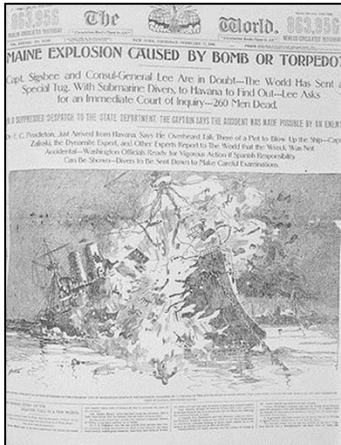


# Stark County Teaching American History Grant

Stark County Educational Service Center  
2100 38th Street NW  
Canton, Ohio 44709



## *Who really sank the Maine?*

Yellow Journalism and the Spanish-American War of 1898

**Grade Level 10**

Created by Ben Hughes  
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**Duration: 2-3 Days**

### Overview:

In this lesson students will first be introduced to the situation in Cuba in 1898 through a PowerPoint presentation and will then examine several primary documents about the sinking of the battleship U.S.S. Maine. Students will analyze the documents in order to complete a document analysis worksheet to use in an authentic debate over who sank the Maine. Students will then be introduced to the concept of Yellow Journalism, and will create their own piece of exaggerated and often distorted writing by either blaming the Spanish for the sinking of the Maine, or focusing on another foreign conflict involving the U.S. during this time period.

### Ohio Academic Content Standards (Current):

- **History Benchmark C**
  - i. Analyze the reasons that countries gained control of territory through imperialism and the impact on people living in the territory that was controlled.
  - ii. **Indicator**
    - Trace the development of the United States as a world power with emphasis on: The Spanish-American War.

- **Skills and Methods Benchmark A**
  - iii. Evaluate the reliability and credibility of sources
  - iv. **Indicator**
    - Determine the credibility of sources by considering the following:
      - a. The qualifications and reputation of the writer
      - b. Agreement with other credible sources
      - c. Recognition of stereotypes
      - d. Accuracy and consistency of sources
      - e. The circumstances in which the author prepared the source
  
- **Skills and Methods Benchmark B**
  - v. Use data and evidence to support or refute a thesis
  - vi. **Indicator**
    - Analyze one or more issues and present a persuasive argument to defend a position

### Revised Ohio Academic Content Strands

- **Topic: Foreign Affairs from Imperialism to Post-World War I (1898-1930)**
  - i. The industrial and territorial growth of the U.S. fostered expansion overseas. Greater involvement in the world set the stage for American participation in WWI and attempts to preserve post-war peace.
  - ii. **Content Statement #10.**
    - As a result of overseas expansion, the Spanish-American War and World War I, the United States emerged as a world power
  
- **Topic: Historical Thinking and Skills**
  - iii. Students apply skills by utilizing a variety of resources to construct theses and support or refute contentions made by others. Alternative explanations of historical events are analyzed and questions of historical inevitability are explored.
  - iv. **Content Statement #2**
    - The use of primary and secondary sources of information includes an examination of the credibility of each source.

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### **Enduring Understandings/ Essential Questions:**

Nations expanded when industrial needs require greater natural resources

Nations had altruistic motives for expansion such as expansion of democratic government

To what extent should a nation go to protect its interests?

Will overseas expansion lead to sustained world power?

What role should the media (journalism) play in the affairs of a nation?

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### **Historical Background:**

“The Splendid Little War,” better known as the Spanish-American War of 1898 is significant for launching the United States onto its path as a world power. The war began as an effort to aid the Cubans in their struggle for independence against Spain. But when it was over, the United States found itself in possession of a small overseas empire that included the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Cuba retained its independence, but the Platt Amendment to the new Cuban constitution gave the United States the right to intervene militarily at any time. The United States also maintained a permanent lease on naval stations in Cuba, including Guantanamo Bay.

The United States entered the conflict mainly because of an independence movement that started in Cuba in 1895. When it became apparent that the Spanish military commander, Valeriano Weyler, was imprisoning hundreds of thousands of Cuban civilians in camps, the United States could identify and sympathize with these Cubans in their desire for freedom and independence. Business and government leaders in the United States were also concerned with protecting sugar plantations in Cuba that generated \$30 million dollars a year in revenue for the American economy. Some Cuban rebels set fire to sugar plantations hoping to pressure the United States to intervene.

As President William McKinley monitored the situation, he tried to pressure Spain to grant Cuban independence. Spain refused. Then, in February 1898 two events led McKinley to change his mind and approve war. William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* published a translation of a letter written by the Spanish minister to the U.S. Enrique Dupuy de Lome, criticizing McKinley as weak and telling the United States to stay out of Cuba. McKinley demanded and received an apology from Spain. But on February 15<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. battleship *Maine* exploded and sank in Havana harbor, killing 266 crewmembers. After a U.S. Navy investigation declared that the *Maine* was destroyed by a submerged mine, public and Congressional pressure reached a point that McKinley asked for and received from Congress authority to intervene in Cuba. On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Spain declared war on the United States, and the U.S. reciprocated two days later.

