

## 2 The Spanish-American War

### TERMS & NAMES

yellow journalism  
U.S.S. *Maine*  
Spanish-American War  
Rough Riders  
Platt Amendment  
Anti-Imperialist League  
Luis Muñoz Rivera

### MAIN IDEA

Independence movements in Spanish colonies led to the Spanish-American War in 1898.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

U.S. involvement in Latin America and Asia expanded greatly after the Spanish-American War.

### ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

José Martí was forced to leave Cuba in the 1870s, when he was still a teenager. In those years, the Caribbean island was a Spanish colony, and he had spoken out for independence. Martí later described the terrible conditions that existed under Spanish rule.

#### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Cuba's children . . . suffer in indescribable bitterness as they see their fertile nation enchained and also their human dignity stifled . . . all for the necessities and vices of the [Spanish] monarchy.

José Martí, quoted in *José Martí, Mentor of the Cuban Nation*

After being forced out of Cuba, Martí spent much of his life in the United States. In 1892, he was elected to lead the Cuban Revolutionary Party. At the Party's headquarters in New York City, Martí began to plan a revolt against Spain that began in 1895.

Martí's lifelong struggle for Cuban independence made him a symbol of liberty throughout Latin America. In this section, you will read how U.S. disapproval of Spain's treatment of Cubans led to the Spanish-American War.



José Martí dedicated his life to the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain.

### Rebellion Against Spain

The Spanish empire was crumbling at the end of the 19th century. Spain had once controlled most of the Americas, including land that became part of the United States. By the 1890s, however, it owned only a few colonies. Among them were the Philippine Islands in the Pacific and the Caribbean islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico. (See the maps on page 263.) Many of the inhabitants of these colonies had begun to demand independence.

Cubans had revolted against Spain several times in the second half of the nineteenth century. Each time, Spanish soldiers defeated the rebels. In 1895, an ongoing economic depression had increased Cubans' anger over Spanish rule, and they rebelled again. José Martí, who had helped to organize the rebellion from New York, returned to Cuba. He was killed in a skirmish with Spanish troops shortly after, but the revolt continued.



Spain sent General Valeriano “the Butcher” Weyler to crush the rebels. Weyler’s methods were harsh. He forced many Cubans from their homes and placed them in camps guarded by Spanish troops. Thousands died of starvation and disease in the camps.

The revolt in Cuba caused alarm in the United States. Business leaders were concerned because the fighting disrupted U.S. trade with Cuba. Most Americans, however, became outraged when the press began to describe the brutality of Spanish officials. Two New York City newspapers, in particular, stirred up people’s emotions.

The *World*, owned by Joseph Pulitzer, and the *New York Journal*, owned by William Randolph Hearst, were battling for customers. Both owners were able to attract readers by printing stories that described—and often exaggerated—news about Spanish cruelty. This sensational style of writing was known as **yellow journalism**. It was named after “The Yellow Kid,” a popular comic strip that ran in the two New York papers.

### ReadingHistory

**A. Forming Opinions** How can newspapers affect public opinion?

## The United States Goes to War

William McKinley, the U.S. president in 1898, did not want war. “I have been through [the Civil War],” he told a friend. “I have seen the dead piled up, and I do not want to see another.”

Even so, public opinion—stirred up by sensational newspaper reports—forced McKinley to take action. He demanded that Spain halt its harsh treatment of Cubans. Spain did bring General Weyler home, but conditions remained severe.

In January 1898, McKinley sent the **U.S.S. *Maine*** to Cuba. Riots had broken out in the capital, Havana, and the battleship was dispatched to protect U.S. citizens. Then, the following month, the *Maine* exploded and sank in Havana’s harbor, killing 260 sailors.

No one knows what caused the explosion. Most historians today believe that it was an accident. For example, a spark might have set off an explosion in the ship’s coal bunker. Even so, Americans blamed Spain.

The explosion of the *Maine* and accounts of the event by yellow journalists led many Americans to favor war against Spain.

