

1-8-2016

# Independent to Imperialist -- The Spanish American War

Tom Stoffel  
*St. Cloud State University*

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## Recommended Citation

Stoffel, Tom, "Independent to Imperialist -- The Spanish American War" (2016). *Curriculum Unit on the Gilded Age in the United States*. Book 20.  
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**Title: Independent to Imperialist – The Spanish American War**

**Author: Lower East Side Tenement Museum**

**Adapter: Tom Stoffel**

**Grade Levels: 9-12**

**Time: 1 Day Lesson 50 Min Classes**

**Focus Statement:** By utilizing primary sources without knowing what the outcome is supposed to be, students will “perceive events and issues as people experienced them at the time, to develop historical empathy as opposed to present-mindedness.” Students will evaluate the message Theodore Roosevelt sent to Dewey and decide if Roosevelt made the correct decision. Students will also learn key terms relating to what lead to the Spanish American War, what events happened in Cuba and debate if Yellow Journalism still occurs today. To finish the day we will cover how and if the Spanish American War changed the course of American foreign policy.

**MN Standard:**

MN Standard 9.4.4.20.8 As the United States shifted from its agrarian roots into an industrial and global power, the rise of big business, urbanization and immigration led to institutionalized racism, ethnic and class conflict and new efforts at reform. (Development of an industrial United States 1870-1920)

Benchmark: Explain how the United States became a world power via trade and imperialist acquisition of new territories. (Development of an Industrial United States: 1870-1920)

**Habit of Mind:**

Perceive past events and issues as they were experienced by people at the time, to develop historical empathy as opposed to present-mindedness.

**Learning Objective(s):** (Both Content and Skill)

- Students will locate: Cuba, Philippines, Guam and Hawaii on a Map
- Students will define the following: Imperialism, Isolationism, Martial Law and Yellow Journalism
- Students will articulate how the Spanish American War changed the course of American Foreign Policy

**Resources: Attached at End**

- Copy of telegram from Theodore Roosevelt to Admiral Dewey
- Writings from Cleveland and McKinley
- In the Shadow of Glory: The Story of the Thirteenth Minnesota in the Spanish American War and Philippine American War, 1898-1899 (Use for Images and story for students to relate to)
- Painting of USS Maine explosion
- Powerpoint in order to give students definitions of key terms and main points

## Day 1

### Methods/Procedures

#### **Beginning (10 minutes):**

- Display the painting of the USS Main exploding, ask the students what they think happened. Write answers on the board. Ask how U.S. citizens might have reacted, what would it be like to be there.
- Note the huge range of answers, write the conspiracies that were going around the United States during the time of the explosion: Spanish forces blew it up, Cuban Rebels blew it up to bring the United States into the war and the ship blew up because the ammunition was stored too closely to the boiler room.
- Display Roosevelt's telegram to Admiral Dewey and see if any of the kids can tell you what it means. If they cannot inform them it authorized Dewey to engage the Spanish fleet without letting everyone else know what is going on. Should Roosevelt have done this?

#### **Middle: Instructional Strategies / Learning Activities (30 minutes):**

- First show where Cuba is in relation to the United States as well as Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines. Use a Map and ensure all students know the basic geography of the region we're talking about.
- Tell the class what the Spanish were doing to the native Cubans and talk about the camps they were putting them into. Talk about the harsh living conditions with so many people living in a confined space under martial law and subject to disease and dirty water.
- Describe Yellow Journalism and how this was used to change the opinions of Americans and government officials by exaggerating the facts and not showing all sides of what was going on.
- Discuss the USS Maine blowing up. Why this happened and how the U.S. population took the news. Was it because of the Spanish or Cubans, or was it just bad placement of the ammunition. U.S. citizens were already getting mad at the Spanish because they were treating people inhumanely just 90 miles off the coast of Florida.
- Again display Roosevelt's telegram to Admiral Dewey and tell the class how Dewey was able to destroy all of the Spanish Ships in the Philippines. Talk about how German and English fleets flocked to the area seeing if the United States was going to take over the Philippines or not. If the United States did not they were going to move in for their own purposes.
- Ask if America wants to expand during this time period or remain isolationist? Between the Gilded Age and until after World War II there was the discussion of being a world power or should we use the oceans to our advantage and be isolationist.
- Break the class up into groups of 2-3 and hand out two different points of view, one from Cleveland and McKinley. Have the students answer who, what, where, when and why. Do students think the way these two politicians did?
- Pick students to discuss what their group wrote. Ask the students if this is the only two viewpoints? Can we today completely understand what was going on during this time from just primary sources?
- Talk about the buildup of the military and staging in Florida as well as Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Tell students we did not even have enough naval ships to ship troops the 90 miles and had to use merchant ships.
- Show students about Buffalo soldiers and how they are the unsung heroes of the Cuban Campaign.
- The Battle of Santiago De Cuba which resulted in the destruction of the Spanish Navy's Caribbean Squadron.
- Discuss imperialism and how the Spanish American War changed foreign policy, was it good that we were in control of areas that were not part of the United States?