One of the key factors leading the United States to war was the role of the media. With no evidence or proof of a guilty party, the American press immediately blamed the Spanish for this attack. Using exaggeration and distorted details in their yellow journalism style of writing, they called for President McKinley to declare war on Spain. The press continued to ignite the growing jingoism spirit in the United States and with the help of the media President McKinley had the support of the American people behind him to ask Congress for a declaration of war. The question at the time however, was who was responsible for the destruction of the U.S.S. *Maine*? There was no visual proof or evidence linking anyone to the responsibility of this ship. Was Spain responsible and blew up the ship as a way to start a war with America? Was it the Cuban rebels further enticing us into a war with Spain? Was it an accident by American sailors? Was it a conspiracy by the American press in an attempt to lure the U.S. into a war with Spain in order to sell more papers? Ultimately it was an

internal explosion that sent the Maine to the bottom of the harbor, yet the sinking of the Maine remains as the catalyst that drove the U.S. to war with Spain and fueled the flames of imperialism.

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### **Assessment:**

Through multi-step assessments, students will be evaluated on their understanding of the content by using the evidence gathered in the primary documents to complete a document analysis worksheet and to form an educated thesis in regards to the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine. Students will use these facts to participate in an authentic classroom debate focusing on the Cuban conflict and their desire for freedom in order to create their own Yellow Journalism newspaper that corresponds with their thesis.

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### **Resources and Materials:**

- Documents analysis worksheet
- Directions for Yellow Journalism Newspaper
- Answer Key for document analysis worksheet
- Rubric for Yellow Journalism Newspaper
- Primary and Secondary Sources:
  - i. Enrique DuPuy De Lome’s Letter to the Spanish Minister, February 9, 1898
  - ii. Excerpt: Editorial, New York Journal, February 17, 1898
  - iii. Excerpt: Editorial, New York Times, February 17, 1898
  - iv. Personal Letters from Sailors Home, 1898
    - Lt. George Blow’s Letter to his Wife, February 16, 1898
    - Lt. John Blandin Letter to his Wife, February 16, 1898
  - v. Excerpts: U.S. Department of the Navy Findings
    - U.S. Department of the Navy Board of Inquiry Report to Congress, March 21, 1898
    - Lars Nelson’s Letter to Congress, March 16, 1898
    - H.G. Rickover, Dept. of the Navy, Report to Congress, August 23, 1976
    - Ship Designers Helquist and Turner’s Response to the U.S. Department of the Navy’s Second Board of Inquiry, July 24, 1911
  - vi. Excerpts: Yellow Journalism Examples
    - Editorial, “Did a Spanish Torpedo Do the Awful Work?”, San Francisco Examiner, February 17, 1898
    - Editorial, “Remember the Maine!” New York Journal, March 15, 1898
    - Photograph: Front page of New York World, February 17, 1898

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## **Instructional Strategies:**

- Day 1:
  - i. Direct Instruction – PowerPoint: Students will review U.S. foreign policy in the late 1800s and the growing conflict in Cuba. Students will be introduced to several key concepts including the atrocities being committed by the Spanish towards the Cubans, Yellow Journalism, the insult towards President McKinley, and the subsequent explosion and sinking of the U.S.S. Maine.
    - Students will be asked to compare the Cuban’s desire for freedom and independence with that of the United States in the late 1700s. Answers will vary but should include similarities such as throwing off a dictatorship, natural rights, or protecting the citizens.
  - ii. Direct Instruction – Model document analysis: Students will be given copies of several primary documents focusing on the events of 1898. Read one of the documents aloud with the class and ask for responses. Pass out the document analysis worksheet and explain the directions so that all students understand what they are to do.
    - Students will then read the ten remaining documents, completing the document analysis worksheet.
  
- Day 2:
  - i. Independent Work – Document Analysis
    - Students will continue the document analysis until the class has finished and each student has formed a thesis about who is to blame for the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine, and accordingly, how the United States should respond to the crisis in Cuba.
  - ii. Student led Debate:
    - The class will be divided into two sides for an authentic debate according to who they believe blew up the Maine. Those students who believe Spain is responsible and that the U.S. should go to war for the Cubans’ freedom will sit on one side of the room, while those who believe it was an accident and that U.S. should remain neutral will sit on the other. Using their primary documents, students will argue that their side is correct. They will try to convince the teacher, who is playing the role of the media, about how best to report this story to the American public.
  
- Day 3:
  - i. Direct Instruction – Yellow Journalism Newspaper
    - Review with students the key components of the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine, the Spanish-American War, and the role of the media during this conflict.
    - Introduce the Yellow Journalism Newspaper assignment. Students will complete the assignment according to the position they took in the debate.
    - Review the rubric for this assignment
    - Assign newspaper for homework

## **Answer Document: “Remember the Maine!”**

Directions: The explosion on the USS Maine is considered the primary event that started the Spanish American War. We are still not absolutely sure what really happened. Your mission is to review the documents and draw some logical conclusions about what happened and how Americans reacted individually and as a nation. You have several primary documents from this incident. Each student should read all of the accounts. Once you have read your documents, answer the following questions as best you can, using only the information from your documents and what we have discussed in class. After you have completed this work, form an opinion as to what you think happened to the USS Maine, who was responsible for its sinking, and the events that followed.

1. What happened to the USS Maine?
2. Why was the Maine in the Havana harbor?
3. Who was the commander of the Maine? How did he react to the explosion? What directions did he give his men?
4. On what part of the ship did the explosion occur?
5. When did the explosion take place?
6. What was the condition of the ship after the explosion?
7. How many men were killed and injured in the explosion?
8. How were the survivors rescued after the incident? Where were they taken to safety?
9. What were some possible explanations for the explosion?
10. How did the American public respond to this incident?
11. How did the press respond?
12. How did President McKinley respond?
13. What information did you find regarding the feelings of Americans toward the Spanish? Towards the Cuban Rebels?