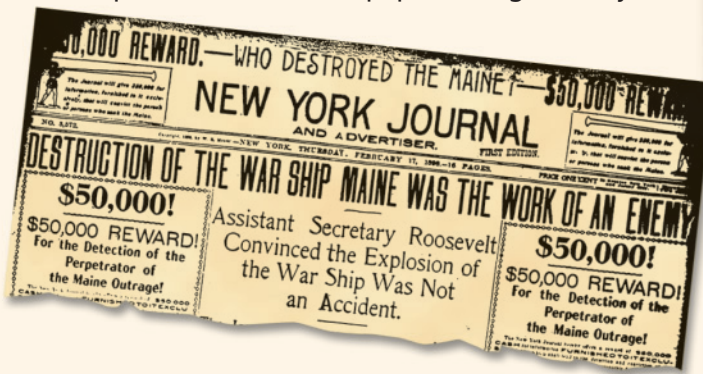


## Detecting Bias in the Media

Modern journalists try to report the news without bias—that is, without letting their personal opinions or those of their employer influence what they write. Unbiased reporting is one of the responsibilities of a free press. It allows citizens to weigh the facts and come to their own understanding of issues and events.


As you have read, journalists and their employers do not always avoid bias. In fact, in the 1890s, journalists were not concerned with bias. Before the United States declared war on Spain in 1898, ‘yellow journalists’ exaggerated stories to help sell newspapers. These stories helped turn U.S. public opinion in favor of war against Spain. They used words and images to reflect their bias that the United States should declare war on Spain—and sell more papers along the way.

William Randolph Hearst ran this headline in his *New York Journal* before authorities had a chance to determine the cause of the *Maine*’s explosion.



### Can You Find Bias in the Media?

1. With a small group, collect news stories from different sources that cover the same issue or event.
2. Record any differences in the way a specific issue or event is covered by the oral, written, or visual sources you have selected.
3. Review the differences and decide whether any of the authors of the sources showed bias in their coverage.
4. Write a report that describes any bias you might detect. Explain why the biased source might have reported the story the way it did.

 See Citizenship Handbook, page 106.

For more about the news media . . .



“Remember the Maine!” became a call to arms. On April 20, 1898, President McKinley signed a congressional resolution that called for Cuba’s independence and demanded a withdrawal of Spanish forces. He gave Spain three days to respond. Spain refused, and the **Spanish-American War** began.

## The War in the Philippines

The United States went to war to fight for Cuban freedom. But the first major battle of the Spanish-American War took place in a Spanish colony on the other side of the world—the Philippine Islands. Many Filipinos, as the inhabitants of the islands were called, had also revolted against Spanish rule in the 1890s.

Before the war began, the Filipino independence movement had attracted the attention of Theodore Roosevelt. At that time, Roosevelt was assistant secretary of the navy. He put a fleet of American ships in Hong Kong on alert. Their leader, Commodore George Dewey, prepared his forces and made contact with the head of the Filipino rebel forces, Emilio Aguinaldo (eh•MEE•lyoh AH•gee•NAHL•doh).

When the war began, Dewey set out for Manila, the Philippine capital, where part of the Spanish fleet was located. The battle in Manila Bay began early on the morning of May 1, 1898. By a little past noon,

### ReadingHistory

**B. Making Inferences** Why did Theodore Roosevelt put the U.S. fleet in Hong Kong on alert?



Dewey's forces had destroyed the Spanish fleet. About 380 Spanish sailors were dead or wounded. No Americans died. U.S. troops, aided by Filipino rebels, took control of Manila in August.

Dewey became an instant hero in the United States. Thousands of babies born at the time of the victory in Manila Bay were named for him, and a chewing gum called "Dewey's Chewies" became popular.

## The War in the Caribbean

When the Spanish-American War began, the U.S. Army had only 28,000 men. Within four months, over 200,000 more joined up. Among the new recruits was Theodore Roosevelt, who had resigned from the Navy Department to volunteer.

Roosevelt helped to organize the First United States Volunteer Cavalry. This unit was nicknamed the **Rough Riders**. Its recruits included cowboys, miners, college students, New York policemen, athletes, and Native Americans.

In June, the Rough Riders and about 16,000 other soldiers—nearly a quarter of them African American—gathered in Tampa, Florida. They then set out for Santiago, a Spanish stronghold in southern Cuba. When the Rough Riders arrived, their dark-blue wool uniforms were too hot for the Cuban climate. Also, many of the soldiers came down with tropical diseases. Even so, they fought their way toward Santiago.

In order to gain control of Santiago's port, American troops had to capture San Juan Hill. They attacked the Spanish on July 1.



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Maps

- 1. Movement** Where was Dewey's fleet before it steamed toward the Philippines?
- 2. Location** About how far is Havana from the tip of southern Florida?

