Overview

This course provides an in-depth analysis of the events that led to the world wars. It describes the U. S. involvement in those conflicts, and it discusses their impact on the country. It also examines the first half of the twentieth century, when the United States strengthened its identity at home and secured its position as a leading world power. Reviewing the critical events of the world wars will enable you to recognize the forces that shaped the current United States of America.

The information needed to achieve this goal is presented in the textbook *A History of the United States*. The original textbook has been repurposed for this course; that is, it has been redesigned to meet your learning needs as a distance education student. For instance, the repurposed textbook directly integrates directions and other course components into the text. It introduces the material presented in the textbook, and it identifies the learning objectives for each lesson. For your convenience, it includes glossary terms at the beginning of each lesson. You will find these glossary terms in the section titled “Terms to
Know.” The repurposed textbook also includes the review questions and assignments that enable you and your instructor to evaluate your progress throughout the course. In addition, it describes some material presented visually in the original textbook.

The textbook is extremely long. Therefore, it has been divided into the following courses:
U.S. History: Discovery to Jacksonian Era
U.S. History: The Nineteenth Century
U.S. History: World Wars
U.S. History: Post-World War Years

Each course is divided into modules. The three modules in this course are based on Units 7–9 of the textbook. These modules are further divided into lessons, which are based on the textbook chapters.

As previously stated, the goal of this course is to review how the critical events of the world wars helped shape the current United States of America. Module 1 explains the United States' position in and relationship with the world at the turn of the century. It summarizes the democratic reforms that were taking place then. It examines the role of the United States in World War I.
Module 2 covers the years 1918–1932. It examines the economic boom that followed World War I. Unfortunately, this boom would soon be followed by the Great Depression.

Module 3 spans the years 1933–1945, which were marked by depression at home and aggression abroad. It examines Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and the reshaping of American life during the 1930s. It also describes the events and outcome of World War II.

No prerequisites are necessary before starting any course in the series. Although you’re advised to take the courses in sequence, it is not necessary to complete them all. For instance, if you’re interested in the discovery of America, the first course would be a logical place to start. If, however, you would like to learn more about the world wars, this course is more appropriate. You decide which courses can best meet your needs.

To complete this course, you will need the materials that The Hadley School for the Blind has provided and writing materials in the medium of your choice. If you are taking the audiocassette version of this course, you will also need your own tape recorder.
The review questions that follow each section are for your personal development only. Do not mail your answers to your Hadley instructor. Rather, check your comprehension by comparing your answers with those provided. Note that answers to some review questions provide more information than you will find in the textbook.

You are required to submit the assignment that concludes each lesson. Remember to wait for your instructor’s feedback before submitting your next assignment. If you mail your assignments, send them as Free Matter for the Blind provided they are in braille or large print (14 point or larger), or on cassette or computer disk. Mailing labels are enclosed for your convenience. The enclosed contact information card indicates your instructor’s fax number and email address in case you prefer to send your assignments electronically.

Now, if you’re ready to explore the events that took place as the United States entered the twentieth century, begin Module 1: Democratic Reforms and World Power 1890–1920.
Lesson 1: The United States and the World

During the Gilded Age, the United States filled its land with farms, factories, and cities. Busy in their vast nation, most Americans felt no need to go abroad. Protected by broad oceans, they paid little attention to events elsewhere. Then, in 1898, war with Spain suddenly thrust the United States upon the world stage. “The guns of Dewey at Manila have changed the destiny of the United States,” the Washington Post observed. “We are face to face with a strange destiny and must accept its responsibilities. An imperial policy!” Familiarizing yourself with the critical events that took place when the United States assumed a prominent position on the world stage will enable you to identify the forces that helped shape the current United States of America.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to
1. describe how and why the United States expanded internationally
2. examine the country’s rise as a sea power
3. discuss the reasons for and the outcome of the Spanish-American War

Terms to Know
The following terms appear in this lesson. Familiarize yourself with their meanings so you can use them in your course work.

*arbitration*: the hearing and settling of a dispute by a third person who is not involved in the disagreement

*imperialism*: the attempt to create an empire, either directly or through economic or political dominance

*jingoism*: aggressive nationalism

*sphere of influence*: an area not within its own borders where the interests of one large nation are considered to be supreme

*yellow press*: newspapers that, in order to attract readers, feature sensational, often distorted stories; especially the Hearst and Pulitzer papers of the late 1890s, which encouraged the United States to fight a war with Spain


Reading Directions

Now read Section 1. After reading this passage, answer the section review questions and compare your answers with those provided.

1. Looking Outward

From time to time, earlier in the 1800s, a few traders, whalers, missionaries, and diplomats did look outward. The expansion of other nations gave the United States the chance—and the excuse—to seek American advantages overseas.

Early expansion to the distant East

American merchants had been visiting Canton to trade with China since 1785. After the Opium War of 1839–1842, Great Britain secured special privileges in China. Then President Tyler sent out Caleb Cushing, the able champion of expansion, to secure the same privileges for Americans. In the Treaty of Wanghia (1844), Cushing won for the United States “most favored nation” status. This meant that in China the United States was to receive the best treatment offered any country. Four new Chinese ports in addition to Canton were opened to American merchants for the first time.
Magnificent American clipper ships and other grand trading vessels also went venturing out to the Philippines, Java, India, and other distant lands. In 1833 a commercial treaty was signed with faraway Siam.