## **Yellow Journalism Newspaper!**

Directions: You are going to create a piece of yellow journalism about one of the events listed below. After reading all of the primary documents, completing the answer document, and participating in the debate, you must make a final decision as to who is to blame for the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine. If you believe that Spain is responsible for this act, you will write about the sinking of the Maine. If you feel that Spain is not to blame, you will select one of the other four events we have discussed that occurred during this time, and that also received quite a bit of attention from the American yellow press. The specific requirements are listed below.

### Possible Events:

1. Sinking of the USS Maine in Havana, Cuba
2. The Roughrider experience in the Spanish-American War
3. The revolution in the Philippines and American involvement
4. The revolution in independent Hawaii and American involvement
5. The revolution in Panama and how America earned the rights to build the Panama Canal

### Things to Include:

1. A title of your newspaper
2. A sensational headline that catches the eye and makes you want to buy the newspaper
3. A “shocking” photograph or drawing
4. A two or three paragraph article about the event written in yellow journalism style that summarizes the event and demonstrates your understanding of the content (The article should focus on the most shocking, sensational, or emotional aspects of the event.
5. Other details normally found in a newspaper are evident. (Sports, weather, other news headlines. You want to add detail to make it look like a newspaper!)

### Example:

**\$50,000 REWARD.—WHO DESTROYED THE MAINE?—\$50,000 REWARD.**

EDITION FOR GREATER NEW YORK  
**NEW YORK JOURNAL**  
AND ADVERTISER.

VOL. XLVII.      NEW YORK, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1898.      PRICE ONE CENT.

**DESTRUCTION OF THE WAR SHIP MAINE WAS THE WORK OF AN ENEMY**

**\$50,000!**

**\$50,000 REWARD!**  
For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!

The New York Journal offers a reward of \$50,000 for the detection of the perpetrator of the Maine outrage. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who shall furnish reliable information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the crime. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who shall furnish reliable information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the crime. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who shall furnish reliable information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the crime.

Assistant Secretary Roosevelt  
Convinced the Explosion of  
the War Ship Was Not  
an Accident.

The Journal Offers \$50,000 Reward for the Conviction of the Criminals Who Sent 258 American Sailors to Their Death. Naval Officers Unanimous That the Ship Was Destroyed on Purpose.

**\$50,000!**

**\$50,000 REWARD!**  
For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!

The New York Journal offers a reward of \$50,000 for the detection of the perpetrator of the Maine outrage. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who shall furnish reliable information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the crime. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who shall furnish reliable information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the crime. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who shall furnish reliable information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the crime.



**NAVAL OFFICERS THINK THE MAINE WAS DESTROYED BY A SPANISH MINE.**

London, Europe. The naval authorities at Havana believe that it is the most probable cause of the explosion of the Maine was a hidden mine or a sunken torpedo. The Spanish government has offered a reward of \$50,000 for the detection of the perpetrator of the crime. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who shall furnish reliable information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the crime. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who shall furnish reliable information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the crime.

**Hidden Mine or a Sunken Torpedo Believed to Have Been the Weapon Used Against the American Man-of-War—Officers and Men Tell Thrilling Stories of Being Blown Into the Air Amid a Mass of Shattered Steel and Exploding Shields—Survivors Brought to Key West Scout the Idea of Accident—Spanish Officials Protest Too Much—Our Cabinet Orders a Searching Inquiry—Journal Sends Divers to Havana to Report Upon the Condition of the Wreck.**

**Assessment Key:**

**Answer Document: “Remember the Maine!”**

Directions: The explosion on the USS Maine is considered the primary event that started the Spanish American War. We are still not absolutely sure what really happened. Your mission is to review the documents and draw some logical conclusions about what happened and how Americans reacted individually and as a nation. You have several primary documents from this incident. Each student should read all of the accounts. Once you have read your documents, answer the following questions as best you can, using only the information from your documents and what we have discussed in class. After you have completed this work, form an opinion as to what you think happened to the USS Maine, who was responsible for its sinking, and the events that followed.

1. What happened to the USS Maine?  
**It exploded in Havana Harbor in 1898**
  
2. Why was the Maine in the Havana harbor?  
**It was sent there by President McKinley in response to the De Lome Letter written by the Spanish Minister to the United States**
  
3. Who was the commander of the Maine? How did he react to the explosion? What directions did he give his men?  
**Captain Sigsbee was in charge of the Maine. The captain asked that the public reserve judgment until an investigation could take place. He ordered his men to suspend judgment and they would be returning home shortly to their families**



4. On what part of the ship did the explosion occur?

**Reports say that a mine was detonated under the ship near the hull plates and also that the coal bunker ignited next to the six-inch magazines depending on who is to blame for the sinking of the ship**

5. When did the explosion take place?

**The night of February 15<sup>th</sup> 1898**

6. What was the condition of the ship after the explosion?

**The ship caught fire quickly and sank to the bottom of the Havana Harbor**

7. How many men were killed and injured in the explosion?

**266 men were killed in this explosion**

8. How were the survivors rescued after the incident? Where were they taken to safety?

**Those that were thrown overboard and survived were picked out of the water and loaded into two boats. They were then taken aboard the American steamship, "City of Washington" to Key West.**

