

The Spanish-American War

Guide to Reading

Connection

In the previous section, you learned how the United States increased overseas trade and began developing a modern navy. In this section, you will discover how the United States went to war with Spain and how the war expanded American territory.

Main Idea

- In support of the Cuban rebellion and in retaliation for the loss of the USS *Maine*, the United States declared war on Spain. (p. 301)
- The United States fought Spain in both the Pacific and the Caribbean. (p. 303)

- Victory in the Spanish-American War allowed the United States to expand its holdings in the South Pacific and to control Puerto Rico and Cuba. (p. 305)

Content Vocabulary

yellow journalism, jingoism

Academic Vocabulary

resource, violate, virtual

People and Terms to Identify

José Martí, William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, Theodore Roosevelt, Platt Amendment

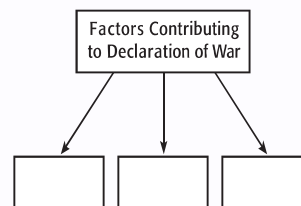
Reading Objectives

- **Describe** the circumstances that led to war between the United States and Spain in 1898.

- **Explain** how the war made the United States a world power.

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about the Spanish-American War, complete a graphic organizer like the one below by listing the circumstances that contributed to war with Spain.



Preview of Events

January 1898

February 1898

USS *Maine* explodes

May 1898

April 1898

U.S. declares war on Spain

September 1898

May 1898

Dewey destroys Spanish fleet in the Philippines

December 1898

December 1898

Treaty of Paris ends Spanish-American War

The following are the main History–Social Science Standards covered in this section.

11.4 Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.

11.4.2 Describe the Spanish-American War and U.S. expansion in the South Pacific.

The Big Idea

The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events.

Many Americans supported the Cuban revolt against Spain. Stories of horrible atrocities committed by the Spanish also fueled support for the Cubans. Fearful of attacks against American citizens, President McKinley sent the battleship USS *Maine* to Havana, Cuba, to prepare for the evacuation of U.S. citizens. For reasons still debated to this day, the *Maine* exploded, killing over half of the sailors and officers on board. Many were quick to blame the Spanish for the explosion. President McKinley, under increasing political pressure, declared war on Spain. The United States fought Spain in both the Philippines and the Caribbean. The larger and more modern U.S. Navy soon defeated the Spanish navy. Victory in the Spanish-American War gave the United States control of territory in the Pacific and the Caribbean.

The Coming of War

Main Idea In support of the Cuban rebellion and in retaliation for the loss of the USS *Maine*, the United States declared war on Spain.

Reading Connection Do you remember what led the American colonists to declare their independence? Read on to learn about another colony that rebelled.

In 1898 Cuba was a Spanish colony in the midst of a revolution. The Cuban people were fighting for independence from Spain. Many Americans regarded the Spanish as tyrants and supported the Cubans in their struggle.

★ An American Story ★

Clara Barton, the founder and first president of the American National Red Cross, was working late in her villa overlooking the harbor in Havana, Cuba, on the evening of February 15, 1898. As she and an assistant reviewed some paperwork, an enormous blast lit up the sky. She later recalled:

“The deafening roar was such a burst of thunder as perhaps one never heard before. And off to the right, out over the bay, the air filled with a blaze of light, and this in turn filled with black specks like huge specters flying in all directions.”

Barton quickly learned what had happened. The U.S.S. *Maine*, anchored in the Havana harbor, had exploded. Barton rushed to a nearby hospital, where she took a firsthand look at the blast’s devastation. The sailors’ wounds, she wrote, “were all over them—heads and faces terribly cut, internal wounds, arms, legs, feet and hands burned to the live flesh.”

—adapted from *The Spanish War*

Of the 354 officers and sailors aboard the *Maine* that winter night, 266 died. No one is sure why the *Maine* exploded. The size of the explosion indicates that the ship’s ammunition supplies blew up. Some experts think that a fire accidentally ignited the ammunition. Others argue that a mine detonated near the ship set off the ammunition.

