

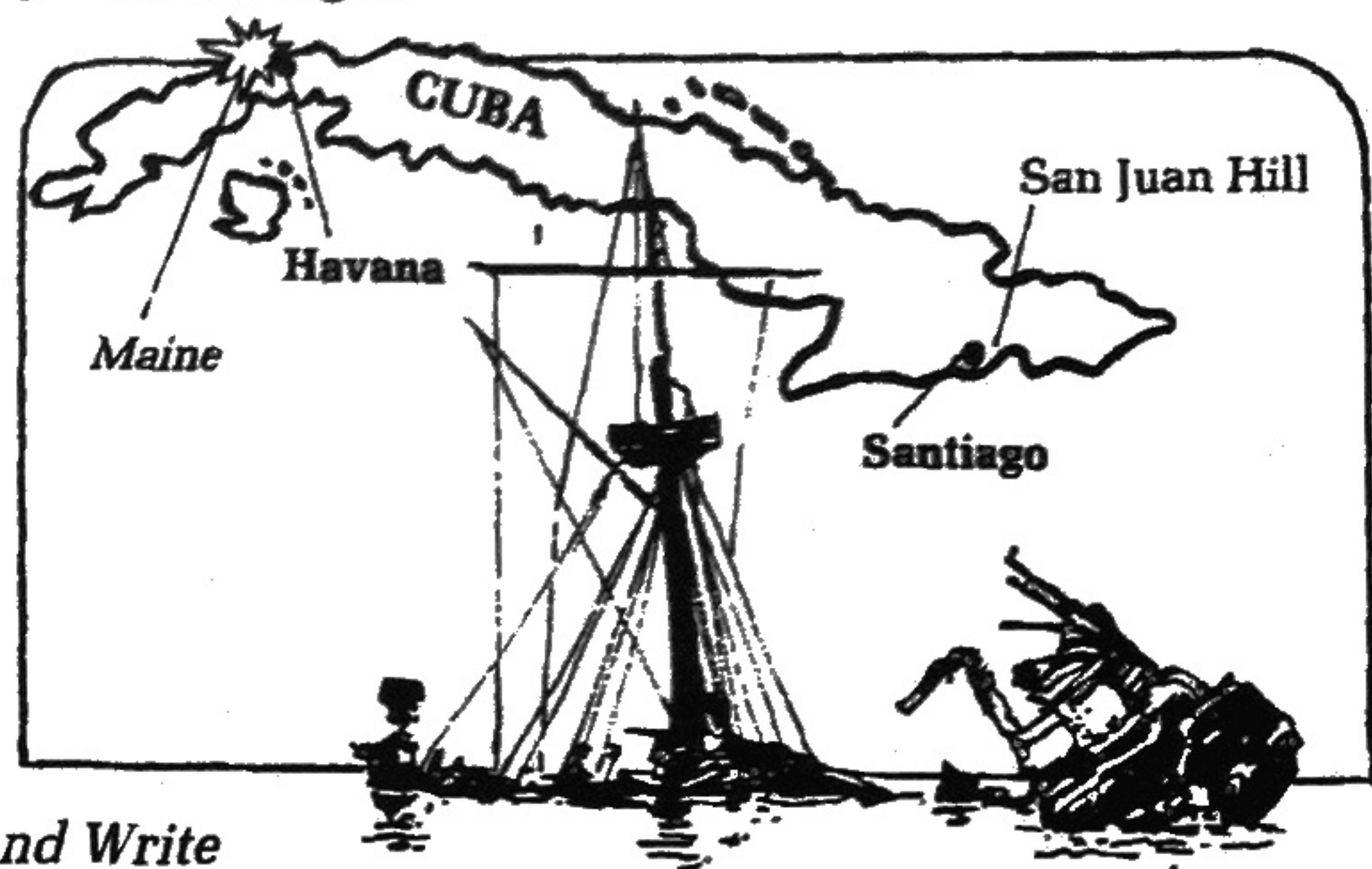
## Spanish-American War: Beginnings

In the mid-1890s, there were serious social, economic, and political problems on the neighboring island of Cuba. Cuban rebels were attempting to free Cuba from Spanish control which dated back to the late 1400s. As Cuba lies only ninety miles from the tip of Florida, the United States has always taken a strong interest in the events happening there. At that time, many Americans sympathized with the efforts of the Cubans. Also, many had invested heavily in the Cuban sugar industry.