9. What were some possible explanations for the explosion?

**Spain could have set a mine in the harbor, the Cuban rebels could have set a mine as well, or it was an internal explosion that sank the Maine**

10. How did the American public respond to this incident?

**The American public blamed Spain for the sinking of our ship and a demand for war was heard across the country**

11. How did the press respond?

**The press immediately blamed Spain for the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine and several papers called for a declaration of war as well**

12. How did President McKinley respond?

**President McKinley waited until a naval investigation revealed that a submerged mine was responsible for the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine. He then asked the Congress for a declaration of War and received on one April 23, 1898.**

13. What information did you find regarding the feelings of Americans toward the Spanish? Towards the Cuban Rebels?

Most American citizens believed initially that Spain was to blame and demanded retribution, while several American sailors were not positive that Spain was truly at fault. Some American citizens and sailors suspected that the Cuban rebels were behind this attack, but this was not the majority opinion at the time

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**Assessment Rubric:**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>10 Points</b>	<b>8 Points</b>	<b>5 Points</b>
<b>The title of your Newspaper</b>	You have chosen a good title for your newspaper and it provides authenticity to the project	You have chosen a good title for your newspaper but it does not add authenticity to the project	Your title does not fit into the criteria for this project
<b>A headline that demonstrates yellow journalism exaggeration</b>	Your headline is written in yellow journalism style and grabs the attention of the reader	Your headline is somewhat written as yellow journalism style but does not shock the reader	Your headline does not shock the reader nor grab their attention to your story
<b>A shocking photograph or drawing that illustrates your story</b>	The photograph or drawing that you have selected enhances and supports your paragraphs about the U.S.S. Maine	The photograph or drawing that you have selected somewhat enhances and supports your paragraphs about the U.S.S. Maine	The photograph or drawing that you have selected does not enhance or support your paragraphs about the U.S.S. Maine

<b>Your story written in yellow journalism style</b>	Your paragraphs are written as yellow journalism and thoroughly demonstrate your understanding of your event in question	Your paragraphs are written as yellow journalism but there is lack of evidence of clear understanding of your event	Your paragraphs do not resemble yellow journalism and key details of your event are not evident
<b>Additional details found in your newspaper</b>	Your details are accurate for a newspaper and enhance the look of your yellow journalism assignment	Your details are accurate for a newspaper but do not enhance the look of your yellow journalism assignment	You lack details or your details do not pertain to a newspaper

### Document A

Source: Enrique DePuy De Lome, Facsimile of Letter Written by the Spanish Minister, New York City, New York Journal, February 9, 1898, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

**(Translation of letter written by Senor Don Enrique Dupuy de Lôme to Senor Don José Canelejas)**  
**LEGACION DE ESPAÑA.**  
**WASHINGTON.**

His Excellency  
Don José Canalejas.

My distinguished and dear friend:

You have no reason to ask my excuses for not having written to me, I ought also to have written to you but I have put off doing so because overwhelmed with work and nous sommes quittes. The situation here remains the same. Everything depends on the political and military outcome in Cuba. The prologue of all this, in this second stage (phase) of the war, will end the day when the colonial cabinet shall be appointed and we shall be relieved in the eyes of this country of a part of the responsibility for what is happening in Cuba while the Cubans, whom these people think so immaculate, will have to assume it.

Until then, nothing can be clearly seen, and I regard it as a waste of time and progress, by a wrong road, to be sending emissaries to the rebel camp, or to negotiate with the autonomists who have as yet no legal standing, or to try to ascertain the intentions and plans of this government. The (Cuban) refugees will keep on returning one by one and as they do so will make their way into the sheep-fold, while the leaders in the field will gradually come back. Neither the one nor the other class had the courage to leave in a body and they will not be brave enough to return in a body. The Message has

been a disillusionment to the insurgents who expected something different; but I regard it as bad (for us).

Besides the ingrained and inevitable bluntness (*grosería*) with which is repeated all that the press and public opinion in Spain have said about Weyler, it once more shows what McKinley is, weak and a bidder for the admiration of the crowd besides being a would-be politician (*politicastro*) who tries to leave a door open behind himself while keeping on good terms with the jingoes of his party.

Nevertheless, whether the practical results of it (the Message) are to be injurious and adverse depends only upon ourselves.

I am entirely of your opinions; without a military end of the matter nothing will be accomplished in Cuba, and without a military and political settlement there will always be the danger of encouragement being give to the insurgents, buy a part of the public opinion if not by the government.

I do not think sufficient attention has been paid to the part England is playing.

Nearly all the newspaper rabble that swarms in your hotels are Englishmen, and while writing for the Journal they are also correspondents of the most influential journals and reviews of London. It has been so ever since this thing began. As I look at it, England's only object is that the Americans should amuse themselves with us and leave her alone, and if there should be a war, that would the better stave off the conflict which she dreads but which will never come about.

It would be very advantageous to take up, even if only for effect, the question of commercial relations and to have a man of some prominence sent hither, in order that I may make use of him here to carry on a propaganda among the senators and others in opposition to the Junta and to try to win over the refugees. So, Amblard is coming. I think he devotes himself too much to petty politics, and we have got to do something very big or we shall fail. Adela returns your greeting, and we all trust that next year you may be a messenger of peace and take it as a Christmas gift to poor Spain.

