

# InsideART

**Title**

*A Look at the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex through Visual Art*

**Estimated Time for Completion of Lesson**

One 50-minute period

**Concept/Main Idea of Lesson**

Through this inquiry-based lesson, students will explore the post-WWII/Cold War era rise of the U.S. military-industrial complex. Visual- and text-based documents invite students to evaluate how Cold War policies facilitated the relationship between the U.S. government and defense industry and how this relationship impacts domestic and foreign policies. The artwork of Gamaliel Rodríguez is featured.

**Intended Grade Levels**

Grades 9-12

**Infusion/Subject Areas**

Visual Arts

Social Studies- U.S. History

**Curriculum Standards***Next Generation Sunshine State Standards*

- Visual Arts:

VA.912.H.3.1: Synthesize knowledge and skills learned from non-art content areas to support the processes of creation, interpretation, and analysis.

VA.912.H.3.3: Use materials, ideas, and/or equipment related to other content areas to generate ideas and processes for the creation of works of art.

- Social Studies:

SS.912.A.6.10: Examine causes, course, and consequences of the early years of the Cold War

SS.912.A.6.12: Examine causes, course, and consequences of the Korean War.

*National Standards for Arts Education*

Anchor Standard #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

*National Council for the Social Studies*  
Time, Continuity, and Change  
Power, Authority, and Governance  
Global Connections

### **Instructional Objectives**

The students will:

- view and analyze a political cartoon, visual art, and primary source documents focused on the U.S. military-industrial complex;
- critically view the work of artist Gamaliel Rodríguez;
- evaluate the emergence and the effects of the U.S. military-industrial complex within the context of the Cold War.

### **Learning Activities Sequence**

#### **Pre-Active Teaching**

Review the information provided in the “notes view” of the PowerPoint presentation and then view the PPT in “slide show” mode to become acquainted with the content, images, and activities.

#### **Attention-Getter:**

Activate PPT titled *The Rise of the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex: A Cold War Strategy*. Advance to slide 2 and provide students with an overview of today’s lesson, then transition to slide 3.

Before launching the video (slide 4), pose the following questions to guide students’ viewing:

1. Who do you recognize in the video?
2. What can you infer is meant by the “military-industrial complex”?
3. When did the idea of the military-industrial complex begin?
4. Does it continue today?

Play video.

Once the video ends, provide students a few minutes to respond to the questions. Initiate a class discussion on the Cold War and the rise of the U.S. military-industrial complex.

#### **Learning Activities:**

Advance to slide 5. Ask a volunteer to read the definition of military-industrial complex. Discuss as a class the definition.

*Think-Pair-Share.* Ask the following questions:

1. Why did the Cold War provide the ideal political environment for the emergence of the U.S. military-industrial complex?

2. What are some positives and negatives of the mutually beneficial relationship between the U.S. government and the defense industry?

Advance to slide 6. Present to students the political cartoon. Give them a minute or two to silently view the image.

*Whole class discussion.* Ask the following questions:

1. What do you see in this image?
2. Who are the main characters in the cartoon? What are they doing?
3. Read the speech bubbles. In your own words, what are the characters saying?
4. What do you perceive is the message in this political cartoon?

Slide 7: Discuss with students in detail the context of the rise of the U.S. military-industrial complex (post-WWII military expansion, Korean War, and U.S. military readiness policy).

Slide 8: *Transition.* Ask students to consider if artwork can be made as a result of, or in response to, the military-industrial complex. Ask them to brainstorm what that could look like.

Slide 9: Introduce artist Gamaliel Rodríguez. Rodríguez was born and raised in Puerto Rico. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and served for two years as an infantryman. Much of his artwork focuses on U.S. military infrastructure.

Slide 10: Ask students to look at the image on the slide and consider what is represented. Ask students:

1. What do you see in this image?
2. Why do you think the artist titled this painting *Smartville*?
3. What does the main building represent to you?

Discuss responses as a class.

Slide 11: Again, ask students to look at the image on the slide and consider what is represented. Ask students:

1. What do you see in this image?
2. Why do you think the artist titled this painting *There are more serious things to talk about*?
3. What does this image represent to you?

Slide 12: Tell students Gamaliel Rodríguez works with pencil, ink, acrylic and ballpoint pen to produce aerial views of artificial industrial, military, and civilian structures in Puerto Rico and US territories. These ideas are manipulated into dystopian, apocalyptic drawings that imagine the collapse of global infrastructure into ruin.

Discuss and define what dystopia and apocalyptic mean, if necessary.

Dystopia: an imagined state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic.

Apocalyptic: resembling the end of the world; momentous or catastrophic.

(Source: Oxford Languages, <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en>)

Point out the meticulous draftsmanship of the drawings as not only a skillful endeavor, but also as a practice with equitable rigor and planning as that of military initiatives. Clearly, these are purposeful drawings.

Ask: Why do you think the artist selected these tonal hues for the drawings?

### **Closure:**

Advance to slide 13. Ask students to consider:

The artist insists his work is not political. Do you agree? Why or why not?

### **Evaluation**

Formative assessments throughout the lesson.

DBQ activity sheet.

### **Materials and Resources**

PowerPoint Presentation: *The Rise of the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex*

Computer

Projector

Screen

DBQ Activity handout

### **Special Learner Accommodations**

Things to consider:

- Extra time for note-taking and completing DBQ activity
- Translation dictionaries for ELLs
- Visually-rich PPT
- Cooperative learning

## Internet Links

[Eisenhower's Warning: Military-Industrial Complex's Growing Budget | Think Back | The New York Times \(2014\). YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QXjBVC233s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QXjBVC233s)

Knighton, A. (2019). *9 American Cold War tanks*.  
<https://www.warhistoryonline.com/instant-articles/9-american-cold-war-tanks.html>

Military-Industrial Complex. (2021).  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military%E2%80%93industrial\\_complex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military%E2%80%93industrial_complex)

Rodríguez, G. (2021). *Gamaliel Rodríguez*. <http://gamarodz.wix.com/gama>

## References

Fallows, J. (2002). The Military-Industrial Complex. *Foreign Policy*, 133, 46–48.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3183556>

National Public Radio. (2011, January 17). *Ike's warning of military expansion, 50 years later*. <https://www.npr.org/2011/01/17/132942244/ikes-warning-of-military-expansion-50-years-later>