Americans who supported the Cubans in their revolt quickly jumped to the conclusion that Spain had blown up the *Maine*. Within a matter of weeks, Spain and the United States were at war. Although

the fighting only lasted a few months, the outcome dramatically altered the position of the United States on the world stage.

The Cuban Rebellion Begins Cuba was one of Spain’s oldest colonies in the Americas. Its sugarcane plantations generated considerable wealth for Spain and produced nearly one-third of the world’s sugar in the mid-1800s. Until Spain abolished slavery in 1886, about one-third of the Cuban population was enslaved and forced to work for wealthy landowners on the plantations.

In 1868 Cuban rebels declared independence and launched a guerrilla war against Spanish authorities. Lacking internal support, the rebellion collapsed in 1878. Many Cuban rebels then fled to the United States, where they began planning a new revolution.

One of the exiled leaders was **José Martí**, a writer and poet who was passionately committed to the cause of Cuban independence. While living in New York City in the 1880s, Martí brought together different Cuban exile groups living in the United States. The groups raised funds from sympathetic Americans, purchased weapons, and trained their troops in preparation for an invasion of Cuba.

By the early 1890s, the United States and Cuba had become closely linked economically. Cuba exported much of its sugar to the United States, and Americans had invested approximately \$50 million in Cuba’s mines, railroads, and sugar plantations.

These economic ties created a crisis in 1894, when the United States imposed new tariffs—including a tariff on sugar—in an effort to protect its troubled economy from foreign competition. The new tariff wrecked the sale of Cuban sugar in the United States and devastated the island’s economy.

“[t]he air filled with a blaze of light. . .”

—Clara Barton



With Cuba in an economic crisis, Martí's followers launched a new rebellion in February 1895. Although Martí died in battle shortly after returning to Cuba, the revolutionaries seized control of eastern Cuba, declared independence, and formally established the Republic of Cuba in September 1895.

Americans Support the Cubans When the uprising in Cuba began, President Grover Cleveland declared the United States neutral. Outside the White House, however, much of the public openly supported the rebels. Some citizens compared the Cubans' struggle to the American Revolution. A few sympathetic Americans even began smuggling guns from Florida to the Cuban rebels.

What led most Americans to support the rebels were the dramatic stories of Spanish atrocities reported in two of the nation's major newspapers, the *New York Journal* and the *New York World*. The *Journal*, owned by **William Randolph Hearst**, and the *World*, owned by **Joseph Pulitzer**, competed with each other to increase their circulation. The *Journal* reported outrageous stories of the Spanish feeding Cuban prisoners to sharks and dogs. Not to be outdone, the *World* described Cuba as a place with "blood on the roadsides, blood in the fields, blood on the doorsteps, blood, blood, blood!" This kind of sensationalist reporting, in which writers often exaggerated or even made up stories to attract readers, became known as **yellow journalism**.



Although the press invented sensational stories to sell more papers, there is no doubt that the Cuban people indeed suffered horribly. The Spanish dispatched nearly 200,000 troops to the island to put down the rebellion and appointed General Valeriano Weyler governor. Weyler's harsh policies quickly earned him the nickname *El Carnicero* ("The Butcher").

The Cuban rebels carried out a guerrilla war. They staged hit-and-run raids, burned plantations and sugar mills, tore up railroad tracks, and attacked supply depots. The rebels knew that many American businesses had invested in Cuba's railroads and plantations. They hoped that the destruction of American property would lead to American intervention in the war.

To prevent Cuban villagers from helping the rebels, Weyler herded hundreds of thousands of rural men, women, and children into "reconcentration camps," where tens of thousands died of starvation and disease. News reports of this brutal treatment of civilians enraged Americans and led to renewed calls for American intervention in the war.

Calling Out for War In 1897 Republican William McKinley became president of the United States. The new president did not want to intervene in the war, believing it would cost too many lives and hurt the economy. In September 1897, he asked the Spanish if the United States could help negotiate an end to the conflict. He made it clear that if the war did not end soon, the United States might have to intervene.

