



# The Spanish-American War



## Explore These Questions

- What were the causes of the Spanish-American War?
- What were the major events of the war?
- What were the results of the war?

## Define

- yellow journalism
- armistice
- protectorate

## Identify

- Lola Rodríguez de Tió
- José Martí
- George Dewey
- Emilio Aguinaldo
- Rough Riders
- Battle of San Juan Hill
- Platt Amendment
- Foraker Act

Replica of 1890s United States Army hat



## SETTING the Scene

In the late 1890s, Americans opened their daily newspapers to find shocking tales of violence. The reports told about a revolution in Cuba, a Spanish-owned island just 90 miles off the Florida coast. A typical story cried out against Spanish actions toward the Cuban people:

“Blood on the roadsides, blood in the fields, blood on the doorsteps, blood, blood, blood!”

Such sensational reports were often inaccurate or one-sided. Yet they succeeded in stirring American anger against Spain. In 1898, the United States put aside its long policy of neutrality to intervene in the Cuban revolution. In the process, American power grew in the Caribbean and across the Pacific.

## Trouble in Cuba

For many years, Americans had looked longingly at Cuba. In 1823, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams compared Cuba to a ripe apple. A storm, he said, might tear that apple “from its native tree”—the Spanish empire—and drop it into American hands.

By the 1890s, Spain’s once-vast empire in the Western Hemisphere had shrunk to two islands in the Caribbean, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Then, Cuban rebels created the storm that Adams had hoped for.

## Revolts against Spain

In 1868, the Cuban people had rebelled against Spanish rule. The revolution was finally crushed after 10 years of fighting. Some of the revolutionaries fled to New York where they kept up the battle for freedom. **Lola Rodríguez de Tió** wrote patriotic poems in support of Cuban independence. **José Martí** told of the Cuban struggle for freedom in his newspaper, *Patria*.

In 1895, Martí returned to Cuba. With cries of *Cuba Libre!*—Free Cuba!—rebels launched a new fight against Spain. Martí died early in the fighting, but the rebels won control of much of the island.

The rebels burned sugar cane fields and sugar mills all over Cuba. They hoped that this would make the island unprofitable for Spain, and convince the Spanish to leave. The rebels killed workers who opposed them. They even blew up some passenger trains.

In response, Spain sent a new governor to Cuba, General Valeriano Weyler (WAY ee lair). Weyler used brutal tactics to crush the revolt.

## Connections With Economics

An American tariff helped cause the Cuban Revolution. The Wilson-Gorman Tariff of 1894 placed a high tariff on imported sugar. As Americans bought less Cuban sugar, the island’s economy declined. Increasing poverty contributed to popular discontent.

His men moved about half a million Cubans into detention camps so they could not aid the rebels. At least 100,000 died from starvation and disease.

### Americans react

In the United States, people watched the revolt in nearby Cuba with growing concern. Americans had invested about \$50 million in the island. The money was invested in sugar and rice plantations, railroads, tobacco, and iron mines. American trade with Cuba was worth about \$100 million a year.

Opinion split over whether the United States should intervene in Cuba. Many business leaders opposed American involvement. They thought that it might hurt trade. Other Americans sympathized with Cuban desires for freedom and wanted the government to take action.

### War Fever

The press whipped up American sympathies for Cuba. Two New York newspapers—Joseph Pulitzer’s *World* and William Randolph Hearst’s *Journal*—competed to print the most grisly stories about Spanish cruelty. The publishers knew that war with Spain would boost sales of their newspapers.

### Yellow journalism

To attract readers, Hearst and Pulitzer used **yellow journalism**, or sensational stories that were often biased or untrue. “You supply the pictures,” Pulitzer told a photographer bound for Cuba. “I’ll supply the war.” News stories described events in Cuba in graphic and horrifying detail.

President Cleveland wanted to avoid war with Spain. He called the war fever in the United States an “epidemic of insanity.” Stories in the press, he grumbled, were nonsense. When William McKinley became President in 1897, he also tried to keep the country neutral.

### Sinking of the *Maine*

In 1898, fighting broke out in Havana, the Cuban capital. Acting promptly, President McKinley sent the battleship *Maine* to Havana to protect American citizens and property there.

On the night of February 15, the *Maine* lay at anchor. Just after the bugler played taps, a huge explosion ripped through the ship. The explosion killed at least 260 of the 350 sailors and officers on board.

The yellow press quickly pounced on the tragedy. “DESTRUCTION OF THE WARSHIP MAINE WAS THE WORK OF AN ENEMY,” screamed one New York newspaper. “THE WARSHIP MAINE SPLIT IN TWO BY AN ENEMY’S SECRET INFERNAL MACHINE?” suggested another.

