



Lesson 6: Stewardship Across Time – Past, Present, Future of San Juan

Crossing America Series – San Juan National Historic Site (Puerto Rico)

Theme: *Islands of Identity – Culture, Defense, and Conservation*

Grade: 4

Lesson Overview

From Spanish soldiers centuries ago to National Park rangers today, people have always been caretakers of San Juan's forts and coastlines. In this final lesson, students explore what stewardship looked like in the past, what it means now, and how *they* can be the next guardians of this island's treasures.

Time Required: 55 minutes

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Compare how San Juan was protected in the past versus today.
- Explain why both culture and nature need modern stewardship.
- Create a timeline of stewardship actions through history.

- Write their own pledge for the future of Puerto Rico's cultural and natural heritage.
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Lesson Flow (Discover → Dig Into It → Make Sense of It → Connect It → Protect It)

1. Discover It (8 minutes)

Hook:

Show two contrasting images side by side:

- A Spanish soldier standing guard at a garita (sentry box).
- A modern park ranger leading a Junior Ranger program.

Ask:

- *"What do you notice is the same? What is different?"*
- *"How did people protect San Juan hundreds of years ago?"*
- *"How do people protect it today?"*

 **Quick Sketch:** Students draw two simple figures — "Past Guardian" and "Today's Guardian."

2. Dig Into It (20 minutes)

Activity: Stewardship Timeline

Divide students into three groups:

1. **Past Stewards** – Spanish soldiers, engineers, local builders.
 - What did they do? (built forts, stood watch, repaired walls)
2. **Present Stewards** – National Park rangers, historians, conservation scientists.
 - What do they do? (preserve history, protect wildlife, educate visitors)
3. **Future Stewards** – Today's students and community members.

- What can they do? (learn history, care for the coast, teach others, protect nature).

Each group writes/draws key ideas on a large strip of paper. Combine them in order on the board to make a **“Stewardship Through Time” timeline**.

3. Make Sense of It (10 minutes)

Whole-class reflection:

- Why did past guardians protect the fort?
- Why do today’s rangers protect it?
- Why will future generations need to keep protecting it?



Student Task: Write one sentence for each era:

- “In the past, people protected San Juan by...”
 - “Today, people protect San Juan by...”
 - “In the future, I will protect San Juan by...”
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4. Connect It (7 minutes)

Mini Role-Play:

Invite students to imagine themselves as a ranger 50 years from now, standing at the fort.

- What story would you tell visitors?
- What would you want them to remember about San Juan?

Pairs share short “future ranger” speeches with one another.

5. Protect It (10 minutes)

Student Pledges:

Each student writes a stewardship pledge beginning with:

- *“I am a guardian of San Juan. I will protect its...”*

They can choose one cultural element (e.g., the forts, stories, traditions) and one natural element (e.g., ocean, wildlife, coast).

Collect pledges and post them on a class bulletin board shaped like a **fort wall**, showing that many guardians together make the fort strong.

Standards Alignment

- **NGSS:**
 - 4-ESS3-2: Generate and compare solutions to reduce human impacts on Earth's systems.
 - 4-LS1-1: Construct an argument that plants and animals have structures to support survival (applied here to ecological stewardship).
 - **C3 Social Studies:**
 - D2.His.3.3-5: Create historical timelines.
 - D2.Civ.14.3-5: Illustrate how people work to improve their communities.
 - **ELA (SL.4.4):** Report on a topic with supporting details.
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Materials Needed

- Images of past soldiers and present-day rangers
 - Strips of chart paper for stewardship timeline
 - Markers and colored pencils
 - Student journals
 - Bulletin board (fort wall design optional)
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Assessment

- **Formative:** Past/Present/Future sketches, group timeline contributions.
 - **Summative:** Individual stewardship pledge (evaluates historical understanding + personal action).
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Real-World Connection

San Juan National Historic Site is a **World Heritage Site** and part of the **U.S. National Park Service**, meaning its protection is a shared responsibility. Today's students may one day walk its walls as rangers, historians, or simply as proud Puerto Ricans and visitors carrying its story forward.