Pressed by McKinley, the Spanish government removed Weyler from power. Spain then offered the Cubans autonomy—the right to their own government—but only if Cuba remained part of the Spanish empire. The Cuban rebels refused to negotiate. They wanted full independence.

Spain's concessions to the rebels enraged many Spanish loyalists in Cuba. In January 1898, the loyalists rioted in Havana. Worried that American citizens in Cuba might be attacked, McKinley made the fateful decision to send the battleship *Maine* to Havana in case the Americans had to be evacuated.

In February 1898, the *New York Journal* printed a private letter written by Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, the Spanish ambassador to the United States. A Cuban agent had intercepted the letter and delivered it to

History Through Art

Cuban Rebellion During the Cuban Revolution in 1895, Spanish general Valeriano Weyler forced much of the Cuban population into guarded camps near military installations. [Why were Americans supporting Cuba's fight against Spain?](#)

the paper. It described McKinley as “weak and a bidder for the admiration of the crowd.” The nation erupted in fury over the insult.

Ambassador de Lôme resigned, but before the furor could die down, the *Maine* exploded in the Havana harbor. The press promptly blamed Spain. Rapidly responding to the hysterical anger of the American public, Congress unanimously authorized the president to spend \$50 million for war preparations. Shortly afterward, on March 28, 1898, a naval court of inquiry concluded that a mine had destroyed the *Maine*. Throughout America, people began using the slogan “Remember the *Maine!*” as a rallying cry for war. By early April, President McKinley was under tremendous pressure to go to war. American mobs were demonstrating in the streets against Spain—and against McKinley for refusing to go to war.

Within the Republican Party, **jingoism**, or an attitude of aggressive nationalism, was very strong, especially among younger members of the party. These members were furious at McKinley for not declaring war. Assistant Secretary of the Navy **Theodore Roosevelt**, for one, raged that McKinley had “no more backbone than a chocolate éclair.” Many Democrats were also demanding war, and Republicans feared that if McKinley did not go to war, the Democrats would win the presidency in 1900. Finally, on April 11, 1898, McKinley asked Congress to authorize the use of force to end the conflict in Cuba.

On April 19, Congress declared Cuba independent, demanded that Spain withdraw from the island, and authorized the president to use armed force if necessary. In response, on April 24, Spain declared war on the United States. For the first time in 50 years, the United States was at war with another nation.

 **Reading Check** **Examining** What conditions led to the Cuban rebellion in 1895?

A War on Two Fronts

 **The United States fought Spain in both the Pacific and the Caribbean.**

Reading Connection Have you ever had to work on two major tasks at the same time? Read on to learn about a time when the United States had to fight a war in two places.

The Spanish in Cuba were not prepared for war. Tropical diseases and months of hard fighting had weakened their soldiers. Their warships were old

and their crews poorly trained. The United States had more battleships, and both sides knew that the war ultimately would be decided at sea. If the United States could defeat Spain’s fleet, the Spanish would not be able to get supplies to its troops in Cuba. Eventually, they would have to surrender.

The Philippines The United States Navy was ready for war with Spain. The navy’s North Atlantic Squadron blockaded Cuba, and the American fleet based in British Hong Kong was ordered to attack the Spanish fleet in the Philippines. The Philippines was a Spanish colony, and American naval planners were determined to prevent the fleet there from sailing east to attack the United States.

A short time after midnight, on May 1, 1898, Commodore George Dewey led his squadron into Manila Bay in the Philippines. As dawn broke, Dewey’s fleet opened fire and rapidly destroyed or captured the severely outgunned Spanish warships.

Dewey’s quick victory took McKinley and his advisers by surprise. The army was not yet ready to send troops to help Dewey capture the Philippines. Hastily, the army assembled 20,000 troops to sail from San Francisco to the Philippines. On the way to the Philippines, the American troops also seized the island of Guam, another Spanish possession in the Pacific.

While waiting for the American troops to arrive, Dewey contacted Emilio Aguinaldo, a Filipino revolutionary leader who had staged an unsuccessful uprising against the Spanish in 1896. Aguinaldo quickly launched a new guerrilla war.