The rulers of Japan, fearing corruption by foreign ways, kept out the foreigners. They allowed only a small colony of merchants of the Dutch East India Company to live on an island at Nagasaki. United States merchants wanted to trade with Japan, but this was not easy to arrange. It required a man of adventurous spirit and imagination. Luckily, in 1852, President Millard Fillmore found that man. He was Commodore Matthew C. Perry, a bold naval officer. He had an interest in ideas and the courage to risk danger. Perry tried to improve the education of midshipmen. He had fought pirates in the West Indies and had helped suppress the slave traffic from Africa. Now he would try to open trade with Japan. He awed the Japanese with his great “Black Ships”—bigger than any ever seen there before. When his ships arrived off the coast of Japan, he was firm and skillful in his diplomacy. He refused to deal with minor officials. He demanded that the Japanese respect the Americans. And he secured
the Treaty of Kanagawa (1854), opening two ports to ships from the United States.

Meanwhile, American traders had already arrived in Hawaii in the 1790s. They were followed in the 1820s by whalers and missionaries. As early as 1849, the United States declared that it could never allow the Hawaiian Islands to pass under the dominion of any other power.

When President Pierce had tried to annex Hawaii in 1854, the treaty was not even sent to the Senate. Every question was bedeviled by the issue of slavery. The same problem defeated his efforts to buy Cuba, Alaska, and all of Lower California. Now the slavery issue was out of the way. Expansion was no longer stopped by sectional rivalry. The whole nation’s factories and farms hungered for new markets. Steamships and telegraph cables were drawing Americans out toward the world.

**Seward pursues expansion**

After the Civil War, Secretary of State William H. Seward became the champion of these expansionist hopes. When the Russians asked whether the United
States might want to buy Alaska, he jumped at the chance. He could expel one more monarchy from the American continent. Seward also believed that a strong United States outpost on the other side of Canada would help to force the British out of Canada. Then Canada, too, could be added to the American Empire for Liberty!

But many sensible congressmen had their doubts. Was Alaska anything but a frozen wasteland? The eloquent Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts shared Seward’s hope to include Canada within the United States. He finally persuaded the Senate to approve the Alaska treaty (April 19, 1867). Opponents never ceased to call it “Seward’s Folly.” In order to secure approval by the House of Representatives of the $7.2 million purchase price, the Russian minister to the United States had to bribe some members of Congress.

When the federal government was still burdened by a Civil War debt of $3 billion, it did seem a wild extravagance to spend millions for “Seward’s icebox.” Few then imagined what a bargain they had made. The gold taken from the Yukon Valley since 1897 has paid for Alaska many times over. Besides, there would be
North Slope oil. Best of all, this vast, untamed wilderness was a new frontier for all Americans.

The Caribbean, too, would offer its own kind of tropical frontier. Seward negotiated a treaty in 1867 to pay $7.5 million for the Danish West Indies (now the Virgin Islands). Since the Senate was slow to approve, the islands did not become part of the United States until they were purchased for $25 million in 1917.

**The *Alabama* claims**

Secretary of State Seward could not give all his efforts to the future. The Civil War had left him problems from the past. One of the knottiest concerned the so-called *Alabama* claims. These were claims for damages to Union shipping by a number of Confederate vessels that had been built in Great Britain. British law forbade anyone in the realm from arming a ship to be used by a foreign state against any nation at peace with Great Britain. The Confederate navy had evaded this law by having ships built in Great Britain and then taking them elsewhere to be armed.

By 1863 many of these commerce raiders were on the high seas menacing the Union. Our minister to Great
Britain, Charles Francis Adams, objected in vain. Then the British government changed its policy, to favor the Union cause. Two powerful ironclad vessels, the “Laird Rams” (built for the South by the Laird shipyard in Liverpool), were not allowed to go to sea.

During the war the British-built ships already at sea destroyed 257 Union vessels. Union shipowners tried to escape this threat by a technicality. They “registered” their ships under foreign flags. More than 700 vessels were shifted to foreign registry. By 1865 only 26 percent of our foreign trade was carried in ships of United States registry.

The British-built *Alabama* alone destroyed more than 60 merchant ships. Finally in June 1864 the United States ship *Kearsarge* caught up with and sank the *Alabama* off the coast of France.

The United States demanded that Britain pay for the damages done by the *Alabama* and the other ships that had been made in Britain for the South. Seward claimed only $19 million. Charles Sumner, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had other ideas. He presented a much larger bill of damages against Great Britain. In an hour-long Senate speech he demanded
$15 million for vessels destroyed and $110 million for driving our commerce from the ocean. This was only a beginning. Sumner asked $2 billion more for “indirect damages.” That was half the Union’s cost for the Civil War! The British owed so much, said Sumner, because the British-built vessels had made the war last twice as long. They could pay this enormous bill easily enough just by handing over Canada to the United States.

The Treaty of Washington

Of course, the British refused to take Senator Sumner’s claim seriously. But many Americans approved. Finally in 1871, American and British commissioners signed a treaty at Washington. The Alabama claims would be submitted to an arbitration court at Geneva, Switzerland. In 1872 this panel of eminent judges from Switzerland, Italy, and Brazil found that during the Civil War Great Britain had violated the international laws of neutrality. They awarded $15.5 million in damages to the United States.

This peaceful way to settle differences was a happy precedent for later years.
Napoleon III’s Mexican “empire”

Another troublesome legacy of the Civil War was the many French troops in Mexico. Napoleon III, like his uncle Napoleon I, had dreamed of a French empire in North America. In 1863, when the United States was fighting the Civil War, Napoleon III sent an army to Mexico. He overthrew the Mexican government. On the Mexican throne he seated his puppet “emperor,” the young Austrian archduke Maximilian.

The United States objected. But during the war it was in no position to use troops to put down this flimsy Mexican emperor. After Appomattox, the 50,000 federal troops in Texas could easily move into Mexico. They were President Johnson’s and Secretary Seward’s message that the French had better go home. In the summer of 1866 Napoleon III removed the French troops. But the foolish and romantic emperor actually thought he could hold onto his throne alone. Maximilian was the only one surprised when, in the summer of 1867, he was executed by a Mexican firing squad.

