

Headlines and History

Historical context can shape a source's point of view.

8.29.D "identify bias and points of view created by the historical context surrounding an event;"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that describe the historical context, circle words or claims that show a point of view, and write N beside the newspaper evidence and G beside the government evidence.

The Maine and the News

- ① In February 1898, the U.S. battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana Harbor, Cuba, killing 266 sailors. Cuba was fighting Spanish colonial rule, and many U.S. readers already sympathized with Cuban independence. U.S. business owners also worried about their property and trade on the island. The explosion's cause was uncertain. Some people suspected a Spanish mine, but investigators had not proved what caused it. The disaster came during a tense debate over whether the United States should intervene in Cuba.
- ② Newspapers competed for readers in an era often called yellow journalism. The *New York Journal* printed a large headline calling the *Maine*'s destruction "the work of an enemy" and offered a \$50,000 reward for information about the attack. These choices made Spain seem guilty before proof existed. The newspaper's editors faced fierce competition for sales and knew that dramatic war news attracted attention. Their commercial setting and many readers' sympathy for Cuba helped create a strongly anti-Spanish point of view.
- ③ President William McKinley faced public pressure after the explosion, but his April message to Congress did not state that Spain had caused it. He described suffering and disorder in Cuba and argued that the United States should help end the conflict. His administration also wanted to protect U.S. citizens and property. This government point of view grew from responsibility for U.S. interests and concern that the nearby war could spread. Cuban independence supporters, meanwhile, generally saw Spanish rule as the central problem and hoped U.S. action would aid their struggle.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Which two conditions in paragraph 1 could make some people in the United States more likely to support intervention in Cuba?

2 What important uncertainty did the *New York Journal's* headline fail to show?

3 How did competition for newspaper sales help create the *New York Journal's* anti-Spanish point of view?

4 How did McKinley's point of view differ from the point of view of Cuban independence supporters?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine you are a U.S. business owner with property in Cuba in 1898. Write a headline about the crisis, then write exactly two complete sentences explaining how your concerns could shape the point of view or bias in that headline.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that describe the historical context, circle words or claims that show a point of view, and write N beside the newspaper evidence and G beside the government evidence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which two conditions in paragraph 1 could make some people in the United States more likely to support intervention in Cuba?	Many readers sympathized with Cuban independence, and U.S. business owners worried about property and trade in Cuba.
2	What important uncertainty did the <i>New York Journal's</i> headline fail to show?	Investigators had not proved what caused the <i>Maine</i> explosion.
3	How did competition for newspaper sales help create the <i>New York Journal's</i> anti-Spanish point of view?	Editors knew dramatic war news attracted readers, so competition for sales encouraged a headline that made Spain seem guilty.
4	How did McKinley's point of view differ from the point of view of Cuban independence supporters?	McKinley stressed ending the conflict and protecting U.S. citizens and property. Cuban independence supporters saw Spanish rule as the central problem and hoped U.S. action would help their struggle.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Cuba Crisis Puts American Property at Risk Because I have property and trade connections in Cuba, I focus on threats to U.S. investments. My concern may bias me toward supporting intervention, even though the cause of the *Maine* explosion has not been proved.

Accept answers that connect a source's wording or focus to the pressures, interests, and attitudes of 1898. For the open response, accept varied headlines and positions if the student clearly explains how business concerns could shape bias.