## HISTORY through ART

On July 1, 1898, U.S. troops, including the Rough Riders, attacked San Juan Hill outside of Santiago, Cuba. This painting shows Theodore Roosevelt leading a cavalry charge up the hill—even though the regiment's horses had been left behind in Florida.

**Why did the artist show the Rough Riders on horses when they made their charge on foot?**



African-American soldiers from the Tenth Cavalry began to drive the Spanish back. Roosevelt and the Rough Riders joined them as they rushed forward and captured the hill.

Two days later, American ships destroyed Spain's fleet as it tried to escape Santiago Harbor. On July 17, the city surrendered. A week later, U.S. forces took Puerto Rico. Finally, on August 12, 1898, Spain signed a truce. To U.S. Secretary of State John Hay, it had been "a splendid little war." For Spain, four centuries of glory had come to an end.

## Results of the War

Although the war had been fought over Cuba, U.S. leaders demanded that Spain give up other colonies after the war—including Puerto Rico, the island of Guam, and the Philippines. Spain had no choice but to agree. The final peace treaty was signed in Paris in December 1898.

One of the most difficult questions for U.S. leaders after the war was what to do with the Philippines. Filipinos had fought alongside Americans during the war and believed that Spain's defeat would bring them independence. But President McKinley eventually decided that the Philippines should become an American colony.

Filipinos were bitterly disappointed. Led by Emilio Aguinaldo, they began to fight against their new colonial rulers. American troops sent to put down the resistance were not able to restore order until 1902.

The United States was also reluctant to grant Cuba complete independence. First, Cuba had to add the **Platt Amendment** to its constitution. This gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuban affairs anytime there was a threat to "life, property, and individual liberty." Cuba also had to allow a U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay.

Puerto Rico became an American territory. The United States set up a government and appointed the top officials. Puerto Ricans had little to

### ReadingHistory

**C. Making Inferences** Why did the United States demand that Spain give up territories in addition to Cuba?



say in their own affairs. Only in 1917 would the United States agree to make Puerto Rico a self-governing territory and grant U.S. citizenship to all Puerto Ricans.

## The Anti-Imperialist League

U.S. treatment of Spain's former colonies after the Spanish-American War disappointed many people in the United States.

Several well-known Americans, including businessman Andrew Carnegie, reformer Jane Addams, and writer Mark Twain, joined with others to form the **Anti-Imperialist League**. Members of the League believed that Americans should not deny other people the right to govern themselves.

### ReadingHistory

**D. Finding Main Ideas** Why did the Anti-Imperialist League oppose U.S. efforts to collect colonies?

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty. . . . We regret that it has become necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

From the *Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League*

The voice of the Anti-Imperialist League was lost, however, in the roar of popular approval of the Spanish-American War.

Many Americans hoped that their nation would surpass the glory of the old Spanish empire. In the next section, you will read more about how the United States continued its involvement overseas.

## AMERICA'S HISTORY MAKERS



**LUIS MUÑOZ RIVERA**

1859–1916

**Luis Muñoz Rivera** devoted his life to obtaining self-government for Puerto Rico—first from Spain and then from the United States.

After Spain granted Puerto Rico self-rule in 1897, Muñoz Rivera joined the government. He resigned and renewed his struggle when Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory.

Muñoz Rivera died just before the United States granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship and a large measure of self-government.

**In what ways did Muñoz Rivera use his leadership skills to help his country?**

## Section 2 Assessment

### 1. Terms & Names

**Explain the significance of:**

- yellow journalism
- U.S.S. *Maine*
- Spanish-American War
- Rough Riders
- Platt Amendment
- Anti-Imperialist League
- Luis Muñoz Rivera

### 2. Taking Notes

Use a time line to record the major events of the Spanish-American War.



Spanish-American War, 1898

About how long did the Spanish-American War last?

### 3. Main Ideas

**a.** What led to the Cuban rebellion against Spain in 1895?

**b.** What was the first major military event of the Spanish-American War?

**c.** What happened in the Philippines after the war?

### 4. Critical Thinking

**Forming Opinions** Did the United States betray its democratic principles when it made the Philippines a colony?

**THINK ABOUT**

- the public's response to yellow journalists and U.S. military victories
- the work of the Anti-Imperialist League

### ACTIVITY OPTIONS

#### LANGUAGE ARTS

#### MATH

Research the Spanish-American War. Write a **television news script** covering a major battle or create a **database** of wartime casualties.