

The Fight to Free Cuba

Cuba, an island south of Florida, had been trying for years to be free from Spain. Spain would not let Cuba go, so the Cubans rebelled and fought against the Spanish soldiers. By the end of 1896, Cuban rebels had taken over most of Cuba's countryside.

The Spanish government tried to keep control of Cuba. Many Cuban people were forced to move into concentration camps. Locked up in these camps, the prisoners could not help the Cuban rebels.

People were treated very badly in the camps. Of the hundreds of thousands who were imprisoned in the camps, thousands died. Some died because they got sick, and others starved to death. When Americans heard about what was happening, they felt sorry for the Cubans. They wanted the U.S. government to step in and help the Cuban people. President William McKinley tried to talk Spain into giving the Cuban people more control of Cuba's government. Spain, though, did not listen, and things got worse in Cuba.



Riots broke out in Havana, Cuba. President McKinley sent the

U.S.S. Maine, a battleship, to protect Americans in Cuba. While docked in the harbor, the *Maine* suddenly exploded. The ship sank immediately, and more than 260 Americans were killed. Americans blamed the



explosion on a Spanish bomb. The Spanish said the explosion must have been caused by a problem inside the ship. People still do not know what caused the explosion that sank the *Maine*.

Americans demanded that the United States go to war against Spain. The battle cry became "Remember the *Maine*!" This time, President McKinley tried to get the Spanish government to give Cuba independence. Spain said no, so President McKinley asked Congress to officially declare war on Spain.

Congress passed a joint resolution that said Cuba was free. The resolution stated that if the United States won the war, then it would not take Cuba for itself. Congress also said the United States would not try to control Cuba's government. The Spanish government cut off its relationship with the United States.

The Spanish-American War started in April 1898. By August, the war was over. The United States had won. The two countries signed the Treaty of Paris in December 1898. Spain was forced to give up Cuba. This was not the only result of the war. In addition, the United States gained control of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Though the plan had been only to free Cuba, the United States now had an empire.

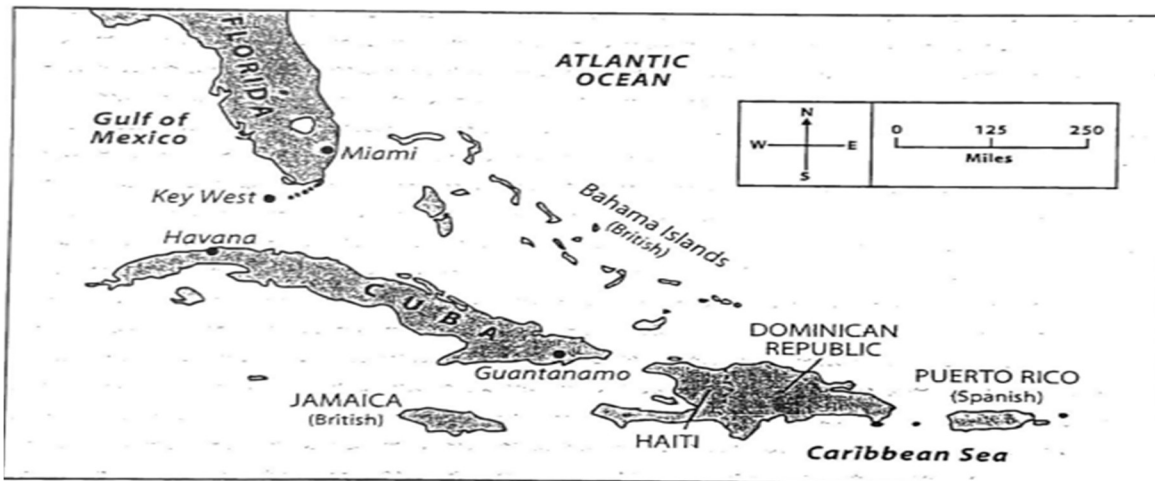
Reading Questions:

Directions: Answer the questions using the reading excerpt.

1. What happened to the US shipped called the *U.S.S. Maine* while in Cuba?
2. Who was blamed for the incident with the *U.S.S. Maine*?
3. What was started because of the incident with the *U.S.S. Maine*?
4. When did the Spanish-American War take place?
5. What was the result of the war on the U.S.'s economy?

Map – Cuba in 1898

Directions: Use the map to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.



1. About how far apart are Key West, Florida and Havana, Cuba?
2. Which islands were ruled by Great Britain?
3. What are the names of the three bodies of water that surround Cuba?