Headlines and War

Trace how events and public opinion brought the United States closer to war with Spain.

USH.C.3.1.D "Identify the events that led many people in the United States of America to support going to war with Spain, assessing how yellow journalism and jingoism influenced public opinion."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two events that could increase support for war, circle two ways newspaper coverage shaped reactions, and write J beside the sentence that explains jingoism.

Cuba, the Press, and the Push for War

1 In 1895, Cuban rebels renewed their fight for independence from Spain. The war unfolded close to U.S. shores, and American businesses had investments in Cuba. Spanish authorities forced many rural Cubans into guarded towns to keep them from aiding the rebels. Crowded conditions, hunger, and disease killed large numbers of civilians. Reports of this suffering reached U.S. readers, who disagreed about what their country should do. Some demanded action to help Cubans; others feared that fighting Spain would cost lives. The rebellion and the harsh Spanish response gave Americans reasons to watch the conflict closely.

2 Publishers Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst competed for readers with bold headlines about Cuba. Their papers described real violence, but some stories used shocking language or claims that were not well verified. This style, called yellow journalism, could make distant suffering feel urgent and make Spain seem entirely to blame. In February 1898, newspapers also printed a leaked letter in which Spain's minister to the United States insulted President William McKinley. The letter angered many readers and deepened distrust of Spain, even though an insult alone was not an act of war.

3 On February 15, 1898, an explosion sank the U.S. battleship Maine in Havana Harbor, killing 266 Americans. The cause was uncertain, and there was no proof that Spain had attacked the ship. Still, some headlines blamed Spain and demanded revenge. Jingoism, an aggressive form of nationalism that favors military action, added force to calls for war. Not everyone agreed: some Americans wanted an investigation rather than a quick attack. As pressure grew over Cuba's suffering and the Maine, McKinley asked Congress in April for authority to intervene in Cuba; Congress approved intervention, and war with Spain followed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Spain's actions toward rural Cubans give some Americans a reason to support intervention?

2. How could yellow journalism change a reader's reaction to the violence in Cuba?

3. Why did the leaked letter increase distrust of Spain, and why was it not by itself a reason for war?

4. After the Maine sank, how could jingoism push people toward war despite an important uncertainty?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence note to a U.S. neighbor in early April 1898 who has not decided whether to support war. Connect two events to public support, explain how yellow journalism or jingoism could shape your neighbor's reaction, and give a reason to examine evidence before choosing a position.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.3.1.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two events that could increase support for war, circle two ways newspaper coverage shaped reactions, and write J beside the sentence that explains jingoism. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Spain's actions toward rural Cubans give some Americans a reason to support intervention?	**Spanish authorities forced rural Cubans into guarded towns, where hunger and disease killed many civilians. Some Americans wanted to intervene to help them.**
2	How could yellow journalism change a reader's reaction to the violence in Cuba?	**Shocking language and poorly verified claims could make the suffering feel more urgent and make Spain seem entirely to blame.**
3	Why did the leaked letter increase distrust of Spain, and why was it not by itself a reason for war?	**Spain's minister insulted President McKinley, angering readers, but an insult was not an act of war.**
4	After the Maine sank, how could jingoism push people toward war despite an important uncertainty?	**Jingoism favored military action, and some headlines demanded revenge, although the explosion's cause was uncertain and Spain's responsibility was unproven.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Spain's forced relocation of Cuban civilians and the explosion that sank the Maine could both make Americans favor intervention, though they raise different concerns. A sensational headline might turn anger over these events into a demand for immediate war by implying Spain caused the explosion. Yet the cause of the Maine's destruction is uncertain, so blaming Spain without evidence would be reckless. I would investigate that claim while weighing the documented suffering of Cuban civilians.

Accept other passage-supported events and reasonable connections to public support for war. Responses should distinguish the events from claims or attitudes that shaped how people interpreted them.