Ever your attached friend and servant,  
ENRIQUE DUPUY de LÔME.

## Document B

Source: Editorial, "Spain's Victory of Peace", *New York Journal*, February 17, 1898.

### SPAIN'S VICTORY OF PEACE

To five hundred thousand Cubans starved or otherwise murdered have been added an American battleship and three hundred American sailors lost as the direct result of the dilatory policy of our government toward Spain. If we had stopped the war in Cuba when duty and policy alike urged us to do the *Maine* would have been afloat today, and three hundred homes, now desolate, would have been unscathed.

It was an accident, they say. Perhaps it was, but accident or not, it would never have happened if there had been peace in Cuba, as there would have been if we had done our duty. And it was an accident of a remarkably convenient kind for Spain. Two days ago we had five battleships in the Atlantic. Today we have four. A few more such accidents will leave us at the mercy of a Spanish fleet.

Two years ago our naval superiority over Spain was overwhelming. Two successive administrations have waited patiently for Spain to overcome that disadvantage by buying and building ships enough to bring her navy up to equality with ours. That process proving too slow, it is now being hastened by the accidental destruction of the American fleet. At this rate it ought not to take long for Spain's naval strength to surpass our own.

As to the immediate cause of the disaster that has bereaved so many American households and robbed the American navy of one of the most valued elements of its fighting strength, we heed Captain Sigsbee's appeal to sound judgment. The Government has set an investigation on foot, and the *Journal* has independently undertaken another. Between them the truth will soon be known. If it be found that the Spanish authorities have fought about this calamity, so profitable to themselves, no power from the White House to Wall Street will be able to restrain the American people from exacting a terrible retribution. And Spain's innocence must be clearly proven. All the circumstances of the case fix the burden of proof upon her. The *Maine* was lying in one of her harbors, under the guns of her fortresses, with the warships at hand.

The anarchy in Cuba, which for three years has reached the sympathies of all Americans but the dehumanized stock-jobbers of Wall-Street, has become an intolerable evil to American interests. It has destroyed three hundred seamen. We have endured it long enough. Whether a Spanish torpedo sank the *Maine* or not, peace must be restored in Cuba at once.

The investigation into the injuries if the *Maine* may take a week, but the independence of Cuba can be recognized today. The Spanish Government can receive today such a notice as freed Mexico when it was addressed to Louis Napoleon. The *Vesuvius* can be recalled today from her odious work of doing police service for Spain against the Cuban patriots and sent to join the defenders of America. The American fleet can move on Havana today and plant the flag of the Cuban Republic on Morro and Cabana. It is still strong enough for that in the absence of further "accidents." And if we take such action as that, it is extremely unlikely that any other accident will happen.

## Document C

Source: Editorial, "The Maine Disaster", *New York Times*, February 17, 1898,

### The Maine Disaster

#### ONLY THEORY AS TO THE CAUSE OF DISASTER

Capt. Sigsbee Reports the Number of Dead as 253 and of Survivors as 96.

All the Information at Hand Tends to Indicate That the Loss Was Due to an Accident.

Nothing has been learned of the cause of the loss of the battle ship *Maine*. She is a burned and broken wreck, resting on the bottom of Havana Harbor, and two officers and 251 sailors have perished. There is no evidence to prove or disapprove treachery. Naval men tell of many ways in which the disaster could have been caused by accident which could not have been guarded against.

It is not yet known how most of the dead men were killed. The supposition is that in most cases the shock of the explosion, which shook Havana, caused direct death or such injuries that the victims were unable to escape from the quickly following dangers of fire and water.

The Spanish authorities in Havana and Madrid have profusely expressed regret and sympathy, have tendered kindly offices, and have bestowed them whenever possible. The people of Havana are reported to have done all they could to help the survivors and to show their sorrow for the dead.

An investigation of the condition of the vessel will be made immediately, and until that has been done nobody can know whether it will be possible to raise and refit her. The inspection is expected to give a clue to the cause of the disaster and to show either the explosion was within or from without. Expressions by some of them indicate their opinion that there was an accident to one of the dynamo engines.

The one thing clearly evident is that it was some form of high explosive that destroyed the *Maine*. In her torpedo heads and in her magazine she carried enough of these compounds to wreck a navy. It seems to us that it is almost wholly profitless to speculate on the causes of any explosion that may have occurred aboard the *Maine*, since it must be impossible to determine what it was that set off the magazine explosives.

Of course, nobody is so foolish to believe that the *Maine* was destroyed by Spaniards with the knowledge and connivance of their Government. A fanatical partisan of BLANCO might have done the deed at the prompting of his own private hatred of the United States, but the crime of an irresponsible wretch cannot be justly charged against his Government. Spain has just now too many reasons for avoiding cause of offense to us to make it permissible to suppose that she would not exercise due diligence to protect a ship of our navy visiting her waters.

## Document D

Source: Lt. George Blow, Letter to his Wife, Havana, Cuba aboard the S.S. City of Washington, February 16, 1898, <http://users.bergen.org/ricpan/maine/letters.html>

### Lt. George Blow's Letter to his Wife

On Board: S.S. City of Washington  
[Havana], February 16, 1898

Dearest,

I sent you two cablegrams last night telling you of my safety, and before they both reached you before the morning papers, and that you were spared the agony of suspense and uncertainty.