The real cause of the explosion remains a mystery. Most historians believe it was an accident. But Americans, urged on by Pulitzer and Hearst, clamored for war with Spain. “Remember the *Maine*!” they cried.

### Viewing HISTORY

### Yellow Journalism

The front page of the New York Journal and Advertiser shouted that an enemy had sunk the *Maine*. To the reading public, that enemy was Spain. Today, most historians believe that the explosion was accidental. ★ Why did newspaper publishers favor sensationalist headlines such as this?



Still hoping to avoid war, McKinley tried to get Spain to talk with the Cuban rebels. In the end, however, he gave in to war fever. On April 25, 1898, Congress declared war on Spain.

## The Spanish-American War

The Spanish-American War lasted only four months. The battlefield stretched from the nearby Caribbean to the distant Philippine Islands.

### Fighting in the Philippines

Two months earlier, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt had begun making preparations for a possible war with Spain. Roosevelt realized that a conflict with Spain would be fought, not only in the Caribbean, but wherever Spanish sea power lay. The Philippine Islands, a Spanish colony

and Spain's main naval base in the Pacific, would be a major objective.

Roosevelt believed it was important to attack the Spanish in the Philippines as soon as war began. He wired secret orders to Commodore **George Dewey**, commander of the Pacific fleet:

“ Order the squadron . . . to Hong Kong . . . [I]n the event of declaration of war [with] Spain, your duty will be to see that the Spanish squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast. And then [begin] offensive operations in Philippine Islands. ”

Dewey followed Roosevelt's instructions. Immediately after war was declared, the Commodore sailed his fleet swiftly to Manila, the main city of the Philippines. On April 30, 1898, Dewey's ships slipped into Manila



### Geography Skills

During the Spanish-American War, United States forces won victories in both the Caribbean and the Pacific.

- 1. Location** On the map, locate: (a) Caribbean Sea, (b) Cuba, (c) Philippine Islands, (d) Manila Bay.
- 2. Movement** (a) Describe the route Dewey took to reach the Philippines. (b) On what Caribbean islands did American forces land?
- 3. Critical Thinking** Why do you think Dewey was able to trap the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay?

harbor under cover of darkness. There lay the Spanish fleet.

At dawn, Dewey told his flagship commander, Charles Gridley, “You may fire when you are ready, Gridley.” Taking their cue, the Americans bombarded the surprised Spanish ships. By noon, the Spanish fleet had been destroyed.

By July, American troops had landed in the Philippines. As in Cuba, local people had been fighting for independence from Spain for years. With the help of the rebels, led by **Emilio Aguinaldo** (ah gwee NAHL doh), the Americans captured Manila.

### Fighting in the Caribbean

Meanwhile, American troops had also landed in Cuba. The expedition was badly organized. Soldiers wore heavy woolen uniforms in the tropical heat, and they often had to eat spoiled food. Yet, most were eager for battle.

None was more eager than Theodore Roosevelt. When the war broke out, Roosevelt resigned his position as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He then organized the First Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, later called the **Rough Riders**. The Rough Riders were a mixed crew—ranging from cowboys to college students and adventurers.

During the battle for the key Cuban city of Santiago, Roosevelt led the Rough Riders in a charge up San Juan Hill. They were joined by African American soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalries. Under withering fire, American troops took the hill. John J. Pershing, commander of the 10th Cavalry, described how the troops united in the **Battle of San Juan Hill**:

“White regiments, black regiments, regulars and Rough Riders, representing the young manhood of the North and South, fought shoulder to shoulder... mindful of their common duty as Americans.”

Two days later, the Americans destroyed the Spanish fleet in Santiago Bay. The Spanish army in Cuba surrendered. American troops then landed on Puerto Rico and claimed the island.



### Biography **Emilio Aguinaldo**

*“Filipino citizens! Now is the occasion for shedding our blood for the last time, that we may achieve our beloved freedom.”* With these words, Aguinaldo urged Filipinos to throw off Spanish rule. Later, he led an unsuccessful revolt against United States rule. The Philippines did not become an independent nation until 1946. ★ **Was Aguinaldo an imperialist or an anti-imperialist? Explain.**

Spain was defeated. On August 12, Spain and the United States agreed to sign an **armistice**, thus ending the fighting. American losses in battle were fairly light—379 killed. However, more than 5,000 Americans died of other causes, such as yellow fever, typhoid, and malaria.

John Hay, who was soon to become Secretary of State, summed up American enthusiasm for the war. “It’s been a splendid little war,” he wrote. A malaria-ridden veteran of the war had a different view: “I was lucky—I survived.”