#### **End / Summary (10 minutes):**

- Fill out an Exit Card defining vocab words
- Discuss whether or not Yellow Journalism still occurs today

- How did America view of its role change from time period of the Civil War to the time period of the Spanish American War

### Afterwards

#### **Provisions for Individual Differences** (physical, emotional, mental, language, etc.):

- Once I find out what Individual Education Program (IEP) I have in the class I will make appropriate adjustments so that all students get the most out of their education
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**Self-Reflection** (What worked? What needs Improvement? What changes would I make before doing the lesson again?)

- I will fill out after trying in a classroom to better incorporate new ideas and how to teach this lesson better
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## Bibliography

- Hickman, Kennedy. "The Spanish-American War." About Education. 2015. Accessed November 25, 2015. <http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/battleswars1800s/tp/The-Spanish-American-War.htm>.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. "Telegram in Code from Theodore Roosevelt to Admiral Dewy, 2/26/1898." National Archives. Accessed October 17, 2015. <https://research.archives.gov/id/300262>
- "Splendid Little War": The Spanish American War." Edsitement. Accessed October 17, 2015. [http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/worksheets/Birth of an American Empire Lesson02.pdf](http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/worksheets/Birth%20of%20an%20American%20Empire%20Lesson02.pdf).
- Ward, Kyle. *In the Shadow of Glory: The Story of the Thirteenth Minnesota in the Spanish American War and Philippine American War, 1898-1899*. St Cloud, Minnesota: North Star Press of St Cloud MN, 1999.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exit Card

1. Define the following:

Imperialism:

Isolationism:

Yellow Journalism:

Martial Law:

2. Does Yellow Journalism still occur today?

3. How did America's view of its role change from time period of the Civil War to the time period of the Spanish American War



Painting of the explosion of the USS Maine

Document for May 1st:

Telegram, in code, from Theodore Roosevelt to Commodore Dewey, 02/26/1898

No. 10  
 (P.A.)—Transmitting John Fern  
 Apr. 26, 1898  
 The Eastern Extension Australasia & China Telegraph Company, Ltd.      The Great Northern Telegraph Company of Copenhagen.

Station from: *84*      Send No. *102*      HONG KONG STATION.      Local No. *Mg*  
 Date: *26*      Time: *2*      1898  
 Class: *7*      Charge:

No. *24*      Words: *Dewey*      Date: *26*      Time: *11:30*      (Official) *Govt north*  
 Place: *Hongkong*

*Kassereip pausatara Badando*  
*Centennial titubadi loschbank*  
*Vosete Offen sendo Caraguies*  
*licarazado numeratura Spilable*  
*appilante depugnere demidewit*  
*monocilabd atocharon Fachonason*  
*chianatte? Crencha sparrwerk*  
*alunatoté*      *Roosevelt*

Price *5.50*      at *4.50*  
 6:30 p.m.      1898

This telegram, in code from Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt to Commodore George Dewey, Commander of the U.S. Asiatic Squadron, was sent without the knowledge of Secretary of the Navy Long. The telegram authorized Dewey to engage the Spanish fleet. On May 1, 1898, Dewey would destroy the Spanish fleet at the Battle of Manila Bay.