It seems almost selfish to speak of ourselves even when so many hundreds are mourning lost dear ones. Still I could only give you the brief statement that I was safe and unhurt.

I cannot tell you now of my miraculous escape, as the scene is still too terrible to recall, even had I the time. I will only say that I was in my room, writing to you when the ship blew up, and that when I rushed for the ladder leading on deck I found the door closed. In pitch darkness, with explosion

following explosion, and expecting each second to be blown into the air, or drowned by the intruding water, I found the other door and reached the ladder - probably the last.

The whole ship was blown into the air, except the officer's quarters - which explains why so many of them were saved. In fact we only lost two, and only our [unreadable] was slightly wounded. Among the men all [underlined] were blown up, but we saved about 50, leaving about 250 dead. I cannot write of the horrors now. Each man lived a lifetime of horror in a few seconds and all would like to forget it if possible.

Whether we were torpedoed by the Spanish, blown up by a mine, or whether the Cubans did it to bring on a war - or whether it was one of these spontaneous explosions, we do not know. I hate to suspect the Spanish, and their actions, sympathy and [unreadable] seems to indicate that they [underlined] are ignorant of the cause. For the present we must withhold our .... [part missing]

It is almost certain that Congress will declare war today, without waiting -and it is possible that we may be prisoners before night. If so you must not worry, as we are sure to receive good treatment on account of the sympathy of the people.

I escaped in my trousers, undershirt and [unreadable]. Of course lost my glasses and haven't a cent in the world. [unreadable] will look out for us when he gets time. At present we have other and sadder duties to our lost shipmates.

do not worry about me darling, for I am strong and able to stand whatever may come - be it what it may. If we were destroyed by treachery, we must avenge our dead when the opportunity occurs.

In my struggle in the darkness and water, you and the babies were in my mind, dearest. I found time to help our poor devil to climb to a place of safety. Whether he escaped or who he was I do not know. Nearly all the saved among the crew were people who had blown overboard and afterwards picked up. One man was picked up a hundred yards away.

The mail steamer has arrived and brought me your two dear letters of the 9th and 10th. As the mail goes out again immediately I must stop and read them and see if they require immediate answer.

Well, dearest, I have read the letters and find they contain good news so I will not attempt to answer them now.

God bless you dearest. He has been very good to us Love and kisses for the dear little ones and a heart full to bursting of love and longing for you my darling.

I must go to work, love to all, Preston

## Document E

Source: Lt. John Blandin, Letter to Wife, Havana, Cuba aboard the S.S. City of Washington, February 16, 1898, <http://users.bergen.org/ricpan/maine/letters.htm>

### Lt. John Blandin's Letter to his Wife

SS City of Washington  
Havana, Cuba, 1898  
February 16

I was on watch , and when the men had been piped below I looked down the main hatches and over the side of the ship. Everything was absolutely normal. I walked aft to the quarter deck behind the rear turret, as is allowed after 8 o'clock in the evening, and sat down on the port side, where I remained for a few minutes. Then for some reason I cannot explain to myself now, I moved to the starboard side and sat down there. I was feeling a bit glum, and in fact was so quiet that Lieutenant J. Hood came up and asked laughingly if I was asleep. I said "No, I am on watch." Scarcely had I spoken when there came a dull, sullen roar. Would to God that I could blot out the sound and the scenes that followed.

Then came a sharp explosion - some say numerous detonations. I remember only one. It seemed to me that the sound came from the port side forward. Then came a perfect rain of missiles of all descriptions, from huge pieces of cement to blocks of wood, steel railings, fragments of gratings, and all the debris that would be detachable in an explosion." "I was struck on the head by a piece of cement and knocked down, but I was not hurt, and got to my feet in a moment. Lieutenant Hood had run to the poop, and, I supposed, as I followed, he was dazed by the shock and about to jump overboard. I hailed him, he answered that he had to run to the poop to help lower the boats. When I got there, though scarce a minute could have elapsed, I had to wade in water up to my knees, and almost instantly the quarter deck was awash.

On the poop I found Captain Sigsbee, as cool as if at a ball, and soon all the officers except Jenkins and Merritt joined us." [Editor's Note: Both Jenkins and Merritt were killed.] "Captain Sigsbee ordered the launch and gig lowered, and the officers and men, who by this time had assembled, got the boats out, and rescued a number in the water. Captain Sigsbee ordered Lieutenant Commander Wainwright forward to see the extent of the damage and if anything could be done to rescue those forward or to extinguish the flames, which followed close upon the explosion and burned fiercely as long as there were any combustibles above the water to feed them. Lieutenant Commander Wainwright on his return reported the total and awful character of the calamity, and Captain Sigsbee gave the last sad order, "Abandon Ship," to men overwhelmed with grief indeed, but calm and apparently unexcited." "Meanwhile, four boats from the Spanish cruiser ALFONSO XII arrived, to be followed soon by two from the Ward Line steamer CITY OF WASHINGTON. The two boats lowered first from the CITY OF WASHINGTON were found to be riddled with flying debris from the MAINE and unfit for use. Captain Sigsbee was the last man to leave his vessel and left in his own gig."

