



LESSON PLAN

Communities on the Threshold of Change



RELATED FILM

Santa Cruz Del Islote

BY LUKE LORENTZEN



Communities on the Threshold of Change

Key Idea

Many remote communities around the globe are on the threshold of change as the impacts of globalization and shifting resources threaten traditional ways of living. While opportunities can be found through navigating these changes, losses will also be inevitable.

Background

Santa Cruz del Islote is a three-acre island approximately fifty miles off the coast of Cartagena, Colombia, in South America. Fishing has been the foundation of life on Santa Cruz del Islote ever since Afro-Colombian fishermen developed the island from an existing sandbar in the 19th century. Due to historically abundant and lucrative fishing opportunities, the island has been able to sustain many residents. Because of its small size, it is currently one of the most densely populated islands on the planet with approximately 1,200 inhabitants.

Residents on Santa Cruz del Islote report a strong sense of community with no violence or crime. Life there is changing rapidly, forcing locals to consider moving. According to *The City Paper of Bogata*, fishing resources have dwindled in just the last decade* threatening the island's subsistence and causing some residents to leave the island to pursue employment and educational opportunities.

The short film, *Santa Cruz Del Islote*, introduces viewers to two islanders, Juancho, a fisherman, and Juan Pablo, a 10-year-old student, who are both contemplating their future. Juancho mourns a decreasing fish population and potential loss of an entire way of life, while Juan Pablo dreams of an education off the island. Both are at the nexus of change, with forces beyond their control likely to extinguish their traditional way of life.

*Manuel Rueda, "[Island of many souls.](#)" *The City Paper*, Bogata, March 13, 2013.



Film: 19 minutes

Class: 60 minutes

SUBJECT AREAS

HIGH SCHOOL

- Anthropology
- English Language Arts
- Geography
- Modern World Studies

COLLEGE

- Cultural Anthropology
- Geography
- History

THEMES

- Community
- Coastal living
- Effects of environmental change
- Change versus tradition

MATERIALS

- Online access to the film
- Equipment for showing film

PREPARATION

- None



Connections to National Standards

Common Core English Language Arts. L.9-10.5 and L.11-12.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Common Core English Language Arts. SL.9-10.5 and SL.11-12.5. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. D2.Geo.2.9-12. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.

Lesson

SETTING THE STAGE

Introduce the film by telling students they will be watching a film about a very small, three-acre island off the coast of Colombia in South America. Tell students that on this unique island, residents report a strong sense of community with no violence, crime, or police. But Santa Cruz del Islote is changing. Island life has revolved around fishing ever since fishermen discovered and developed the island in the 19th century. But in the last decade, fishing stocks have been dwindling, putting an end to this traditional way of life. Other resources—employment and education opportunities, for example—are drawing residents off-island.

Ask students to consider their own towns, cities, and communities. What do they like or dislike about where they live? What are some benefits and challenges to the location of their communities? Benefits can include support from family and friends or access to natural, cultural, or urban environments. Challenges could include a lack of access to schools, jobs, or nature. Ask students to consider the future. What factors might inform their decision to stay or leave their current community? If they did leave, what would they miss most?



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ENGAGING WITH THE STORY

Ask students to watch the short film while jotting down notes about Santa Cruz del Islote and its people. What are some of the characteristics of the island and its inhabitants? What are the concerns and hopes expressed by the main characters, Juancho and Juan Pablo? Ask students to imagine living on Santa Cruz del Islote. Would this way of life be appealing to them? Why or why not?

Delving Deeper

After viewing the film, lead a discussion with such questions as:

- Who are the main characters in the film? What can you say about their daily lives and their future goals?
- How would you describe the island? List the physical characteristics of Santa Cruz del Islote. Describe the shape and size of the island as well as the characteristics of the homes.
- Juancho, the fisherman highlighted in the film, says, “They say we live in paradise. What belongs to one person belongs to everybody. What happens to one family happens to the whole island.” How is this positive sense of community illustrated in the film?
- The island today remains peaceful with no crime or police force. What do you think are the contributing factors that create a peaceful community? What evidence from the film supports this view?
- The fishing resources on the island are dwindling, which is affecting the residents’ livelihoods. What are some additional negative, as well as positive, aspects of island life apparent in the film?
- In an interview, filmmaker Luke Lorentzen explained, “My initial goal with the film was to recreate the experience of living on this island, not only the physical, but also the emotional essence of their way of life.” Do you think he was successful with his goal? Why or why not?



Reflecting and Projecting

Give students one of the following reflective writing prompts to demonstrate their understanding of the story. (Note for teachers: Just as quotes from a book or text are used to prove an analytical thought, students use the film to justify their reasoning.)

1. Referring to the island community, Santa Cruz del Islote resident Juancho says, “The island is like one heart.” What do you think he means by this? How might this experience be influenced by the island landscape? Think about where you live—either your own community or home—and fill in the words to the following simile. The simile can depict a positive, negative, or neutral tone. “_____ is like one _____.” Explain the reasoning behind your sentence in a paragraph. Ask students to read their responses aloud in class. (CCSS.ELA.L.9-10.5 and L.11-12.5)
2. Filmmaker Luke Lorentzen, in an interview, stated that the film’s main characters “spoke for two generations.” Juancho in the film mourns the loss of the fishing population while Juan Pablo, who is younger, dreams about an education off the island. Write a paragraph describing how different generations might respond to change. Do you think change is handled differently depending on one’s age? If so, how? And what might be the reasons behind those differences? Provide an example from your own life. (CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.5 and SL.11-12.5)
3. Santa Cruz del Islote does not contain police, a doctor, or a steady supply of water or electricity. Would you consider living on an island without these resources and amenities? Why or why not? What could be the challenges of living without each of these resources? What resources or opportunities would encourage or discourage you from living in a remote community like Santa Cruz Del Islote? Why? (C3.D2.Geo.2.9-12)



Resources

Edward Symes, "[Luke Lorentzen: Santa Cruz del Islote.](#)" Frontrunner Magazine, November 28, 2014.

"[In Focus: Luke Lorentzen on Santa Cruz del Islote.](#)" SF Film Society Blog, May 9, 2014.

"[Declining Fish.](#)" National Geographic Video.

Kate Schneider, "[Life in the most crowded place on Earth.](#)" News.com.au, July 22, 2015.