Cobblestone™

THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

Use the articles, lessons, and activities in this Teacher Guide to help students understand the origins and consequences of the Spanish-American War.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

What factors affected the Spanish-American War?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- **Students will learn about the Spanish-American War.**
- **Students will create a comparison of ship technology before and after the war.**
- **Students will explain how perspective influences the way people view a war and create historical sources.**
- **Students will explain how natural and human-created catastrophes in one place can affect people in other places.**
- **Students will conduct research.**
- **Students will create a chart.**

In addition to supplemental materials focused on core Social Studies skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

• **America's Steel Navy**
Expository Nonfiction, ~1090L
• **Read All About It!**Expository
Nonfiction, ~1020L
• **The Attack of "Yellow Jack"**
Expository Nonfiction, ~930L

America's Steel Navy

pp. 10–12, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about America's steel ships to let students explore how technological changes in transportation affected the Spanish-American War.

Lexile Score: ~1090L

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the Civil War era of the US Navy.
- Students will analyze why the US needed a stronger navy.
- Students will learn about the construction of new steel naval vessels.

RESOURCES

Compare and Contrast

KEY VOCABULARY

- **downsizing (p. 10)** the process of replacing something larger with something smaller
- **fleet (p. 11)** a group of ships sailing together, especially in a country's navy
- **commodore (p. 12)** a naval officer of high rank, especially in the US Navy

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What factors affected the Spanish-American War?

Ask students if they have ever heard of the Spanish-American War. Do they know when it took place or why? Explain that the war was fought between Spain and the United States and also involved Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and that the development of a stronger navy played a big role in their success. Have them create a K-W-L (know, want to know, learned) chart. After completing the reading and the READ & DISCUSS questions, have students return to the chart and complete the final ("learned") column.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Read the vocabulary words and definitions. Then have students work in three groups and assign each group one of the words. Give the groups five minutes to create as many different sentences as they can, using that word correctly. Have each group share their sentences with the class. Finally, remind students to look for the vocabulary words as they read.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students answer these questions after reading the article.

1. Why did the US Navy become smaller after the Civil War?
2. What were some of the reasons that the US decided it needed to increase the size of the Navy in the 1880s?
3. What did the Naval War College encourage besides building new ships?
4. What were the advantages of steel ships?

SKILL FOCUS: Analyze Historical Sources

INSTRUCT: Explain that Spain and the United States each had their own reason for wanting to control Cuba. Share the Spanish perspective on Cuba and the war with the United States using sources such as the Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/ojeda.html). What reasons does Spain's perspective give for the war?

ASSESS: Have students write a letter from a Spanish citizen to a friend in the United States, arguing that the US should not try to claim Cuba or any of the other territories involved in the war. Then have students gather in groups to share and discuss their letters. Challenge them to write responses.

EXTEND

Social Studies Have students create a chronological timeline of the events of the Spanish-American War. Be sure major events are labeled and posted accurately.

Compare and Contrast Comparing the technologies between two historical times requires finding the similarities and differences between those eras. In the left column, list the details of Civil War–era ships. In the right column, list the same details for the new steel naval ships of the Spanish-American War. Some categories are provided to help you begin.

Civil War Ships	Spanish-American War Ships
Construction: *mostly wood*	Construction: *steel*
Cost:	*Cost:*
Performance in battle:	Performance in battle:

Read All About It!

pp. 20–23, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about newspaper reporting and political cartoons to explore how their perspectives affected the public's perceptions of the Spanish-American War.

Lexile Score: ~1020L

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about "yellow" journalism during the Spanish-American War.
- Students will analyze how newspapers reflected the perspectives of their owners.
- Students will learn about the uses of political cartoons to convey opinions.

KEY VOCABULARY

- *circulation* **(p. 20)** how widely a publication is read by an audience
- *intercept* **(p. 21)** to stop, seize, or interrupt the progress of something
- *scoop* **(p. 23)** a piece of news published by a newspaper before any of its rivals

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What factors affected the Spanish-American War?