"I have no theories as to the cause of the explosion. I cannot form any. I, with others, had heard the Havana harbor was full of torpedoes [Editor\*s Note: Torpedo was then a synonym for mine], but the officers whose duty it was to examine into that reported that they found no signs of any. Personally, I do not believe that the Spanish had anything to do with the disaster. Time may tell. I hope so. We were in a delicate position on the MAINE, so far as taking any precautions was concerned. We were friends in a friendly, or alleged friendly port and could not fire upon or challenge the approach of any boat boarding us unless convinced that her intention was hostile. I wish to heaven I could forget it. I have been in two wrecks and have had my share. But the reverberations of that sullen, yet resonant roar, as if the bottom of the sea was groaning in torture, will haunt me from many days, and in the reflection of that pillar of flame comes to me even when I close my eyes.

Jack  
Don't publish this letter.



## Document F

Source: U.S. Congress, U.S. Navy Department Board of Inquiry, Official Report of the Naval Court of Inquiry into the Loss of the Battleship Maine, March 21, 1898, [www.spanamwar.com/mainerpt.htm](http://www.spanamwar.com/mainerpt.htm)

U.S.S. IOWA, First Rate,  
Key West, Fla.,  
Monday, March 21, 1898.

After full and mature consideration of all the testimony before it, the court finds as follows:

First - That the United States battleship MAINE arrived in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, on January 25, 1898, and was taken to buoy 4, in from five and a-half to six fathoms of water by the regular government pilot. The United States consul-general at Havana had notified the authorities at that place the previous evening of the intended arrival of the MAINE.

Second - The state of discipline on board the MAINE was excellent, and all orders and regulations in regard to the care and safety of the ship were strictly carried out. All ammunition was stowed in accordance with prescribed instructions, and proper care was taken whenever ammunition was handled. Nothing was stowed in any one of the magazines or shell rooms which was not permitted to be stowed there.

Third - The destruction of the MAINE occurred at 9:40 P.M. on February 15, 1898, in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, she being at the time moored to the same buoy to which she had been taken upon her arrival. There were two explosion of a distinctly different character, with a very short but distinct interval between them, and the forward part of the ship was lifted to a marked degree at the time of the first explosion. The first explosion was more in the nature of a report, like that of a gun, while the second explosion was more open prolonged and of greater volume. The second explosion was, in the opinion of the court, caused by the partial explosion of two or more of the forward magazines of the MAINE.

Fourth - The evidence bearing upon this, being principally obtained from divers, did not enable the court to form a definite conclusion as to the condition of the wreck, although it was established that the after part of the ship was practically intact and sank in that condition a very few minutes after the destruction of the forward part. The following facts in regard to the forward part of the ship are, however, established by the testimony:

Fifth - At frame 17 the outer shell of the ship, from a point eleven and one half feet from the middle line of the ship and six feet above the keel when in its normal position, has been forced up so as to be now about four feet above the surface of the water; therefore, about thirty-four feet above where it would be had the ship been uninjured. The outside bottom plating is bent into a reversed V shape, the after wing of which, about fifteen feet broad and thirty-two feet in length (from frame 17 to frame 25), is doubled back upon itself against the continuation of the same plating extending forward.

In the opinion of the court, this effect could have been produced only by the explosion of a mine situated under the bottom of the ship at about frame 18, and somewhat on the port side of the ship.

Sixth - The court finds that the loss of the MAINE on the occasion named was not in any respect due to fault or negligence on the part of any of the officers or members of the crew of said vessel.

Seventh - In the opinion of the court, the MAINE was destroyed by the explosion of a submarine mine, which caused the partial explosion of two or more of her forward magazines.

Eighth - The court has been unable to obtain evidence fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the MAINE upon any person or persons.

W. T. SAMPSON, Captain U.S.N.,  
President.

A. MARIX, Lieut.-Commander U.S.N.,  
Judge Advocate.

### **Document G**

Source: Lars Nelson, Response to the U.S. Department of the Navy's Board of Inquiry Report on the Loss of the Battleship Maine, Washington D.C, March 16, 1898, [www.spanamwar.com](http://www.spanamwar.com)

### **Lars Nelson, Response to U.S. Navy Inquiry**

... With all due respect to the Board of Inquiry working on behalf of the US Navy investigating the USS Maine, I must strongly object to the conclusion. I believe that it is entirely possible for the coal in the bunker next to the magazine to have spontaneously combusted. This would account for the explosion, the degree of the explosion, and for the lack of evidence of a mine.

### **Document H**

Source: Admiral H.G. Rickover, How the Battleship Maine was Destroyed, Washington D.C, August, 23, 1976, <http://www.usm.maine.edu/~rklotz/exhibits/rickover.htm>

How the Battleship Maine was Destroyed  
by H.G. Rickover  
1976 Department of the Navy

At 9:40 p.m., Tuesday, February 15, 1898, the American battleship *Maine* exploded in the harbor of Havana, Cuba. Out of a complement of 354 officers and men, 266 lost their lives. The tragedy was one of a series of events that led the United States into the Spanish-American War and a new age....

Congress declared war on April 25. Between the declaration and the signing of an armistice, 110 days elapsed. Within that brief time, the Americans were strikingly triumphant.

The American court of inquiry held its first meeting on February 21, on board the *Mangrove*... The court had one fact from which to begin. There was no doubt that an explosion occurred in one or more of the forward magazines. What caused the explosion was another matter. Logically there were four possibilities: an internal accident, an internal deliberate act, an external accident, or an external deliberate act. If the origin of the explosion was external, the force from outside the ship had to be sufficient to detonate a part of the magazines.