Grover Cleveland: American Interests in the Cuban Revolution (1896):

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/gc26.htm>

THE INSURRECTION IN CUBA still continues with all its perplexities. It is difficult to perceive that any progress has thus far been made toward the pacification of the island or that the situation of affairs as depicted in my last annual message has in the least improved....

Indeed, as the contest has gone on, the pretense that civil government exists on the island, except so far as Spain is able to maintain it, has been practically abandoned. Spain does keep on foot such a government, more or less imperfectly, in the large towns and their immediate suburbs. But, that exception being made, the entire country is either given over to anarchy or is subject to the military occupation of one or the other party....

Meanwhile, as in all cases of protracted civil strife, the passions of the combatants grow more and more inflamed, and excesses on both sides become more frequent and more deplorable. They are also participated in by bands of marauders, who, now in the name of one party and now in the name of the other, as may best suit the occasion, harry the country at will and plunder its wretched inhabitants for their own advantage...

The sure result would seem to be that the industrial value of the island is fast diminishing, and that unless there is a speedy and radical change in existing conditions, it will soon disappear altogether. That value consists very largely, of course, in its capacity to produce sugar - a capacity already much reduced by the interruptions to tillage which have taken place during the last two years...

The spectacle of the utter ruin of an adjoining country, by nature one of the most fertile and charming on the globe, would engage the serious attention of the government and people of the United States in any circumstances... It is reasonably estimated that at least from \$30 million to \$50 million of American capital are invested in plantations and in railroad, mining, and other business enterprises on the island. The volume of trade between the United States and Cuba, which in 1889 amounted to about \$64 million, rose in 1893 to about \$103 million, and in 1894, the year before the present insurrection broke out, amounted to nearly \$96 million....

These inevitable entanglements of the United States with the rebellion in Cuba, the large American property interests affected, and considerations of philanthropy and humanity in general, have led to a vehement demand in various quarters for some sort of positive intervention on the part of the United States... It is now also suggested that the United States should buy the island - a suggestion possibly worthy of consideration if there were any evidence of a desire or willingness on the part of Spain to entertain such a proposal. It is urged, finally, that, all other methods failing, the existing internecine strife in Cuba should be terminated by our intervention, even at the cost of a war between the United States and Spain - a war which its advocates confidently prophesy could be neither large in its proportions nor doubtful in its issue.

The correctness of this forecast need be neither affirmed nor denied. The United States has nevertheless a character to maintain as a nation, which plainly dictates that right and not might should be the rule of its conduct. Further, though the United States is not a nation to which peace is a necessity, it is in truth the most pacific of powers and desires nothing so much as to live in amity with all the world. Its own ample and diversified domains satisfy all possible longings for territory, preclude all dreams of conquest, and prevent any casting of covetous eyes upon neighboring regions, however attractive. ...

Nevertheless, realizing that suspicions and precautions on the part of the weaker of two combatants are always natural and not always unjustifiable, being sincerely desirous in the interest of both as well as on its own account that the Cuban problem should be solved with the least possible delay, it was intimated by this government to the government of Spain some months ago that, if a satisfactory measure of home rule were tendered the Cuban insurgents and would be accepted by them upon a guarantee of its execution, the United States would endeavor to find a way not objectionable to Spain of furnishing such guarantee. While no definite response to this intimation has yet been received from the Spanish government, it is believed to be not altogether unwelcome, while, as already suggested, no reason is perceived why it should not be approved by the insurgents.

Neither party can fail to see the importance of early action, and both must realize that to prolong the present state of things for even a short period will add enormously to the time and labor and expenditure necessary to bring about the industrial recuperation of the island. It is therefore fervently hoped on all grounds that earnest



efforts for healing the breach between Spain and the insurgent Cubans, upon the lines above indicated, may be at once inaugurated and pushed to an immediate and successful issue. The friendly offices of the United States, either in the manner above outlined or in any other way consistent with our Constitution and laws, will always be at the disposal of either party.

Whatever circumstances may arise, our policy and our interests would constrain us to object to the acquisition of the island or an interference with its control by any other power.