In 1896, the Spanish government attempted to put an end to the rebel cause. General Valeriano Weyler was sent to crush the rebellion. Weyler destroyed sugar plantations and built prison camps for Cubans in rebel-held areas. News of mistreatment of the Cubans came to America. Stories were told of 100,000 captured Cubans starving to death in the Spanish camps. The atrocities were given much coverage in the American press, and in some cases reports were grossly exaggerated.

Although many Americans were prepared to support the Cubans in their move for independence, President McKinley took a cautious stance. He had hoped the situation would be resolved in the near future, but a series of events made a simple answer impossible. One highly publicized event was the publishing of a letter that was intercepted en route to a post office in Havana, Cuba. Written by a Spanish diplomat stationed in Washington, the

letter insulted McKinley and referred to him as a "weakling" and a "crowd pleaser." The derogatory tone of the letter angered many Americans. More serious in nature, a second event involved the deaths of American sailors. On the night of February 15, 1898, an explosion ripped through the hull of the *Maine*, an American vessel docked in the Havana Harbor. The ship had been sent to protect Americans on the island. No one was ever to know for sure who or what had caused the explosion in which more than 250 Americans lost their lives. The tragedy stirred the American spirit, and many blamed the Spaniards. Public pressure finally forced McKinley to take action. On April 11, the President went before Congress to request a declaration of war against Spain. Two weeks later, on April 25, the United States declared war against the old colonial power. With the rallying cry, "Remember the Maine," many Americans eagerly joined the fight.



Review and Write

- Why do you think many Americans supported the Cuban rebels in their efforts against Spain? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 What two events caused that support to increase? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- A 1976 investigation directed by Admiral Rickover came to the conclusion that a fire in the coal bin probably caused an explosion of ammunition stored nearby. Read more about the theories concerning the sinking of the *Maine*. What do you believe to be the most likely explanation for the cause of the explosion? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Should the United States have gone to war over the destruction of the *Maine*? Why or why not? How else might the situation have been handled? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

## Spanish-American War: Battles and Outcome

Even before the official declaration of war against Spain, the American fleet in the Pacific was steaming off to the Philippines, which had been a part of the Spanish empire for over 300 years. In the event that war was declared against Spain, they were to capture the enemy squadron in Manila, the Philippine capital. On May 1, 1898, just days after the official declaration of war, Commodore George Dewey and six ships arrived in Manila Bay to begin bombardment of the fleet. In a matter of hours, the United States navy had destroyed the Spanish fleet and blockaded the harbor. American troops entered the Philippine islands the day after an **armistice**, or agreement to stop fighting, was signed.

Meanwhile, in Cuba, the Spanish fleet in the Atlantic was docked in Santiago Harbor. By the end of May, United States warships had arrived to blockade the Cuban harbor. The next month, on June 22, U.S. troops landed in Cuba just east of Santiago. The Americans found the going rough in the hills of Cuba, for the Spanish had strongly fortified positions. Casualties were high. Among the troops which drew heavy fire was a volunteer unit called the "Rough Riders." It was led by Theodore Roosevelt, who had resigned his office as Assistant Secretary of the Navy to join the cause. The Rough Riders were actually a cavalry unit, but this time they fought only on foot, for their horses never made it to the island.

Two days after Roosevelt's men succeeded in taking Kettle Hill on the ridge overlooking Santiago, the most decisive battle of the war took place. (See map p. 25.) In the battle of San Juan Hill, the Americans emerged victorious, and Roosevelt became an instant hero.

On July 3, 1898, the Spanish attempted to move their fleet out of Santiago Harbor. The Americans

opened fire, destroying all the escaping ships. On July 17, the Spanish in Santiago surrendered. With no options remaining, the Spanish government in Cuba also surrendered. Shortly after this victory, the U.S. occupied Puerto Rico, an island southeast of Cuba. Along with Cuba, the Philippines, and the island of Guam, Puerto Rico came under the protection of the United States. The war with Spain was over. With the ratification of the Treaty of Paris early in 1899, America became an imperialist country with an empire stretching from the Caribbean to the distant Pacific.

In the election of 1900, William Jennings Bryan again represented the Democrats. McKinley proved a tough opponent, running on a platform of expanded territories and continued prosperity under a Republican Administration. Aiding the ticket was the nomination for Vice-President of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, hero of San Juan Hill. Winning easily, the Republicans remained in the White House.

### Use the Map

1. What lands did the U.S. gain following the Spanish-American War? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What part of North America was under U.S. control before the Spanish-American War? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The first American victory in the war occurred in the Philippines. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

