

Title: Empire at Home: Imperialism, Power and Policing in New York City

Essential Question: How did imperial power abroad influence policing and social control within New York City?

Essential Knowledge:

Common Core

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

New York State

- 11.3 American nationalism was both strengthened and challenged by territorial expansion and economic growth.
- 11.6 Students will examine debates between anti-imperialists and imperialists surrounding ratification of the Treaty of Paris of 1898 and annexation of the Philippines.

National Council for the Social Studies Themes

- Global Connections
- Power, Authority, and Governance

C3

- D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.
- D4.4.9-12. Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand the ways in which immigrant communities have always been surveilled, in part because of the goal of suppressing political thought.
- Students will identify patterns between the treatment of marginalized groups domestically and abroad.
- Students will articulate the ways in which police and military surveillance are part of the imperialist project.

Grade Level: 9-12

Time Needed: 60-90 minutes

Relevant Topics: imperialism, Spanish-American War, Filipino history, Manifest Destiny

Key Vocabulary:

Required Sources:

[Lesson Citations](#)

Materials/Additional Sources:

[Lesson 7: Imperialism](#)
[Lesson 7: Primary Source Exploration](#)
[Lesson 7: Creative Analysis Activity](#)

Teacher Preparation/Background Knowledge:

This lesson situates Episode 7 of *Empire City* within the broader historical context of late 19th–early 20th century U.S. imperialism and its influence on urban governance and policing in New York City. Teachers

should be prepared to frame imperialism not solely as overseas expansion, but as a system of power that shaped domestic practices of surveillance, social control, and law enforcement.

Implementation Notes & Disclaimers:

This lesson is best implemented over 1–2 class periods. Teachers may choose to pause *Episode 7 of Empire City* at key moments to allow for guided discussion, source analysis, or clarification of historical context.

Scaffolding Inquiry:

Students may need explicit modeling on how to connect global imperial systems to local institutions such as policing. Use anchor questions and graphic organizers to support this analytical transfer.

Modifications

Individual Student Learning Needs:

- Provide graphic organizers (cause/effect charts, system maps, incentive tables).
- Allow extended time for viewing, reading, and creative tasks.
- Offer multiple ways to demonstrate understanding (visual, written, oral, digital).
- Highlight or bold key excerpts in primary sources.
- Model one example of a completed response or creative product.

Language Support:

- Pre-teach key vocabulary using student-friendly definitions, visuals, and examples (e.g., *imperialism, incentive, authority, surveillance*).
- Provide a glossary or word bank alongside the viewing guide and primary sources.
- Allow students to annotate sources in their home language or use bilingual dictionaries.

Safety Concerns:

- Acknowledge upfront that the lesson includes discussions of policing, social control and power within a historical context.
- Emphasize that students are not expected to share personal experiences or opinions.

Do now: Political Cartoon

Suggested Time: 5 minutes

- Display image on first slide. Ask students to jot down their initial noticings and wonderings.
- Who has power in the image? What is the image depicting?

Engage: Listening activity [The American Problem](#). Use [Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routine: Claim, Support, Question](#) to lead discussion about the episode.

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

- Go through slides 1-2 and then replay part of the Empire City episode, while projecting guiding questions on slide 3. [Lesson 7: Imperialism](#)

Explore: Primary Source Stations

Suggested Time: 30 minutes

- Students will explore primary sources related to the show at the theme of "Empire at Home," while filling out a note catcher, as they rotate to each primary source station. [Lesson 7: Primary Source Exploration](#)

Explain: Creative Analysis Looking at Empire at Home

Suggested Time: 20 minutes (finish for homework)

- Students will choose from one of the three activities and do independent (or group) research that further explores imperialism. [Lesson 7: Creative Analysis Activity](#)

Elaborate: Closing Discussion

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

- Ask students, How does policing function as a tool of empire within cities? (slide 4)