[Commander] Sigsbee and his officers disposed of the internal causes to the court's satisfaction. His officers corroborated Sigsbee on the routine of taking the temperatures of the magazines and bunkers, and on carrying out the proper procedures for disposing of ashes and wastes and stowing paints. Discipline was excellent and there was no reason to believe that anyone on board had deliberately destroyed the ship. If the court accepted the testimony of Sigsbee and his officers, only an external force could have set off the magazines. For this cause the wreck itself offered the best evidence,

As the days passed the major characteristics of the damage were revealed. The explosion shattered the ship forward of the second stack. Part of the forward deck was hurled up and thrown back upon itself. Fittings which remained attached to that portion of the deck were now upside down; a forward 6-pounder gun, for example, was now inverted. The forward 10-inch turret, with armor protection 8-inches thick, had vanished. On the port side the armor belt plating had been blown out. Although a large part of the bottom, particularly on the port side of the keel, had disappeared, the bow was still connected to the stern. The most baffling problem was the condition of the ship near frame 18. Frames - the ribs of a ship - were numbered from fore to aft. As it heard testimony from the divers and a description of the wreckage from Powelson, the court confronted a crucial question. Could a magazine explosion alone have caused the peculiar damage to the keel? On the other hand, could a mine at frame 18 have detonated the magazines? The court turned increasingly toward the theory that a mine had set off the magazines.

On the night of the explosion everything had been reported secure for the night at 8 o'clock. At the time of the disaster the ship was quiet and therefore least liable to accident. The court found there had been two explosions. The first had sounded like a gunshot; it lifted the forward part of the ship and forced the keel into the inverted V and some of the bottom plates upward. In the court's opinion these conditions could only have been caused by "the explosion of a mine situated under the bottom of the ship at about frame 18 and somewhat on the port side of the ship." The second explosion had folded back the protective and main decks. It was caused by the magazine. The court as Lee's cable to Washington on February 28 had foreshadowed - was unable to find any evidence fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the *Maine* on any person or persons....

The Hansen-Price analysis shows that the characteristics of the damage are consistent with a large internal explosion. The analysis concludes that the primary source of the explosion was centered in the 6-inch reserve magazine which caused a partial detonation of the other forward magazines. In this area, the explosion blew out the sides and ruptured the decks. The bottom was driven downwards, although its displacement, because it was supported by water, was less than that of the sides and decks. The forward section was separated from the after section except where it was attached by the keel and adjacent bottom plating, mostly on the starboard side. As the forward section turned on its starboard side, the keel at frame 18 was raised upward. At the same time the after section was flooding, inclining downward at that part through which the water was pouring. The movement of the two sections led to the inverted V configuration which so troubled the court of 1898. The Hansen-Price analysis does not support the finding of the 1911 board. That area which attracted the attention of the board showed no

evidence of a rupture or deformation which would have resulted from a contact or near contact mine. There is no doubt that in one relatively small area the bottom plating was folded inward. But there are several plausible explanations for its cause other than an external explosion.

What did happen? Probably a fire in bunker A16. Fires of this kind had happened before. Instances had occurred in which bituminous coal of the type carried in the *Maine* bunkers had ignited through spontaneous combustion. Such fires were difficult to detect. Often they smoldered deep below the exposed surface of the coal, giving off no smoke or flames, or raising the temperature in the vicinity of the alarm. The bunker on the *Maine* had not been inspected for nearly 12 hours before the explosion; a period which experience had shown was ample time for a bunker fire to begin, heat bulkheads and set fire to contents in adjacent compartments.

In conclusion: There is no evidence that a mine destroyed the *Maine*.

### Document I

Source: Naval architects Helquist and Turner, Response to U.S. Dept. of the Navy Second Board of Inquiry, Washington, D.C, July 24, 1911, [www.spanamwar.com](http://www.spanamwar.com)

### Helquist and Turner, Response to U.S. Navy's Second Inquiry

Unfortunately, the Second Board has come to the same faulty conclusion as the First. The reason that no evidence of a mine was found was because none existed, the explosion came from within and not without. The *Maine* was a coal burning ship with storage of coal adjacent to the reserve six-inch magazine. The coal on the ship was highly combustible and almost undoubtedly caused the explosion.

### Document J

Source: Editor, "The Question on Every Lip is, Did a Spanish Torpedo Do the Awful Work?," *San Francisco Examiner*, February 17, 1898

### The Question on Every Lip is, 'Did a Spanish Torpedo Do the Awful Work?'

*Cuba*-The *Maine* has been sunk and over 200 sailors have died. Their work in Cuba although short-lived was already accomplishing its mission of establishing peace. Although the question of

responsibility is hot on everyone's mind, we must wait. Even the good captain, Sigsbee, calls for us to hold our calls for blame until further reports.

### **Document K**

Source: Editor, Remember the Maine!, *New York Journal*, March 15, 1898

### **Remember the Maine!**

*Cuba*—With the reports from the Navy Board of Inquiry, there is no longer any reason to hold back. It is obviously the cowardly Spanish who are responsible for the sinking of the Maine and the murder of over 260 sailors. We must respond. Remember the *Maine*! To Hell with Spain!

### **Document L**

Source: Joseph Pulitzer, Maine Explosion Caused by Bomb or Torpedo, *The New York World*, February 17, 1898, Section A1

