: Referendum votes on independence and statehood in 1967, 1993, and 1998.

*Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status.* December 2005. Public domain. Available at the website of the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez: [http://charma.uprm.edu/~angel/Puerto\\_Rico/reporte\\_status.pdf](http://charma.uprm.edu/~angel/Puerto_Rico/reporte_status.pdf).

**2012 Referendum**

*NOTE: The 2012 referendum posed two questions. Voters were first asked whether they agreed that Puerto Rico should continue to have its present form of territorial status. Regardless of how voters answered that question, they were asked secondly, to express their preference among the three nonterritorial alternatives. In this election, 2,402,941 voters were registered to vote; of these, 1,864,186 voted, giving the plebiscite a 78 percent stake. In the second part of the ballot, 480,918 voters left blank ballots, and another 18,357 ballots were rejected, with votes not awarded.*

Part I Choice	Votes	%	Part II Choice	Votes	%
<b>X</b> No	<b>970,910</b>	<b>53.97</b>	<b>✓</b> Statehood	<b>834,191</b>	<b>61.16</b>
Yes	828,077	46.03	Free Association	454,768	33.34
Valid votes	1,798,987	95.74	<b>Independence</b>	<b>74,895</b>	<b>5.49</b>
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Registered voters and turnout	2,402,941	78.19	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,878,969</b>	<b>100</b>
			Registered voters/turnout	2,402,941	78.19

Chart 2: Referendum vote on independence and statehood in 2012.

Data from the 2012 Referendum, General Elections 2012 and Plebiscite on Puerto Rico Political Status website. Public domain.

[http://64.185.222.182/REYDI\\_Escrutinio12/index.html#es/default/OPCIONES\\_NO\\_TERRITORIALES\\_ISLA.xml](http://64.185.222.182/REYDI_Escrutinio12/index.html#es/default/OPCIONES_NO_TERRITORIALES_ISLA.xml)



## Supporting Question 3

### Featured Source

**Source A:** Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza, article against Puerto Rican statehood, “What’s the Matter with Puerto Rico?” (excerpt), *Pacific Standard* magazine, November 17, 2014

Throughout most of the 1800s, the branches of the federal government seemed in agreement that the United States could only acquire and govern territories as such so long as the territory would either eventually become independent or join the union as a state. Then Congress “acquired” Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines in 1898 following the Spanish-American War, even as Cuba became independent. Most legislators were of the opinion that Spain should not be allowed to keep its colonial possessions, but few could agree on what the United States should do with its new Pacific possessions. Puerto Rico was a different story, a relatively uncontroversial candidate for statehood.

Still, Puerto Rico never did become a state. Its political status remains that of an “unincorporated” territory, technically a commonwealth. And as a result Puerto Ricans are subject to some of the most egregious and pervasive ongoing civil rights violations of this century.

While Puerto Ricans are entitled to U.S. citizenship, the form of citizenship they and other territory-born American citizens receive differs fundamentally from that of a North Carolinian or a Californian, for example. There is a one-sided form of American citizenship, wherein citizens may be obligated to pay federal taxes and be eligible for the draft but will be denied the protections of the Bill of Rights and the right to vote for president.

Reprinted with permission from the Miller-McCune Center for Research, Media and Public Policy. <http://www.psmag.com/politics-and-law/whats-matter-puerto-rico-congress-united-states-94238>.



## Supporting Question 3

### Featured Source

**Source B:** United States Council For Puerto Rico Statehood, position statement on statehood for Puerto Rico, "Statehood Issues" (excerpts), 2004

### Why Should the U.S. Want Puerto Rico as a State?

- We would benefit from it. Puerto Ricans have brought much to our society; politically, economically, culturally.
- The Puerto Rican people have earned it through their steadfast support of our country, our flag, and by sending their sons and daughters to fight in US wars...
- We cannot continue to operate a colony, forcing U.S. citizens to accept a second-class citizenship, one without full political rights and equal representation, and not guaranteed by the constitution. The United States is a republic, not an empire
- U.S. taxpayers are paying billions per year to prop up an economy that in its present form doesn't work well. It doesn't provide proportionate economic benefit for Puerto Ricans....
- Commonwealth status was never meant to be permanent, it was meant as a transitional step.

### Why Should Puerto Ricans Want to be a State?

- They should not have to wait any longer to gain constitutionally-guaranteed citizenship with full political rights and responsibilities.
- Puerto Ricans would then share as everyone else in full benefits from our government, while paying taxes like everyone else.
- In the words of Don Luis Ferre, Ex-Governor of Puerto Rico, and winner of the U.S. Medal of Freedom, "It is an honor to be a citizen of the greatest country in the history of the World."

Used with permission of the United States Council for Puerto Rico Statehood. <http://www.prstatehood.com/issues/index.asp>.



## Supporting Question 4

### Featured Source

**Source A:** Luis Gallardo Rivera, article against statehood for Puerto Rico, “Why Statehood is Bad for Puerto Rico” (excerpts), *La Respuesta*, October, 7 2014

*NOTE: The author, Luis Gallardo Rivera, MPA, JD, is a legislator for the municipality of Aguas Buenas in Puerto Rico. He is also a member of the board of directors for the Association of Municipal Legislators of Puerto Rico and teaches courses in public administration for the University of Phoenix.*

Statehood would do little to counter corruption, government inefficiencies, and nor would it decrease the monstrous size of the government. In fact, with the influx of federal aid, it would probably increase....

Now, what would statehood really bring the island?

... As a state Puerto Ricans would have to pay up to \$2.3 billion in new federal income tax. On top of that, add up to an additional \$5 billion in corporate taxes that would have to be coughed up. ... some citizens would see their annual tax contributions more than double....

And though there will surely be an influx of federal funding for other things such as transportation and job creation, one must ask just how effective it would be. The Puerto Rican government, for example, had a terrible track record and had very little to show for the \$7 billion received as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Said spending was riddled with misuse, bad administration, and inefficiencies. Puerto Rico’s most pressing dilemmas will not be solved by federal funding. Throwing money at a problem will not solve it....

No serious economist on the island has been able to paint a picture where the end result of statehood would be anything more than what is has been up until now: a myth.

Used with permission from *La Respuesta*. <http://larespuestamedia.com/statehood-is-bad-for-pr/>.



## Supporting Question 4

### Featured Source

**Source B:** Robert DePosada, research brief on Puerto Rican statehood, “Caution Needed on Puerto Rico Statehood: The Costly, Confusing, and Contentious Repercussions of H.R. 856” (excerpt), Heritage Foundation, October 2, 1997

Statehood for Puerto Rico would cost American taxpayers greatly and would trigger divisive debate over language and culture....

Puerto Rican statehood would have adverse long-term budgetary and political consequences for the United States as a whole....

Statehood carries major budgetary implications for the U.S. government. As a state, Puerto Rico would be eligible to participate in all federal social programs at a projected annual cost of more than \$3 billion....

Congress should realize that creating another state...could significantly alter the future political and economic course of America.

Courtesy of The Heritage Foundation. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/1997/10/em495nbsp-caution-needed-on-puerto-rico-statehood>.