

Yellow Journalism Assignment

Document A: New York Journal (Modified)

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

- 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 All Agree That the Ship Was Destroyed on Purpose.

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

George Bryson, the Journal's special reporter at Havana, writes that it is the secret opinion of many people in Havana that the war ship Maine was destroyed by a mine and 258 men were killed on purpose by the Spanish. This is the opinion of several American naval authorities. The Spaniards, it is believed, arranged to have the Maine drop anchor over a harbor mine. Wires connected the mine to the magazine of the ship. If this is true, the brutal nature of the Spaniards will be shown by the fact that they waited to explode the mine until all the men had gone to sleep. Spanish officials are protesting too much that they did not do it. Our government has ordered an investigation. This newspaper has sent divers to Havana to report on the condition of the wreck. This newspaper is also offering a \$50,000 reward for exclusive evidence that will convict whoever is responsible. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt says he is convinced that the destruction of the Maine in Havana Harbor was not an accident. The suspicion that the Maine was purposely blown up grows stronger every hour. Not a single fact to the contrary has been produced.

Source: Excerpt from New York Journal and Advertiser, February 17, 1898. Purchased by William Randolph Hearst in 1895, the Journal published investigative and human interest stories that used a highly emotional writing style and included banner headlines and graphic images.

Document B: New York Times (Modified)

MAINE'S HULL WILL DECIDE

- Divers Will Inspect the Ship's Hull to Find Out Whether the Explosion Was from the Outside or Inside.
- Magazines of War Ships Sometimes Blow Up Because of Too Much Heat Inside –
- Hard to Blow Up the Magazine from the Outside.

It has been a busy day for the Navy Department. The war ship Maine was destroyed in Havana Harbor last night. Officials in Washington and Havana have been sending cables all night long. Secretary Long was asked whether he thought this was the work of the enemy. He replied: "I do not. I am influenced by the fact that Captain Sigsbee has not yet reported to the Navy Department. It seems he is waiting to write a full report. So long as he has not made a decision, I certainly cannot. I should think from the signs however, that there was an accident – that the magazine exploded. How that came about I do not know. For the present, at least, no other war ship will be sent to Havana." Captain Schuley, who knows a great deal about war ships, did not entertain the idea that the Maine had been destroyed on purpose. He said that fires would sometimes start in the coal bunkers, and he told of such a fire on board another war ship that started very close to the magazine. The fire became so hot that the heat blistered the steel wall between the fire and the ammunition before the bunkers and magazine were flooded with water to

stop the fire. He did not believe that the Spanish or Cubans in Havana had either the information or the equipment necessary to blow up the magazine, while the Maine was under guard.

Source: New York Times, February 17, 1898. Established in 1851, the New York Times provided investigative coverage of local New York issues and events, as well as national and international news.

Which account do you find more believable?

Document	Publication Date	According to this article, what happened to the <i>Maine</i> ?	What information is included to support this version of the story?	Write a quotation that contrasts with something written in the other article.
A Journal				
B Times				

Document A: In 1898, the battleship USS Maine was sent to Havana, Cuba, to protect U.S. interests during a Cuban revolt against Spain. On February 14, the vessel exploded and sank. Many Americans blamed Spain, and the incident helped trigger the Spanish-American War. The excerpt below is from an official report of a U.S. Naval Court of Inquiry into the sinking of the Maine. The report was released on March 21, 1898.

“... [T]he vertical keel [of the ship] is broken in two and the flat keel is bent at an angle similar to the angle formed by the outside bottom plating. This break is now about six feet below the surface of the water, and about thirty feet above its normal position.

. . . . 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 [ammunition storage rooms] The court has been unable to obtain evidence fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the MAINE upon any person or persons.”

Document B: This excerpt appeared as a front-page story on March 6, 1898 in The San Francisco Call.

“The Call correspondent has the best of grounds for saying that Consul General Lee . . . has been quietly conducting an investigation of his own, independently of the Naval Court; that he has employed detectives who have obtained front Havana sailors evidence strongly pointing to a plot to destroy the Maine, and that he filed a report with the State Department expressing the opinion that although the Spanish Government was not in any way responsible for the Maine's destruction, it appears the work was done by Spaniards who were sympathizers of [Spain's governor in Cuba] Weyler.”

1. In the weeks after the loss of the Maine, confusion about what caused the explosion added to American tensions with Spain over Cuba. How does Document A provide evidence of this confusion?
2. How does Document B also provide evidence of the confusion about what caused the explosion of the Maine?

Directions: Create a timeline using the events below.

Event/Battle	Date	Location	Significance
Spanish send Valeriano ("Butcher") Weyler to Cuba to put down Cuban rebellion	February 1895	Cuba	Cuban towns turned into concentration camps, rebels are tortured. Newspaper publishers Pulitzer and Hearst print sensational stories to boost circulation. This came to be known as the "Yellow Press."
McKinley elected president	November 1896	U.S.	Two campaign promises: 1) Protect American business and 2) Free the Cuban people.
Negotiations between Spain and U.S. break down after insulting letter from Spanish ambassador is	February 9, 1898	New York Journal	Dupuy de Lome had written that Pres. McKinley was "...weak...and a would-be politician..." He resigns, though American people are angered.

published			
U.S.S. Maine blows up	February 15, 1898	Havana Harbor	260 American sailors killed after mysterious explosion. Yellow Press call for war against Spain ("Remember the Maine"), offer rewards for proof of Spanish plot.
Assistant Secretary Theodore Roosevelt orders Admiral Dewey to prepare for Asian war	February 25, 1898	Washington, D.C.	Roosevelt tells Dewey to attack Spanish fleet in the Philippines if war broke out between U.S. and Spain.
McKinley asks Congress to declare war	April 11, 1898	Washington, D.C.	Although Spain agrees to all American demands, McKinley tells Congress that God has told him to attack the Spanish forces.
Dewey sinks Spanish fleet	May 1, 1898	Manila Bay	In just seven hours, the entire Spanish Asian fleet is sunk. U.S. suffers one death.
Roosevelt's Rough Riders take San Juan Hill	June 1898	Santiago, Cuba	Roosevelt achieves heroic stature for leading men (sans horses) up hill overlooking Santiago Harbor.
Americans destroy Spanish Caribbean fleet	July 3, 1898	Off southern Cuban coast	Every Spanish warship is sunk as fleet tries to run to open sea.
U.S.-Filipino War	1898-July 1902	Philippine Islands	Led by Emilio Aguinaldo, Filipinos fought Americans for independence. Effort fails and Philippines stay under American control until captured by Japan in 1942.