At first, Aguinaldo believed the Americans were his allies, but when American troops arrived in the islands he became suspicious. The Americans quickly seized the Philippine capital of Manila from the Spanish but refused to allow Aguinaldo’s forces into the city. They also refused to recognize his rebel government. Hostility between the Filipinos and the Americans began to grow as both sides waited for the war with Spain to end.

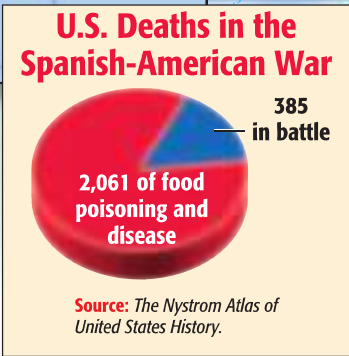
American Forces Battle in Cuba Unlike the mobilization of the navy, which had been very efficient, the mobilization of the American army was very poorly conducted. Although volunteers flooded into army training camps, the army lacked the **resources** to train and equip them. In many camps, conditions were so unsanitary that epidemics broke out, and hundreds of Americans died. By the end of the war, far more Americans had died in training camps than in actual battle.

**Spanish-American War
in the Philippines and the Caribbean, 1898**



Geography Skills

- 1. Interpreting Maps** The main battles of the Spanish-American War occurred in which parts of the world?
- 2. Applying Geography Skills** How far is the Havana harbor from the port of Tampa, Florida?



Finally, on June 14, 1898, a force of about 17,000 troops landed on the southern coast of Cuba, east of the city of Santiago. A Spanish fleet occupied Santiago Harbor, where it was well protected by powerful shore-based guns. American military planners wanted to capture those guns in order to drive the Spanish fleet out of the harbor and into battle with the American fleet waiting in the waters off the Cuban coast.

Among the American troops advancing toward Santiago was a volunteer cavalry unit from the American West. They were a flamboyant mix of cowboys, miners, and law officers known as the “Rough Riders.” The commander of the Rough Riders was Colonel Leonard Wood. Second in command was Theodore Roosevelt, who had resigned from his post as assistant secretary of the navy to join the fight against Spain.

On July 1, American troops attacked the village of El Caney northeast of Santiago. Another force attacked the San Juan Heights, a series of hills overlooking the main road to Santiago. While one group

of soldiers attacked San Juan Hill, the Rough Riders—who were on foot, not horseback—attacked Kettle Hill. After seizing Kettle Hill, Roosevelt and his men assisted in the capture of San Juan Hill.

The Rough Riders did not make their attack alone. Accompanying them up Kettle Hill were the all-black 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments. Many African Americans had responded to the call for volunteers, and roughly one-fourth of the American troops fighting in Cuba were African American. Four African American soldiers received the Medal of Honor for their bravery during the war.

The Spanish commander in Santiago panicked after the American victories. He immediately ordered the Spanish fleet in the harbor to flee. As the Spanish ships raced out of the harbor on July 3, the American warships guarding the entrance attacked them. In the ensuing battle, the American squadron sank or beached every Spanish vessel.

Spanish resistance in Cuba ended with the surrender of Santiago two weeks later. Soon after, American

troops occupied the nearby Spanish colony of Puerto Rico. On August 12, 1898, Spain and the United States agreed to a cease-fire.

✓ Reading Check **Describing** How prepared was the U.S. Army to fight a war against Spain?

An American Empire is Born

Main Idea **Victory in the Spanish-American War allowed the United States to expand its holdings in the South Pacific and to control Puerto Rico and Cuba.**

Reading Connection Do you think that Puerto Rico should become the 51st state? Read on to learn about the beginning of that territory's long association with the United States.

As American and Spanish leaders met to discuss the terms for a peace treaty, Americans debated what to do about their newly acquired lands. Cuba would be given its freedom as promised, and Spain had

agreed that the United States would annex Guam and Puerto Rico. The big question was what to do with the Philippines. The United States faced a difficult choice—remain true to its republican ideals or become an imperial power.