The United States and Samoa

A wide variety of reasons led the nation to reach across the world. When steamships were powered by
coal, coaling stations were needed everywhere. On the remote Samoan island of Tutuila, American sailors had long been interested in the fine harbor of Pago Pago. In the South Pacific, Pago Pago had a strategic importance like that of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in the North Pacific. The United States Navy tried, and failed, to set up a protectorate over the Samoan Islands. Germany also tried to seize control.

After narrowly evading war over Samoa, delegates from Germany, Great Britain, and the United States met in Berlin in 1889. They agreed to establish a joint protectorate. Ten years later Great Britain withdrew. The islands were divided between Germany and the United States. The tiny Samoan Islands enticed the United States onto the stage of world diplomacy.

The joint protectorate, our Secretary of State observed in 1894, was “the first departure from our ... policy of avoiding entangling alliances with foreign powers in relation to objects remote from this hemisphere.”

Problems with Chile

But Latin America was in this hemisphere. And Secretary of State Blaine aimed to capture trade with
our neighbors to the south. In 1889 at the 1st International American Conference in Washington the nations founded the International Bureau of American Republics—now called the Organization of American States. The idea was to encourage more cordial and more equal relations among these unequal countries.

The United States was an overpowering neighbor. It was not easy to enforce a neighborly spirit. In Chile, in October 1891, American sailors on shore leave from the cruiser *Baltimore* were attacked by a mob on the streets of Valparaiso. Two sailors were killed and eighteen injured. The Chilean government refused to apologize and put the blame on the Americans.

On January 25, 1892, President Harrison sent a special message to Congress that seemed to invite a declaration of war on Chile. When a squadron of eight United States cruisers was readied in the Pacific, the Chilean government yielded. They apologized and agreed to pay damages to the families of the killed and wounded sailors.
Section 1 Review

1. Identify or explain: Caleb Cushing, Matthew Perry, Treaty of Kanagawa, William H. Seward, Seward’s Folly.

Caleb Cushing: negotiated a treaty with the Chinese in 1844 that secured “most favored nation” status for the United States

Matthew Perry: naval officer who persuaded Japan to allow some trade with the United States

Treaty of Kanagawa: agreement secured by Perry in 1854 to open trade between the United States and Japan

William H. Seward: Lincoln’s Secretary of State who strongly supported the purchase of Alaska

“Seward’s Folly”: name given to the purchase of Alaska, which opponents considered a frozen wasteland

2. Locate: Canton, Siam, Nagasaki, Yukon Valley, Virgin Islands, Pago Pago, Valparaiso.

Canton: port in China
Siam: now called Thailand, located in the Far East between Burma and French Indochina

Nagasaki: city on the Japanese island of Kyushu, on the East China Sea

Yukon Valley: area along the Yukon River in Alaska

Virgin Islands: located east of Puerto Rico in the Caribbean Sea

Pago Pago: town in American Samoa, a small chain of islands in the South Pacific

Valparaiso: city on the coast of Chile

3. What kind of United States “expansion” to the Far East took place in the period before the Civil War?

Before the Civil War, the United States expanded into the Far East through trade and diplomacy, thus obtaining a commercial treaty with Siam, “most favored nation” status from China, and a treaty opening trade with Japan. American traders, whalers, and missionaries had established their presence in Hawaii, and the United States had declared that it would not allow the Hawaiian Islands to be controlled by another nation.
4. Explain the dispute that was settled by the Treaty of Washington.

The Treaty of Washington settled disputes that had arisen between the United States and Britain during the Civil War. Ships made in England for the Confederacy had destroyed or damaged many Union ships, and the United States sought and received reparations for the damage.

5. What kinds of diplomatic problems arose in Samoa, Mexico, and Chile? How was each resolved?

In the Samoan Islands, the United States almost went to war over the harbor of Pago Pago. Instead, in 1899, the United States, Germany, and Great Britain agreed to rule the islands jointly, although Britain later withdrew. France had taken control of Mexico during the American Civil War. After the war, the United States warned France that it would not tolerate French control of Mexico, and the French withdraw. Chile initially refused to apologize and pay damages for an attack on American sailors in Valparaiso. When the United States seemed ready to go to war over this
dispute, however, Chile offered an apology and reparations.

6. Critical Thinking: Recognizing Bias. Why did some people continually refer to the purchase of Alaska as “Seward’s Folly”?

Many members of Congress and other Americans doubted that Alaska, a “frozen wasteland,” was worth its price, especially because the federal government still had a Civil War debt of $3 billion. As Seward had jumped at the chance to buy Alaska, his plan was called “Seward’s Folly.”

If you are satisfied with your answers, proceed to the next section. If you found the previous questions difficult, however, review this material before moving on.

📖 Reading Directions

Now read Section 2. After reading this passage, answer the section review questions and compare your answers with those provided.
2. Expanding on the Seas

By 1900, without thinking of the consequences, the United States had become the third-ranking naval power in the world. This large navy was no solution to the problems of depression, farm revolt, labor unrest, free silver, and Populism. If the nation continued to build its costly navy, there must be some grand purpose. What was it?

Mahan and sea power

Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, a scholarly naval officer who helped set up the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, had an answer. To be strong in the modern world, he said, the United States must sell its products on all continents. To secure and protect these foreign markets, the nation needed a powerful navy. Drawing on his study of ancient and modern times, he wrote *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890). It was sea power “that made, and kept a nation great.” Captain Mahan called for a strong navy, a canal across the Isthmus of Panama, United States dominance in the Caribbean, and control of Samoa and Hawaii.

Among the many who read and believed Mahan’s message was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of
Massachusetts. He came from one of the oldest New England families and had inherited wealth. His upper-class background did not keep him from being a skillful politician. With a Harvard Ph.D. degree in history and a talent for writing history, he knew the American past and was fascinated by the struggle for power. During the 1890s again and again Lodge called for a bigger navy, annexation of Hawaii, a canal across the Isthmus of Panama, and the purchase of the Danish West Indies to protect the approaches to the canal. He also wanted to bring Greenland and Cuba under United States control and to dominate the Caribbean.