It should be added that it cannot be reasonably assumed that the hitherto expectant attitude of the United States will be indefinitely maintained. While we are anxious to accord all due respect to the sovereignty of Spain, we cannot view the pending conflict in all its features and properly apprehend our inevitably close relations to it and its possible results without considering that, by the course of events, we may be drawn into such an unusual and unprecedented condition as will fix a limit to our patient waiting for Spain to end the contest, either alone and in her own way or with our friendly cooperation...

President McKinley's Declaration of War, 1898:  
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/mkinly2.htm>

...The present revolution is but the successor of other similar insurrections which have occurred in Cuba against the dominion of Spain, extending over a period of nearly half a century, each of which, during its progress, has subjected the United States to great effort and expense in enforcing its neutrality laws, caused enormous losses to American trade and commerce, caused irritation, annoyance, and disturbance among our citizens, and, by the exercise of cruel, barbarous, and uncivilized practices of warfare, shocked the sensibilities and offended the humane sympathies of our people.

...The grounds for such intervention may be briefly summarized as follows:

First, in the cause of humanity and to put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation, and horrible miseries now existing there, and which the parties to the conflict are either unable or unwilling to stop or mitigate. It is no answer to say this is all in another country, belonging to another nation, and is therefore none of our business. It is specially our duty, for it is right at our door.

Second, we owe it to our citizens in Cuba to afford them that protection and indemnity for life and property which no government there can or will afford, and to that end to terminate the conditions that deprive them of legal protection.

Third, the right to intervene may be justified by the very serious injury to the commerce, trade, and business of our people, and by the wanton destruction of property and devastation of the island.

Fourth, and which is of the utmost importance, the present condition of affairs in Cuba is a constant menace to our peace, and entails upon this government an enormous expense. With such a conflict waged for years in an island so near us and with which our people have such trade and business relations; when the lives and liberty of our citizens are in constant danger and their property destroyed and themselves ruined; where our trading vessels are liable to seizure and are seized at our very door by warships of a foreign nation, the expeditions of filibustering that we are powerless to prevent altogether, and the irritating questions and entanglements thus arising -- all these and others that I need not mention, with the resulting strained relations, are a constant menace to our peace, and compel us to keep on a semiwar footing with a nation with which we are at peace.

These elements of danger and disorder already pointed out have been strikingly illustrated by a tragic event which has deeply and justly moved the American people. I have already transmitted to Congress the report of the Naval Court of Inquiry on the destruction of the battleship Maine in the harbor of Havana during the night of the 15th of February. The destruction of that noble vessel has filled the national heart with inexpressible horror. Two hundred and fifty-eight brave sailors and marines and two officers of our Navy, reposing in the fancied security of a friendly harbor, have been hurled to death, grief and want brought to their homes, and sorrow to the nation.

The Naval Court of Inquiry, which, it is needless to say, commands the unqualified confidence of the government, was unanimous in its conclusion that the destruction of the Maine was caused by an exterior explosion, that of a submarine mine. It did not assume to place the responsibility. That remains to be fixed. In any event, the destruction of the Maine, by whatever exterior cause, is a patent and impressive proof of a state of things in Cuba that is intolerable. That condition is thus shown to be such that the Spanish government cannot assure safety and security to a vessel of the American Navy in the harbor of Havana on a mission of peace, and rightfully there. . . .

The long trial has proved that the object for which Spain has waged the war cannot be attained. The fire of insurrection may flame or may smolder with varying seasons, but it has not been, and it is plain that it cannot be, extinguished by present methods. The only hope of relief and repose from a condition which can no longer be endured is the enforced pacification of Cuba. In the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, in behalf of endangered American interests which give us the right and the duty to speak and to act, the war in Cuba must stop.

In view of these facts and of these considerations, I ask the Congress to authorize and empower the President to take measures to secure a full and final termination of hostilities between the government of Spain and the people of Cuba, and to secure in the island the establishment of a stable government, capable of maintaining order and observing its international obligations, insuring peace and tranquillity and the security of its

citizens as well as our own, and to use the military and naval forces of the United States as may be necessary for these purposes.

And in the interest of humanity and to aid in preserving the lives of the starving people of the island, I recommend that the distribution of food and supplies be continued, and that an appropriation be made out of the public Treasury to supplement the charity of our citizens...