## Viewing HISTORY

### American Soldiers in Cuba

*This United States Army cavalry unit served in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. A number of African American cavalry units also fought against Native Americans in the American West.*

★ How do you think these soldiers felt about fighting in Cuba?

▲ Army bugle

## The Fruits of Victory

In a peace treaty signed in Paris in December 1898, Spain agreed to grant Cuba its freedom. Spain also gave the United States two islands: Puerto Rico in the Caribbean and Guam in the Pacific. Finally, in return for \$20 million, Spain handed over the Philippines to the United States.

Before the Senate approved the treaty, a great debate occurred. Many Americans objected to the treaty. They said it violated American principles of democracy by turning the United States into a colonial power.

Expansionists favored the treaty. They said that the navy needed bases in the Caribbean and the Pacific. They pointed out that the Philippines and Puerto Rico offered new territory for American businesses. Also, many Americans agreed with President McKinley, who said that the United States would “uplift and civilize and Christianize [the Filipinos].” In fact, most Filipinos already were Christians.

Urged on by McKinley, the Senate narrowly approved the treaty in early 1899. At last, the United States had an empire.

## Ruling Cuba and Puerto Rico

Americans had to decide how to rule their new territories. When the war with Spain began, the United States had pledged to “leave the government and control of [Cuba] to its people.” That promise was not kept.

After the war, American soldiers remained in Cuba while the nation debated. Many in Congress believed that Cuba was not ready for independence. American business leaders feared that an independent Cuba might threaten their investments there.

In the end, the United States let the Cuban people write their own constitution. However, Cuba had to accept the **Platt Amendment**. The amendment allowed the United States to intervene in Cuba and gave the United States control of the naval base at Guantanamo Bay.

In effect, the amendment made Cuba an American **protectorate**, a nation whose independence is limited by the control of a more powerful country. The United States pulled its army out of Cuba in 1902. However, American soldiers would return to Cuba in 1906 and again in 1917.

In Puerto Rico, the United States set up a new government under the **Foraker Act** of 1900. The act gave Puerto Ricans only a limited say in their own affairs. In 1917, Puerto Ricans were made citizens of the United States. Americans set up schools, improved health care, and built roads on the island. Even so, many Puerto Ricans wanted to be free of foreign rule.

## Filipino War for Independence

Filipino nationalists had begun fighting for independence long before the Spanish-American War. When the United States took over their land after the war, Filipinos felt betrayed. Led by Emilio Aguinaldo, they now fought for freedom against a new imperial power—the United States.

Aguinaldo, who had fought beside the Americans against Spain, accused the United States of forgetting its beginnings. The United States, he said, was using military force to keep the Filipinos from attaining “the same rights that the American people proclaimed more than a century ago.”

The war in the Philippines dragged on for years. At one point, about 60,000 American troops were fighting there. Aguinaldo was captured in 1901, and the war finally came to an end.

The war against Aguinaldo’s nationalists was longer and more costly than the original war against Spain in 1898. More than 4,000 Americans died in the Philippines. Nearly 20,000 Filipino soldiers were killed. Another 200,000 civilians died from shelling, famine, and disease.

In 1902, the United States set up a government in the Philippines similar to the one in Puerto Rico. Filipinos, however, were not made American citizens because the United States planned to give them independence in the future. It was not until 1946, however, that the United States allowed Filipinos to govern themselves.

## ★ Section 2 Review ★

### Recall

1. **Locate** (a) Cuba, (b) Philippine Islands, (c) Puerto Rico.
2. **Identify** (a) Lola Rodríguez de Tió (b) José Martí, (c) George Dewey, (d) Emilio Aguinaldo, (e) Rough Riders, (f) Battle of San Juan Hill, (g) Platt Amendment, (h) Foraker Act.
3. **Define** (a) yellow journalism, (b) armistice, (c) protectorate.

### Comprehension

4. Explain one long-term cause and one immediate cause of the Spanish-American War.
5. (a) How did the United States Navy help win the

war? (b) How did Theodore Roosevelt contribute to American victory? (c) What role did African American soldiers play in the war?

6. How did the war affect the relationship between the United States and each of the following? (a) Cuba, (b) Puerto Rico, (c) Philippines

### Critical Thinking and Writing

7. **Analyzing Primary Sources** Review the newspaper headlines that reported the sinking of the *Maine*. How are they examples of yellow journalism?
8. **Analyzing Ideas** Why did Emilio Aguinaldo fight alongside American soldiers as an ally, but later fight against them?



**Activity Drawing a Political Cartoon** You are a journalist covering international affairs after the Spanish-American War. Draw a cartoon about some topic related to the results of the war.