

Directions: Every time you read a handout, you will mark it up to show you were in the text. Today is no different. ☺

### The Spanish-American War

“By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Spain – once the most powerful colonial nation on earth – had lost most of its colonies. It retained only the Philippines and the island of Guam in the Pacific, a few outposts in Africa, and the Caribbean islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Americas. The United States had long held an interest in Cuba, which lies only 90 miles south of Florida. When the Cubans rebelled against Spain between 1868 and 1878, American sympathies went out to the Cuban people. Anti-Spanish sentiment in Cuba soon erupted into a second war for independence. José Martí, a Cuban poet and journalist in exile in New York, launched a revolution in 1895. Public opinion in the United States was split. Many businessmen wanted the government to support Spain in order to protect their investments in Cuban sugar mills and plantations. Other Americans, however, were enthusiastic about the rebel cause. The cry ‘Cuba Libre!’ was, after all, similar in sentiment to Patrick Henry’s ‘Give me liberty or give me death!’ In 1896, Spain responded to the Cuban revolt by sending General Valeriano Weyler to Cuba to restore order.

Weyler tried to crush the rebellion by herding the entire rural population of central and western Cuba into barbed-wire concentration camps. Here civilians could not give aid to rebels. An estimated 300,000 Cubans filled these camps, where thousands died from hunger and disease. Weyler’s actions fueled a war over newspaper circulation that had developed between the American newspaper tycoons William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. To lure readers, Hearst’s *New York Journal* and Pulitzer’s *New York World* printed exaggerated accounts – by reporters such as James Creelman – of ‘Butcher’ Weyler’s brutality. Stories of poisoned wells and of children being thrown to the sharks deepened American sympathy for the rebels. This sensational style of writing, which exaggerates the news to lure and enrage readers, became known as yellow journalism.

In February 1898, however, the *New York Journal* published a private letter written by Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, the Spanish minister to the United States. A Cuban rebel had stolen the letter from a Havana post office and leaked it to the newspaper, which was thirsty for scandal. The de Lôme letter criticized President McKinley, calling him ‘weak’ and ‘a bidder for the admiration of the crowd.’ The embarrassed Spanish government apologized, and the minister resigned. Still, Americans were angry over the insult to their president. Only a few days after the publication of the de Lôme letter, American resentment toward Spain turned to outrage. Early in 1898, President McKinley had ordered the *U.S.S. Maine* to Cuba to bring home American citizens in danger from the fighting and to protect American property. On February 15, 1898, the ship blew up in the harbor of Havana. More than 260 men were killed. At the time, no one really knew why the ship exploded. In 1898, however, American newspapers claimed the Spanish had blown up the ship.” ~ *The Americans*

1. News organizations were engaging in yellow journalism when
  - a. publishers tried to prevent the war
  - b. articles about Cuba were fair
  - c. newspapers exaggerated events
  - d. writers ignored Cuba
2. The expression “yellow journalism” refers to the newspapers that emphasized
  - a. Pacifism in foreign affairs.
  - b. Lurid and sensational news.
  - c. The dangers of Oriental immigration.
  - d. Manifest Destiny.

“The Spanish-American War marked a major turning point in American foreign relations, changing the United States from a nation without colonies to one in possession of an overseas empire.”