The Debate Over Annexation Many supporters of annexing the Philippines emphasized the economic and military benefits of taking the islands. They would provide the United States with a naval base in Asia, a stopover on the way to China, and a large market for American goods.

Other supporters believed America had a duty to teach “less civilized” peoples how to live properly. “Surely this Spanish war has not been a grab for empire,” commented a New England minister, “but a heroic effort [to] free the oppressed, and to teach the millions of ignorant, debased human beings thus freed how to live.”

Not all Americans supported annexation. Anti-imperialists included industrialist Andrew Carnegie, social worker Jane Addams, writer Samuel Clemens

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

MOMENT in HISTORY

FEISTY LEADER FOR A NEW CENTURY

Theodore Roosevelt (center) embodied the spirit of the United States at the turn of the century: full of vitality, brimming with confidence, and convinced that no job was impossible, no challenge insurmountable. Whether hunting big game in Africa, roping cattle from horseback on a Dakota ranch, or leading his “Rough Riders” cavalry (right) up San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt never did anything cautiously or quietly. As president, Roosevelt guided the country into its new, unaccustomed role as a world power.





Picturing History

Building an Empire Two Filipino women nervously converse with American troops in the Philippines. Filipino civilians suffered many hardships while Filipino guerrillas fought American troops. Thousands perished from sickness, starvation, and other indirect effects of war. [What American policy contributed to civilian hardships in the Philippines?](#)

(Mark Twain), and the leader of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers. Carnegie argued that the cost of an empire far outweighed the economic benefits it provided. Gompers worried that competition from cheap Filipino labor would drive down American wages. Addams, Clemens, and others believed imperialism **violated** American principles.

President McKinley had to decide what to do with the Philippines. Ultimately, he decided to annex the islands. He later explained his reasoning to a group of ministers:

“And one night late it came to me this way . . .

(1) that we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany . . . that would be bad for business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government . . . and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them.”

—quoted in *A Diplomatic History of the American People*

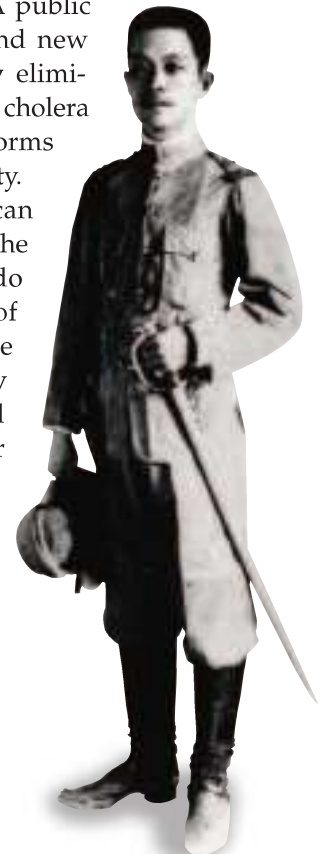
On December 10, 1898, the United States and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris. Under the treaty, Cuba became an independent country, and the United States acquired Puerto Rico and Guam and agreed to pay Spain \$20 million for the Philippines. After an intense debate, the Senate ratified the treaty in February 1899. The United States had become an imperial power.

Rebellion in the Philippines The United States quickly learned that controlling its new empire would not be easy. Emilio Aguinaldo called the American decision to annex his homeland a “violent and aggressive seizure.” He then ordered his troops to attack the American soldiers in the Philippines.

To fight the Filipino guerrillas, General Arthur MacArthur (the father of the future American general Douglas MacArthur) adopted many of the same policies that America had condemned Spain for using in Cuba. MacArthur set up reconcentration camps to separate guerrillas from civilians. The results were also similar to what had happened in Cuba. Thousands of Filipinos died from disease and starvation.