Lodge’s colorful friend, Theodore Roosevelt of New York, was another follower of Mahan. He believed a nation should grow strong and be ready to fight. He shared Mahan’s hopes and Lodge’s plans for American expansion. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President McKinley, he worked for these goals.

Lodge and Roosevelt believed that a great nation must be strong. The world was full of weak nations. The American empire builders said that American power was only a force for good. Other nations should be glad to be ruled by us. And the American people would
profit by reaching abroad. According to Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana:

American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours. We will establish trading posts throughout the world as distributing points for American products. We will cover the ocean with our merchant marine. We will build a navy to the measure of our greatness. Great colonies governing themselves, flying our flag and trading with us, will grow about our posts of trade.

**Renewed attempts to annex Hawaii**

The people who lived in those potential “great colonies” did not all agree with Senator Beveridge. When Queen Liliuokalani came to the throne of Hawaii in 1891, she tried to shake off the control by American settlers. She wanted to restore the royal rights that her brother had given up. But she was frustrated in her struggle for freedom. In January 1893 the settlers, encouraged by the Harrison administration and assisted
by United States Marines from the cruiser *Boston,* overthrew the queen. The new pro-America government drew up a treaty of annexation which President Harrison sent to the Senate for approval. The Democrats prevented Senate approval before Harrison left office.

Grover Cleveland, back in the White House again, was against expansion. Upon coming to office in 1893, he sent an agent to Hawaii to find out what had happened. The agent reported that the American minister to Hawaii had fomented the revolution. Cleveland withdrew the treaty to annex Hawaii. Instead he tried to restore “Queen Lil” to her throne. Not until after the Spanish-American War was Hawaii finally annexed by joint resolution of Congress (July 1898). Would the United States follow the European example and build an empire by conquest? Or could the Empire for Liberty in North America add states in the far Pacific?

**The Venezuelan boundary dispute**

It was not easy for the growing United States to find its proper role. The new Latin American nations had only recently been colonies of European empires. The
Venezuela-British Guiana boundary question was a test. President Cleveland thought the Monroe Doctrine was at stake. Great Britain claimed that 23,000 square miles of disputed borderland belonged to its colony of British Guiana (now the nation of Guyana). Venezuelans relied on the United States guarantees under the Monroe Doctrine. They begged the United States to defend them and save their land.

The United States urged arbitration of the dispute. But Britain refused. Then Cleveland’s Secretary of State, Richard Olney, saw his chance to establish the right of the United States to intervene in Latin America. In a new version of the Monroe Doctrine he warned Great Britain. He said that the United States, “practically sovereign on this continent,” would “resent and resist” any attempt by the British to take Venezuelan soil. The vast ocean between England and America, he said, made “political union between a European and American state unnatural and inexpedient.” Again he called for arbitration. The British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, replied that the Monroe Doctrine was no part of international law. This boundary dispute was no business of the United States.
President Cleveland responded with threats. He asked Congress to vote $100,000 for a boundary commission, which was only a start. He would defend his extension of the Monroe Doctrine—even if it meant war. Congress agreed.

But many Americans feared the consequences and rose in protest. The bellicose Theodore Roosevelt was disgusted. “The clamor of the peace faction,” he wrote to his friend Senator Lodge, “has convinced me that this country needs a war.”

Fortunately, calmer heads prevailed. The British already had enough troubles of their own, fighting for control of South Africa. Why turn the United States into an enemy over a petty border dispute? The British agreed to submit to arbitration. In October 1899 a tribunal in Paris (generally favoring Great Britain’s claim) peacefully settled the boundary that had been debated for more than half a century.

The Venezuelan affair had expressed a more aggressive American spirit. “It indicates,” Captain Mahan wrote, “the awakening of our countrymen to the fact that we must come out of our isolation ... and take our share in the turmoil of the world.”
Section 2 Review

1. Identify: Alfred T. Mahan, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, Queen Liliuokalani.

   Alfred T. Mahan: naval officer who helped set up the Naval War College and persuaded many American leaders that both expansion overseas and a strong navy were essential to the nation’s future.

   Theodore Roosevelt: Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President McKinley.

   Henry Cabot Lodge: Massachusetts senator who believed in Mahan’s message and called for a larger navy.

   Queen Liliuokalani: ruler of Hawaii who was overthrown by American settlers in 1893.

2. What was Senator Beveridge’s message?

   Senator Beveridge stated that an American empire would be good for both Americans and the world. The United States needed overseas markets for its surplus products, and it needed a strong navy and foreign outposts to secure these markets. The senator believed that the people in foreign lands
would be lucky to come under the influence of the United States.

3. What was the importance of the Venezuelan boundary dispute to the United States?

Cleveland believed that the Monroe Doctrine was at stake. During the dispute, Cleveland and his Secretary of State asserted an expanded version of that doctrine, claiming the right to intervene in Latin American affairs. This incident demonstrated both the usefulness of arbitration (which finally settled the dispute) and a new assertiveness in American foreign policy.

4. How did the United States obtain control of Hawaii?

In 1893, Americans living in Hawaii, with some help from United States Marines, overthrew the Hawaiian queen and asked the United States to annex Hawaii. A treaty of annexation was submitted to the Senate, but President Cleveland withdrew the treaty when he learned how the queen had been overthrown. Nevertheless, Hawaii was annexed by the United States in 1898.
5. Critical Thinking: Recognizing Bias. What was Captain Mahan’s “message”? How did it influence Lodge and Roosevelt?

Captain Mahan believed that the United States should expand. The nation needed overseas markets, as well as a strong navy to secure and protect those markets. Lodge and Roosevelt were persuaded by Mahan’s arguments, and they worked for a bigger navy, the annexation of Hawaii, and a canal in Panama.

