

**U.S. Imperialism****Lesson 2**

# The Spanish–American War

**Key Terms and People**

**José Martí** Political activist who worked for Cuban independence

**Valeriano Weyler** General sent from Spain to Cuba to restore order in 1896

**yellow journalism** Reporting in newspapers and magazines that exaggerates the news in order to make it more exciting

**USS *Maine*** U.S. warship that exploded in a Cuban harbor in 1898

**George Dewey** U.S. naval commander who led the American attack on the Philippines

**Rough Riders** Fighting unit led by Theodore Roosevelt in Cuba

**San Juan Hill** Location of an important American land victory in Cuba

**Treaty of Paris** The treaty that ended the Spanish-American War

**Before You Read**

In the last lesson you learned how the United States became an imperialist power and took over the Hawaiian Islands. In this lesson you will learn how the United States became involved in Cuba and fought a war with Spain.

**As You Read**

Complete a cause and effect chart as you take notes on the Spanish-American War.

**CUBANS REBEL AGAINST SPAIN****What happened when Cuba rebelled against Spain?**

Between 1868 and 1878 Cubans fought their first war for independence from Spain. The rebels did not win, but they did force Spain to abolish slavery in 1886. After that, United States capitalists invested in sugarcane plantations in Cuba.

Sugar was the most important product of Cuba. The United States was the main market for the sugar. As long as the United States did not charge a tariff on Cuban sugar, the Cuban

economy thrived. But the Cuban economy collapsed in 1894 when a tariff on sugar was imposed.

In 1895 Cubans began a second war for independence. The rebellion was led by **José Martí**. He was a Cuban poet and journalist who had been living in exile in New York. Martí organized a campaign of destroying property, especially American-owned sugar plantations, as a way of provoking the United States to action. The rebels wanted the United States to join their cause.

American opinion was mixed. Some wanted to support Spain in order to keep

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their investments safe. Others wanted to help the Cuban people win their freedom from Spain just as the United States had won its independence from England.

1. How did Cuba's two wars for independence affect American business interests?

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**WAR FEVER ESCALATES****Why did Americans become angry with Spain?**

In 1896 Spain sent an army to Cuba to restore order. The army was led by General **Valeriano Weyler**. Weyler rounded up the entire rural population of central and western Cuba. He kept 300,000 people as prisoners in concentration camps. That way they could not help the rebels. Thousands died of hunger and disease.

This story was widely reported in the United States. Rival newspapers in New York made the terrible events sound even worse. They exaggerated the brutality of the story in order to attract readers. These sensational stories became known as **yellow journalism**—reporting that exaggerates the news in order to make it more exciting.

William McKinley became president in 1897. At that time, many Americans wanted the United States to help the rebels against Spain. McKinley tried to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. His efforts had several positive results. Spain sent General Weyler home, changed the concentration camp policy, and gave Cuba limited self-government.

Then two events made Americans very angry at Spain. The first was the publication of a letter that insulted the American president. The de Lôme letter

was written by a Spanish diplomat. It criticized McKinley for being weak. Although some Americans agreed that the president was weak, they did not want to hear this criticism from a Spanish official.

Only a few days after the letter was published, something worse happened. The battleship **USS *Maine*** was stationed in Cuba to protect American lives and property. On February 15, 1898, the ship exploded. The ship sank, and 260 officers and crew on board died. The cause of the explosion was not known. However, newspapers blamed Spain. Americans cried for war.

2. What two events led Americans to call for war against Spain?

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**WAR WITH SPAIN ERUPTS****Where and when did the fighting take place?**

On April 20, 1898, the United States went to war with Spain. The first battle took place in the Philippines. The Philippines had been a Spanish colony for 300 years. They had rebelled many times. In 1896 they began another rebellion.

On May 1, 1898, the American naval commander **George Dewey** sailed into Manila Bay in the Philippines. His ships destroyed the Spanish fleet there. In the next two months, U.S. soldiers fought on the side of the Filipino rebels. The Spanish surrendered to the United States in August.

In Cuba, the American navy blocked off the harbor of Santiago de Cuba. Spanish ships could not leave. Then American troops landed on the island in June 1898.

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One unit of volunteer soldiers was called the **Rough Riders**. Theodore Roosevelt was one of their leaders. They helped win the important battle of **San Juan Hill**. American newspapers made Roosevelt a hero.

When the Spanish ships tried to leave the harbor, their fleet was destroyed. This led the Spanish to surrender on July 25.

Spain quickly agreed to a peace treaty. The **Treaty of Paris** granted Cuba its independence. Spain gave Puerto Rico and the Pacific island of Guam to the United States. The United States paid Spain \$20 million for the annexation of the Philippine Islands.

The Treaty of Paris touched off a great debate in the United States about

imperialism. President McKinley was in favor of it. But some prominent Americans presented a variety of arguments against annexation. Booker T. Washington argued that the United States should settle race-related issues at home before taking on social problems elsewhere. Labor leader Samuel Gompers opposed the treaty because he believed Filipino workers would compete for American jobs. The Senate approved the treaty on February 6, 1899.

3. What three territories did the United States get from the war with Spain?

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As you read about the Spanish-American War, write notes in the appropriate boxes to answer the questions about its causes and effects.

<b>CAUSES: HOW DID EACH OF THE FOLLOWING HELP TO CAUSE THE OUTBREAK OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR?</b>
1. American business owners
2. José Martí
3. Valeriano Weyler
4. Yellow journalism
5. De Lôme letter
6. USS <i>Maine</i>

<b>EFFECTS: WHAT HAPPENED TO EACH OF THE FOLLOWING TERRITORIES AS A RESULT OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR?</b>
7. Cuba
8. Puerto Rico
9. Guam
10. Philippine Islands