While MacArthur fought the guerrillas, the first U.S. civilian governor of the islands, William Howard Taft, tried to win over the Filipino people by reforming education, transportation, and health care. New railroads, bridges, and telegraph lines strengthened the economy. A public school system was set up, and new health care policies **virtually** eliminated severe diseases such as cholera and smallpox. These reforms slowly reduced Filipino hostility.

In March 1901, American troops captured Aguinaldo. The following month, Aguinaldo accepted American control of the islands and called on the guerrillas to surrender. By summer 1902, the United States had declared the war over. Eventually the United States allowed the Filipinos a greater role in governing



Emilio Aguinaldo, revolutionary general and first president of the Philippines

their own country. By the mid-1930s, they were permitted to elect their own congress and president. Finally, in 1946, the United States granted independence to the Philippines.

Governing Puerto Rico Another pressing question facing the United States government was how to govern Puerto Rico. In 1900 Congress passed the Foraker Act, making Puerto Rico an unincorporated territory. This meant that Puerto Ricans were not U.S. citizens and had no constitutional rights. The act also stated that Congress could pass whatever laws it wanted for the island.

Congress gradually allowed the inhabitants of Puerto Rico a certain degree of self-government. In 1917 the United States made Puerto Ricans citizens of the United States. In 1947 the island was given the right to elect its own governor. At this time a debate began over whether to grant Puerto Rico statehood, allow it to become an independent country, or continue it as a commonwealth of the United States. This debate over Puerto Rico's status continues as Puerto Rico is still a commonwealth today.

Cuba and the Platt Amendment After the war, the United States established a military government in Cuba. Although the United States had promised to secure Cuban independence, President McKinley took steps to ensure that Cuba would remain tied to the United States. He allowed the Cubans to prepare a new constitution for their country, but he attached conditions. A special amendment that Senator Orville Platt attached to the 1901 army appropriations bill described those conditions.


The **Platt Amendment** specified the following: (1) Cuba could not make any treaty with another nation that would weaken its independence or allow another foreign power to gain territory in Cuba; (2) Cuba had to allow the United States to buy or lease naval stations in Cuba; (3) Cuba's debts had to be kept low to prevent foreign countries from landing troops to enforce payment; and (4) the United States would have the right to intervene to protect Cuban independence and keep order.

Although the Cubans rejected the Platt Amendment at first, they quickly realized that unless they accepted it, the United States would maintain its military government of the island. Reluctantly, they added the amendment to their constitution. The Platt Amendment governed relations between the United States and Cuba until its repeal in 1934. It effectively made Cuba an American protectorate.

 **Reading Check** **Explaining** What were the arguments for and against establishing an American empire?

HISTORY Online 

Student Web Activity Visit the *American Vision: Modern Times* Web site at tav.mt.glencoe.com and click on **Student Web Activities—Chapter 4** for an activity on American imperialism.

HISTORY Online  **Study Central**

For help with the concepts in this section of *American Vision: Modern Times* go to tav.mt.glencoe.com and click on **Study Central**.

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

1. **Vocabulary** Define: yellow journalism, jingoism, resources, violated, virtually.
2. **People and Terms** Identify: José Martí, William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, Theodore Roosevelt, Platt Amendment.
3. **Explain** why many Americans blamed Spain for the explosion of the USS *Maine*.

Reviewing Big Ideas

4. **Understanding** Why did many Filipinos feel betrayed by the U.S. government after the Spanish-American War?

Critical Thinking

5. **Interpreting** Do you think President McKinley could have taken a different course of action with Spain over Cuba? If so, what kind? If not, why not?
6. **Categorizing** Complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by summarizing the effects of the United States annexing lands obtained after the Spanish-American War.

Lands Annexed	Effects

Analyzing Visuals

7. **Analyzing Art** Examine the painting on page 291. Considering what you have learned about the Rough Riders and this battle, what is inaccurate about the painting? What kind of artistic bias is evident in this painting?

Writing About History

8. **Descriptive Writing** Imagine that you are a Filipino living during the time of the U.S. annexation of the Philippine Islands. Write a journal entry in which you describe your feelings about U.S. control of the islands. **CA 11WS1.2; 11WA2.1b**