If you are satisfied with your answers, proceed to the next section. If you found the previous questions difficult, however, review this material before moving on.

📖 Reading Directions

Now read Section 3. After reading this passage, answer the section review questions and compare your answers with those provided.

3. War With Spain

Many Americans who never read Captain Mahan’s history books had their own reasons to reach out
across the world. Some were crusaders who wanted to spread Christianity. Others wanted to teach the lessons of American democracy to faraway peoples. Still others thought that the nation would not be secure without bases in every ocean. And some wanted adventure—escape from economic hard times and the humdrum life at home.

**Problems in Cuba**

The United States had long been interested in Cuba. As early as 1823 John Quincy Adams called Cuba a natural appendage of the North American continent. Later Presidents, too, tried to acquire the island from Spain. In 1868, just after the Civil War, rebels in Cuba began agitating for independence.

In the United States many people felt sympathy for this latest American revolution. In February 1895 when Cuban rebels declared their independence, the Spanish government sent in troops. Their ruthless general was Valeriano “Butcher” Weyler. He ordered “all inhabitants of the country” to “concentrate themselves in the towns.” Anyone found outside a town after February 10, 1896, would be shot. Cuban towns were made into “concentration camps.” Cuban rebels were
tortured. Innocent men, women, and children—including some United States citizens—were herded together, to die of disease and starvation.

The “Yellow Press”

American newspapers splashed “Butcher” Weyler’s atrocities on their front pages. The new speed presses flooded the cities with six editions each day. By 1896 rural free delivery of mail brought one of these editions daily even to remote farms. The larger a paper’s “circulation”—the more copies it sold—the more it could charge for advertising.

Joseph Pulitzer, an adventurous Hungarian immigrant, had secured passage to America by enlisting in the Union army. His energy and enterprise made him a fortune in the newspaper business. He built circulation by championing the interests of his “American aristocracy”—the aristocracy of labor—and by printing sensational stories. If there was no startling news, he would invent some. He once sent Nelly Bly traveling around the world to beat the legendary record of 80 days.
To make his *New York World* interesting for readers of all ages, he invented the comic strip. He hired a clever cartoonist, Richard F. Outcault, to draw the adventures of a bad boy called the “Yellow Kid.” Then when these comics appeared regularly in the Sunday *World*, Pulitzer’s leading competitor, William Randolph Hearst, hired Outcault to do another Yellow Kid series for his own *New York Journal*. Because both of these sensational newspapers featured the Yellow Kid, they were soon called the “Yellow Press.” And the Yellow Press was more interested in selling papers than in keeping peace.

**The United States readies for war**

American business firms had invested more than $50 million in Cuban sugar. Hoping to prod the United States to intervene, in 1895 the rebels destroyed these sugar plantations and their mills. Then, in 1896, William McKinley was elected President with his twin promises: Protect American business! Free the Cuban people!

When Spain began to negotiate with the United States about the freedom of the Cubans, it seemed that there would be no need to fight. But the Yellow Press now
cleared the path to war. On February 9, 1898, the *New York Journal* printed a stolen letter. The Spanish ambassador, Dupuy de Lôme, had written that President McKinley was “weak and a bidder for the admiration of the crowd, besides being a would-be politician who tries to leave a door open behind himself while keeping on good terms with the jingoes of his party.” Though de Lôme quickly resigned, Americans were angered by his insults. Before they could calm down, a more serious incident occurred.

To protect American lives and property, the United States battleship *Maine* had been sent to Havana Harbor. At 9:40 on the night of February 15, 1898, the *Maine* was shattered by an explosion, and 260 officers and men were killed. The Navy’s court of inquiry reported that the cause was an underwater mine. (Later investigations seem to indicate it was an internal explosion.) Still they could not say for sure whether or not the Spanish were to blame. Anyway the Yellow Press called for war against Spain, and headlined the slogan, “Remember the *Maine!*”

When the excitable Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, heard that McKinley was
hesitating, he said the President “had no more backbone than a chocolate éclair.” On February 25 the Secretary of the Navy made the mistake of taking the afternoon off. That left impatient Teddy as Acting Secretary—in charge of the whole United States Navy. Without consulting anyone, he cabled his friend Commodore George Dewey, who commanded the United States fleet in Asian waters. Make sure, he ordered, to have your ships ready for sea. In case of war attack the Spanish fleet in the Philippines.

When the Secretary of the Navy returned to his office the next day, he was astonished. “Roosevelt,” he wrote in his diary, “has come very near causing more of an explosion than happened to the Maine.” But it was too late to change the order. So even before war had begun in nearby Cuba, Teddy had arrayed the United States fleet for war on the other side of the world.

**The United States goes to war**

If McKinley had been a stronger man, he would not have been afraid to keep the peace. The government of Spain now told him they would give Cuba its independence. But the Yellow Press was still
demanding Spanish blood. The “jingoes”—the people who loved to see a fight—wanted war. Their name came from a line of a British song of the 1870s, “We don’t want to fight, yet by Jingo! if we do, We’ve got the ships, we’ve got the men, and got the money too.” The jingoes had their way.

On April 11, the day after President McKinley learned that Spain would agree to do everything Americans said they wanted, he asked Congress to declare war.

The war lasted only a few months—but that was long enough to create the greatest confusion. At the training camp in Tampa, Florida, commanding officers could not find uniforms. Yet for weeks fifteen railroad cars full of uniforms remained on a siding 25 miles away. The commander of United States troops in Cuba, Major General W. R. Shafter, weighed 300 pounds and was therefore “too unwieldy to get to the front.” Unprepared for combat, the Army committed every kind of foolishness.

