The Empire Question

Debating U.S. control of the Philippines in 1898

USH.3.1 "Explain the debates surrounding America's entrance into global imperialism."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline two reasons Americans gave for taking control of the Philippines, circle two objections, and box one detail showing what Filipinos wanted. Use your marks to compare what each side believed was at stake.

Who Should Rule the Philippines?

1. In December 1898, American negotiators signed a treaty ending the war with Spain. Spain agreed to give up the Philippines, a group of islands in the Pacific, and the United States agreed to pay Spain $20 million. The U.S. Senate had to approve the treaty, and Americans argued over a larger question: Should victory in war allow the United States to rule people far from its shores? Filipino independence leaders, including Emilio Aguinaldo, had fought Spanish rule and had declared independence in June 1898. Their goal clashed with American plans to take control of the islands.

2. Supporters of annexation, or adding the islands to U.S. territory, argued that the Philippines could give the United States a naval foothold in the Pacific and better access to trade with Asia. Some feared that if the United States withdrew, another powerful country might take the islands. Others claimed American rule would bring schools and a more stable government. These arguments treated overseas control as a sign of national strength. Yet promises to help Filipinos raised a hard question: Could a nation claim to spread freedom while refusing to let islanders decide their own future? Supporters did not all agree on how long American rule should last.

3. Opponents, including members of the Anti-Imperialist League, said ruling the Philippines without Filipino consent violated the American ideal of government by the people. Some also warned that holding the islands would cost money and American lives. As the Senate debated the treaty, fighting broke out between U.S. and Filipino forces in February 1899. The Senate approved the treaty, but the conflict grew into a long, brutal war. For opponents, the war showed the price of denying independence; supporters argued that American control was needed to restore order. Both sides claimed to defend the nation's future, but they disagreed about freedom, power, and responsibility.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the argument for trade with Asia conflict with an objection to annexation?

2. How did supporters and opponents weigh the risks of controlling the islands differently?

3. How could Filipino independence leaders challenge the claim that American rule would spread freedom?

4. How did opponents and supporters interpret the fighting that began in February 1899 differently?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence editorial advising the Senate to approve or reject U.S. control of the Philippines. Weigh one argument from each side, address the Filipino independence movement, and propose a specific U.S. policy toward the islands.

ANSWER KEY

The Empire Question

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline two reasons Americans gave for taking control of the Philippines, circle two objections, and box one detail showing what Filipinos wanted. Use your marks to compare what each side believed was at stake. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the argument for trade with Asia conflict with an objection to annexation?	**Supporters saw the islands as a way to expand trade with Asia. Opponents argued that gaining this advantage by ruling Filipinos without their consent violated government by the people.**
2	How did supporters and opponents weigh the risks of controlling the islands differently?	**Supporters feared another powerful country might take the islands if the United States withdrew. Opponents warned that keeping the islands would cost money and American lives.**
3	How could Filipino independence leaders challenge the claim that American rule would spread freedom?	**They had already declared independence after fighting Spanish rule, so American control would deny them the chance to decide their own future.**
4	How did opponents and supporters interpret the fighting that began in February 1899 differently?	**Opponents saw the fighting as a cost of denying Filipino independence. Supporters argued that it showed the need for American control to restore order.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Senate should reject U.S. control of the Philippines because Filipinos should choose their own government. A Pacific naval foothold might strengthen the United States, but that benefit does not justify ruling people without their consent. Filipino leaders fought Spain and declared independence, so replacing Spanish rule with American rule would ignore their goal. Some Americans fear another country might seize the islands, and that risk deserves attention. Instead of taking control, the United States should recognize Filipino independence and seek a trade agreement with the new government.

Accept other defensible positions when students accurately weigh arguments from both sides and address Filipino independence. The proposed policy should be specific and consistent with the student's position.