Ask students if they have seen a political cartoon in a newspaper, on a billboard, or online. (Provide samples.) Have the class consider the following questions: Could they tell what kind of opinion or issue it was displaying? Did they feel like it changed their opinion about something? For example, does a poster about an endangered species make them want to help with that issue? Discuss how the political cartoons and articles of two New York newspapers used these methods to change their readers' perceptions of the Spanish-American War, and as a way to attract more readers.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Read the vocabulary words and definitions. Then ask students to work in pairs to create a word search puzzle using at least 15 words, including the three vocabulary words. Have pairs trade off to solve each other's puzzles.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students answer the questions below after reading the article.

1. What were some of the ways that the two New York newspapers competed for readers?
2. How did newspaper articles and cartoons affect the perspectives of the US public?
3. Why were "yellow journalism" stories not usually factual?
4. Why were/are political cartoons effective ways to illustrate opinions?

SKILL FOCUS: Compare and Contrast

INSTRUCT: Just as political cartoons and sensational headlines were used during the Spanish-American War, political cartoons (as well as graphics, social media illustrations, and memes) are used widely today to show political opinions and sensational news. Why have these kinds of images remained effective through time?

ASSESS: Have students research modern political or issue-related cartoons, illustrations, and reliable online sources to find an example of a political or issue-related graphic. Have students gather in groups to share their graphics and to discuss why they think it is an effective way of influencing opinions.

EXTEND

Art Students will draw a political cartoon pertaining to a modern issue or event that is relevant to them. Have them analyze various cartoon styles and wording. Instruct them to be sure that the cartoon includes symbolism. Color or shading can enhance the graphic and the message.

The Attack of "Yellow Jack"

pp. 30–32, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about the effects of yellow fever on the Spanish-American War to show how it affected not only those in Cuba, but other parts of the world as well.

Lexile Score: ~930L
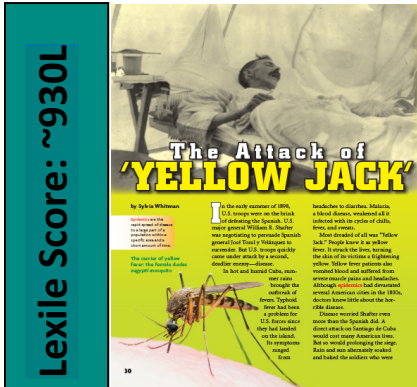
OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about yellow fever during the Spanish-American War.
- Students will analyze how yellow fever affected the course of the war.
- Students will learn how the US Army was able to eliminate yellow fever.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **trenches (p. 31)** long narrow ditches used for military defense
- **invalids (p. 31)** people who are weak or disabled because of an illness
- **inoculate (p. 32)** to immunize someone against a disease

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What factors affected the Spanish-American War?

Guide a discussion initiated by asking students about illnesses they have had in their lives. Did they get the illness from someone else? What kinds of symptoms did they have? Did they have to take medication? Discuss what yellow fever is and why it was so easy for people to get.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Read the vocabulary words and definitions. Then display the sentences below and have students use the vocabulary words to complete them. Finally, remind students to look for the vocabulary words as they read.

1. Soldiers often caught yellow fever in the wet, muddy _____ of Cuba.
2. Many people who developed yellow fever became permanent _____ because of the disease.
3. Attempts to _____ people against yellow fever did not work as well as trying to eliminate mosquitoes.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students answer these questions after reading the article.

1. Why did people catch yellow fever so easily?
2. What were some of the ways that the US Army tried to keep soldiers from getting yellow fever?
3. How did yellow fever affect other parts of the world in terms of health and in terms of the progress of the war?

SKILL FOCUS: Compare and Contrast

INSTRUCT: Yellow fever was a problem for soldiers during the Spanish-American War. Furthermore, during the construction of the Panama Canal (a humanmade waterway in Panama between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans) yellow fever killed tens of thousands of workers and periodically halted progress on building the canal. Epidemics and illnesses can have a major impact on daily life and bigger projects.

ASSESS: Have small groups of students choose from the diseases of polio, Covid, smallpox, the 1918 flu epidemic, or typhoid. Have them research their disease and list the effect of that disease on everyday life. Groups will then share their lists with the class.

EXTEND

English Have students write an imaginary letter from a soldier suffering from yellow fever to his family back home, describing his illness. Remind them to use friendly letter format and descriptive words.