The Navy was in better shape. On May 1, when Commodore George Dewey, following Roosevelt’s impulsive orders, attacked the Spanish warships in the Philippines, he finished off the Spaniards in seven
hours. The rest of the Spanish fleet, which was in North American waters, was bottled up in Santiago Harbor on the southeastern tip of Cuba.

Roosevelt and the Rough Riders

Meanwhile Teddy Roosevelt had himself named lieutenant colonel of a new regiment of cavalry. At a training camp in San Antonio, Texas, he gathered cowboys, sheriffs, and desperadoes from the West, and a sprinkling of playboy polo players and steeplechase riders from the East.

On June 22, Roosevelt’s Rough Riders arrived in Cuba. In the battle to capture Santiago, they stormed both Kettle and San Juan hills. Without their horses, which had been left in Florida, the Rough Riders had to charge on foot. “I waved my hat and went up the hill with a rush,” Roosevelt recalled. After bloody fighting they reached their goals.

Theodore Roosevelt never suffered from modesty. When Roosevelt published his book The Rough Riders, the humorist “Mr. Dooley”—Finley Peter Dunne—said Teddy should have called it “Alone in Cuba.”
The decisive naval battle occurred even before the Americans could place their big guns on San Juan Hill overlooking Santiago to bombard the enemy navy below. When the Spanish fleet tried to run for the open sea, the United States Navy sank every one of their warships. All over the United States, cheering Americans celebrated their victory.

The “splendid little war”

By the standards of American history, this had not been a full-sized war. There were 385 battle deaths—less than one-tenth the deaths in the American Revolution, and only one-twentieth the deaths at the Battle of Gettysburg alone. While the American Revolution had lasted nearly eight years and the Civil War had lasted four years, the Spanish-American War lasted only four months. Future Secretary of State John Hay called it “a splendid little war.” Even this “little” war cost a quarter-billion dollars and several thousand deaths from disease.

The little war marked a big change in the relationship of the United States to the world. The tides of history were turned.
The defeated Spain gave up to the United States an empire of islands. And this nation, born in a colonial revolution, would now have its own colonies. All were outside the continent; some were thousands of miles away. The United States acquired Puerto Rico at the gateway to the Caribbean along with Guam, important as a refueling station in the mid-Pacific. The Philippine Islands (all 7000 of them, of which more than 1000 were inhabitable!) off the coast of China were sold to the United States for a bargain price of $20 million.

These new American colonies added up to 100,000 square miles, holding nearly 10 million people. That was not much, compared to the vast empires of England, France, or Germany. But for the United States it was something quite new.

The meaning of this Spanish-American War in American history, then, was actually less in what it accomplished than in what it proclaimed. The American Revolution had been our War of Independence. Now the Spanish-American War at the threshold of the 1900s was our first War of Intervention. We had joined the old-fashioned race for empire.
Reader’s note: The map titled “Territory Acquired by the United States, 1857–1899” shows important territorial acquisitions, such as Alaska in 1867. That same year, the United States acquired the Aleutian Islands and Midway Island in the Pacific Ocean. In 1898, it acquired Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, as well as the Hawaiian Islands, the Philippine Islands, and Guam in the Pacific Ocean. Then, in 1899, Wake Island, northeast of Guam, and American Samoa, a series of islands east of Australia, also became American possessions. End of note.

Americans opposed to empire

Many Americans were worried. Some were saddened, and even angry. They called themselves “Anti-Imperialists,” for they hated to see the United States become an empire. To be an empire, they said, meant lording it over people in faraway places. They also feared that seizing land in the Pacific might someday lead to war with Japan. Some felt Asians could never be part of a democracy. And most wondered how the United States could uphold the Declaration of Independence if it became an empire. Anti-Imperialists included Democrats and Republicans, of all sections
and classes—labor leader Samuel Gompers, industrialist Andrew Carnegie, President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard and President David Starr Jordan of Stanford, philosopher William James, social worker Jane Addams, and popular writer Mark Twain. William Jennings Bryan was also opposed to America’s new imperialism.

The Anti-Imperialists were especially disturbed by the situation in the Philippines. The Filipinos did not want to be ruled by the United States any more than by Spain. Led by Emilio Aguinaldo they fought against the Americans. Guerrilla warfare went on for three years. The United States used more troops and spent more money than in the entire war against Spain. Many Americans were shocked by the brutal methods we used to put down the Filipinos.

It was not until April 1902 that the last rebel surrendered and the Philippines were officially declared “pacified.” Even before then, however, in 1900 under the direction of William Howard Taft, first as head of the Philippine Commission and then as civil governor, the large land holdings of the Catholic friars were distributed to the people. Under Taft’s wise direction
roads were built, harbors and sanitation improved, and the Philippines started on the path to self-government.

McKinley was renominated by the Republicans at Philadelphia in 1900 with a unanimous shout. Theodore Roosevelt, governor of New York and “Rough Rider” hero, was the vice-presidential candidate. Once nominated, Roosevelt threw himself into the campaign with his usual boyish vigor. Up and down the country he denounced the “mollycoddles” who would have us “scuttle” out of the Philippines.

The Democrats met at Kansas City on Independence Day and nominated William Jennings Bryan. Although Bryan insisted on a free-silver plank in the platform, the campaign was not fought on that dead issue. The Republican Congress had already passed an act making gold the only standard of currency. The issue was imperialism. A huge American flag hanging from the rafters of the Democratic convention hall proclaimed, “The flag of the Republic forever, of an Empire never.”

In 1900 that slogan was already too late. People did not like what they heard about the Filipinos fighting against American control, even though censorship kept them from hearing the worst. Still, the war had helped
to return prosperity to the United States. McKinley, “the advance agent of prosperity,” was easily reelected by 292 electoral votes to Bryan’s 155.

The reorganization of Cuba

For better or worse—and without much thought of what it all meant for the future—the United States was now running a colonial empire.

The administration had already begun setting up governments for the former Spanish islands. The Teller Amendment was attached to Congress’s war resolution of April 20, 1898. It pledged that the United States would not exercise sovereignty over Cuba. We would leave government of the island to its people.

Still, United States troops did not leave. Under the military governor General Leonard Wood (1899–1902) the ruins wrought by the revolution were repaired. A school system was organized. The finances of the island were set in order. Peace lasted while the Cubans drew up a new constitution. But what use was a new constitution to people weakened and dying of the tropical disease of yellow fever? A commission headed by Major Walter Reed of the Army Medical Corps
proved that yellow fever was carried by a mosquito (the female *Aëdes aegypti*) which bred in stagnant waters. Reed helped to stamp out the disease so Cuba could prosper.

The United States wanted certain assurances before it withdrew its army from Cuba. Cuba must make no treaties with foreign powers that would limit its independence. It should not permit any foreign power to acquire Cuban territory. Cuba should sell or lease to the United States land for coaling or naval stations. Cuba should not contract debts whose interest could not be met out of current revenues. And, finally, Cuba should allow the United States to step in whenever necessary “for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty.”

The Platt Amendment, named for Senator Orville H. Platt of Connecticut, attached all these provisions to an army money bill. The provisions would have to appear in any constitution of the Cubans. And they would also be included in a treaty with the United States. Otherwise the United States would not withdraw its troops.
The Cubans protested these terms but finally wrote them into their constitution. American troops were then withdrawn. The Platt Amendment became a "permanent" treaty with Cuba in 1903.

A new status for Puerto Rico

The island of Puerto Rico, with a population of almost a million, willingly came under the rule of the United States. The Foraker Act of April 1900 organized Puerto Rico as a compromise between a colony and a territory. The President would appoint a governor and a council of 11, including 5 Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans would elect a legislature of 35 members. The Spanish courts were swept away and replaced by a court system like that of the United States. Works of sanitation, education, road building, and agricultural development were begun. In 1901 Congress abolished customs duties between the island and the United States.

The "Open Door" in China

On the other side of the world were more lands waiting to be occupied by the new imperial powers. After China had been defeated in a war with Japan, in 1894–1895, the country lay at the mercy of the great
powers. China was cut up into “spheres of influence.” France, Germany, Japan, and Russia forced the Chinese government to grant them “leases” of great areas. Within each of these the lucky foreigners seized valuable railroad and mining rights and even abolished China’s political rule.

The United States took Hawaii and the Philippines at the very moment when this piecemeal division of China was under way. The China trade was appealing to American merchants. Knowing that Great Britain wanted the same opportunities, McKinley’s Secretary of State, John Hay, sent identical notes to enlist England, France, Germany, Japan, and Russia. They were not to interfere with the rights of any of the 22 ports in China, nor to disturb the regular collection of the Chinese duties. They were not to increase railroad rates or harbor dues or in any way to close their own “spheres of influence” to other nations. Every nation was to have equal commercial treatment throughout China.

When Hay addressed the Great Powers, they avoided giving a direct answer. Hay went ahead anyway. On March 20, 1900, he announced that their consent had
been “final and definitive.” In this very casual way, without realizing what the “Open Door” in China might mean, the United States plunged deeper into world affairs.

The Boxer Rebellion

Meanwhile many Chinese would not let their country and themselves be treated like foreign property. They rushed to join a patriotic society called the “righteous Fists of Harmony” (shortened to “Boxers”). In May 1900 they rose up against the “foreign devils” hoping to drive them out of China. The Boxers killed missionaries and their families. They besieged the foreigners’ neighborhood in Beijing. It took seven weeks for a makeshift army of American, British, French, German, Russian, and Japanese troops to reach Beijing and drive off the mob.

The foreign powers doing business in China wished to take their revenge and prevent this from happening again. They wished to overthrow the government and divide China among themselves. Still, Secretary Hay stuck by his policy of the Open Door. He insisted that Chinese independence be preserved. Hay urged that, instead of overthrowing the shaky government of
China, they only force the government to punish the ringleaders of the Boxer Rebellion and pay damages. The whole sum was finally fixed at a stiff $334 million. When it was found that less than half the $24 million allotted to the United States was enough to pay our military expenses, Congress returned the balance to China.

The Chinese government said that it was “profoundly impressed with the justice and great friendliness of the United States.” It put the American money in a trust fund to send hundreds of young Chinese to colleges and universities in the United States.

The United States had not only acquired colonial outposts in the Far North, in the Caribbean, and the North and South Pacific. This nation had even committed itself to preserve the independence and the territorial integrity of China—a vast, half-understood country on the other side of the globe. These varied commitments, so casually undertaken, held a dangerous destiny. The New World was no longer simply a place of refuge for oppressed peoples from everywhere. Our nation had become one of the world’s great powers.
Section 3 Review


   Joseph Pulitzer: owner of a New York paper that started the Yellow Press

   Richard Outcault: cartoonist who created the “Yellow Kid” comic strip

   W. R. Hearst: press lord who was Pulitzer’s competitor

   Dupuy de Lôme: Spanish ambassador whose criticisms of McKinley strained relations between the United States and Spain

   George Dewey: naval commander who captured the Philippines

   “jingoes”: name given to people eager for a war

   “Rough Riders”: name of Theodore Roosevelt’s cavalry regiment

Havana: city located on the western portion of the island of Cuba

Philippines: islands located southeast of China

Santiago: harbor located on the southeastern tip of the island of Cuba

Guam: island east of the Philippine Islands

Puerto Rico: island east of Cuba in the Caribbean Sea

Beijing: city in eastern China

3. Why did American Anti-Imperialists oppose expansion?

American Anti-Imperialists believed that expansion violated the fundamental principles of American democracy. They believed that the United States would go to war with Japan. They thought that the United States could not be both a democracy and an empire.

4. List the provisions of the Platt Amendment.

According to the Platt Amendment, Cuba could not make any treaty that would limit its sovereignty or
allow any foreign power to acquire any of its territory. It had to lease areas for naval bases to the United States. It could not acquire debts with interest payments greater than current revenues could meet. Also, it had to allow the United States to intervene in its internal affairs in order to protect life, property, or liberty.

5. How did Secretary of State John Hay achieve the “Open Door” policy?

The “Open Door” policy proclaimed that no one nation could claim exclusive rights over any area in China. Instead, all nations had the right to exploit China equally. Hay implemented this policy, suggesting it to England, France, Germany, Japan, and Russia. He claimed that they had accepted the policy.

6. What was the Boxer Rebellion? How did it influence our relations with China?

The Boxer Rebellion was an unsuccessful attempt by Chinese nationalists to drive out all foreigners. The Chinese government was impressed by the actions of the United States after the rebellion was
suppressed. The United States insisted on the preservation of Chinese independence and would not accept reparations that exceeded the actual damages suffered in the rebellion.


a. “Butcher” Weyler was a Spanish general whose brutality in suppressing the Cuban rebels helped rouse support for the war in the United States.

b. Cuban rebels declared independence from Spain in 1895. Americans were sympathetic to their cause.

c. The United States blamed Spain for the sinking of the Maine.

d. Theodore Roosevelt ordered Dewey to attack the Spanish.
e. President McKinley declared war on Spain even though he knew the Spanish would meet American demands.

f. The Yellow Press called for war and generally inflamed the emotions of the public.

If you found the previous questions difficult, review this material before moving on. If you are satisfied with your answers, however, complete the assignment that follows.

Assignment 1

Complete this assignment in the medium of your choice. Begin by giving your full name, address, and phone number. Also indicate the course title, Assignment 1, your instructor’s name, and the date. Then provide your answers. Be sure to indicate the question number along with each answer. Note that this assignment is worth 100 points. Instructions for sending assignments can be found in the Overview to the course.

Indicate whether the following statements are true or false. If the statement is false, reword it to make it true. (3 points each)
1. Matthew Perry was the American naval commander who opened up Japan for trade.

2. As Secretary of State, William Seward negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia.

3. Arbitration means having two parties make a decision in a dispute.

4. President Harrison and his Secretary of State created a new version of the Monroe Doctrine, claiming the right to intervene in Latin American affairs.

5. A naval officer, scholar, and writer, Alfred Thayer Mahan convinced many leaders in the United States of the need for a powerful navy.


7. Dupuy de Lôme was the Spanish ambassador to the United States whose criticism of President McKinley angered Americans.

8. Jingoes were patriots who did not want to fight a war to advance their nation’s interests.
9. The Imperialists did not want the United States to become an empire.

10. Walter Reed headed the commission in Cuba that proved yellow fever was transmitted by mosquitoes.

Answer the following multiple-choice questions by choosing the correct answer: (3 points each)

11. Which of the following was not a reason for Americans favoring overseas expansion in the late 1800s?
   a. spreading Christianity and democracy
   b. acquiring bases for U.S. security
   c. acquiring new markets for trade
   d. halting the spread of Russian influence

12. What was the primary reason for the purchase of Alaska?
   a. search for gold
   b. drill for oil
   c. force Britain out of Canada
   d. establish military bases

13. The Treaty of Kanagawa opened trade between the United States and which country?
14. In 1893, whom did American settlers overthrow with the assistance of the marines from the cruiser *Boston*?
   a. leader of Venezuela  
   b. emperor of Mexico  
   c. queen of Hawaii  
   d. Spanish government in Cuba  

15. Which Latin American nation requested U.S. intervention in the late 1800s?
   a. Chile  
   b. Venezuela  
   c. Colombia  
   d. Panama  

16. Which of the following developments did not lead to the war with Spain in 1898?
   a. sinking of the *Maine*  
   b. Yellow Press  
   c. de Lôme letter  
   d. Spanish interference with American trade
17. Which of the following descriptions applies to the U.S. battleship *Maine*?
   a. was shattered by an explosion while in Havana Harbor
   b. led the attack on Spanish warships in the Philippines
   c. led the attack on Spanish warships near Santiago, Cuba
   d. was the flagship when the U.S. fleet sailed around the world

18. Compared to the Civil War and the American Revolution, which of the following statements characterizes the Spanish-American War?
   a. It was much longer.
   b. It was much costlier in terms of U.S. casualties.
   c. It was much less costly in terms of U.S. casualties.
   d. It was less significant in terms of the relationship of the United States with the world.

19. Which of the following statements describes the Chinese reaction that followed the Boxer Rebellion?
a. China cut off relations with the United States.
b. China believed that relations with the United States were strained.
c. The Chinese were friendly to and impressed by the United States.
d. The Chinese were cautious in dealing with the United States.

20. What did the Platt and Teller amendments accomplish?
a. gave Cubans the right to establish their own constitution
b. called for Spanish evacuation of Cuba
c. forbade U.S. military intervention in Cuba
d. required that Cuba reimburse American businessmen for damages to their sugar plantations

Answer the essay question that follows. Limit your answer to two print pages, five braille pages, or a 2-minute recording. (40 points total)

21. Until the Civil War, the United States had seemed a world of its own. Then, at the turn of the century in 1898, war with Spain suddenly thrust the United States upon the world stage. Examine America’s
imperialistic character by answering the following questions:

a. How did the United States benefit from expansion in the late nineteenth century? (15 points)

b. In what ways did the belief that sea power determined a nation’s military strength influence American foreign policy? (20 points)

c. What territorial changes in the United States occurred as a result of the Spanish-American War? (5 points)

Once you have completed this assignment, mail, fax, or email it to your instructor. Then proceed to Lesson 2: The Progressive Era.