

**Research Lesson Plan:** Who sank the Maine?

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**Targeted Grade Level:** 9<sup>th</sup> grade

**Essential Question:** What is bias? How do you determine if a source is credible?

## Formative Assessment Prompts:

**Instructional Chunk #1:** What is bias? How does bias effect perspective and opinion?

**Instructional Chunk #2:** Who blew up the Maine? How did bias and propaganda influence the American public's opinion of the Maine explosion?

**Instructional Chunk #3:** Hoes does propaganda influence an audience's opinion of an event or issue?

## Standard Addressed:

History Standard 3: Students will compare competing historical narratives, by contrasting different historian's choice of questions, use and choice of sources, perspectives, beliefs, and points of view, in order to demonstrate how these factors contribute to different interpretations.

## Problematic Prior Knowledge (PPL) Addressed

1. The Spanish American War and Mexican War were the same thing.
2. The side who wins the debate over the cause of the Maine explosion is the side with the correct answer.
3. Anything written by a "professional" is right.
4. The first idea/concept that students are exposed to is the right answer/idea/concept.
5. All propaganda has a positive and "true" motive.

## Activating Strategies:

Strategy 1: Warm Up—review of the headlines on the board and discussion of motive, bias in each of these. After this introduction I will announce that today we will be focusing on bias and credibility in a historical event called the Spanish American War.

Strategy 2: United Streaming video on the sinking of the Maine to give brief overview of events

Strategy 3: Transition and PowerPoint-students will hold up their background cards on each of the events leading up to the explosion of the Maine. I will use the moving timeline in Smartboard to visually show the

## Key Vocabulary to preview

Bias  
Credible  
Propaganda  
Perspective  
Primary and Secondary Sources

students each of these events on a timeline as they are read aloud.

## Teaching Strategies:

1. Direct instruction for Warm Up and introduction to main ideas for the lesson
2. Collaborative groups to discuss and read the Times/Journal articles (Resource 3)
3. Individual work to create political cartoon that conveys bias

## Graphic Organizer(s) Used:

- Students will use the graphic organizer entitled “Read Like a Historian” (Resource 4), which asks them to compare to articles on the explosion of the Maine and look for similarities and differences between the two.

- **Materials Needed:**

- Student warm up (Resource 1), United Streaming video clip on the explosion of the Maine, Powerpoint on the explosion of the Maine (Resource 2), Journal/Times documents (Resource 3), graphic organizer for newspaper articles (Resource 4), Maine lesson plan (Resource 5) \*This can be found online at <http://www.sheg.stanford.edu/?q=node/33>

## Differentiation Strategies:

- Direct instruction during the first chunk of the lesson, group discussion and presentations during the second chunk, underlining/highlighting evidence in order to determine key information during the third chunk of the lesson

## Instructional Plan:

**Instructional Chunk #1:** What is bias? How do you determine if a source is credible?

1. **Procedures**

The teacher should put several headlines from a current newspaper on the board. As the warm up, students should answer the following questions:

1. What is bias?
2. How do you determine if a source is credible?
3. Pick one of the newspaper headlines from the board. How does it show bias? Is this source credible? Why or why not?

2. **Debrief: ask the students...**

1. What does the word bias mean? What types of things cause bias?

2. What makes a source credible? How do you determine whether a source is credible or not credible?

**3. Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:**

1. The teachers should instruct students to turn to a person sitting next to them and discuss the meaning of the word bias. Together they should come up with a definition and share this with the class.

**Instructional Chunk #2:**

**1. Procedures:**

1. The teacher should begin by showing the students the United Streaming video on the explosion of the Maine (if the teacher does not have access to United Streaming, several videos are available from Google video that show a brief synopsis of the explosion)
2. The teacher should hand out to each student (if it is a large class select students at random to read cards) a note card with an event leading up to the explosion of the Maine. The teacher should ask the students to read these cards in order while reviewing the moving timeline on the Smart Board (if a Smartboard is not available simply write each event on the board as the student reads in out loud).
3. The teacher should introduce the question “Who sank the Maine?”
4. The teacher should read aloud the power point slide “Awake! United States” and discuss with the class
5. The teacher should break students into groups of three and distribute the Journal/Time documents with their graphic organizers
6. Students should work in groups to complete the graphic organizers on the newspaper articles

**1. Debrief: ask the students...**

1. How do the headlines differ? What might cause the two newspapers to report on the same event in different ways?

**2. Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:**

1. Which account is more believable? Discussion. Students should hold up an index card with their choice for which account is more credible with a summary of why they feel that way. This should be a 5-10 minute class discussion.

**Instructional Chunk #3:** Introduce the concept of propaganda

**1. Procedures:**

1. Begin by asking students what propaganda means. How is it used to sway public opinion? Write students responses on the board.
2. Show students the examples of propaganda located on the power point. As a class, discuss how these pieces of propaganda were used at the time to sway public opinion and evoke feelings.

**2. Debrief: ask the students...**

1. What is propaganda? How is it evident in the images you have seen? Can you identify a modern day example of propaganda?
2. What are some of the misconceptions you had about propaganda and how it is used?
3. How is bias evident in propaganda?

**3. Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:**

1. Provide students with a piece of white computer paper. Ask students to create a piece of propaganda that demonstrates their understanding of how it is used to sway public opinion/evoke feelings of the viewer.

## **Summarizing Strategy:**

Students should do a gallery walk of their classmate's propaganda posters. They should look for bias in each, and as a class discuss what they have found. The students should report out on what they have learned and how bias impacted their decisions when creating their propaganda poster.

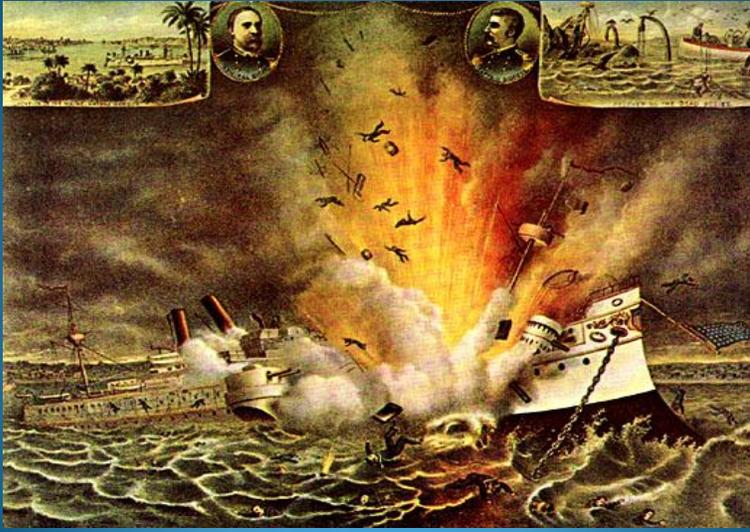
### **RESOURCES:**

Resource 1: Warm Up

## **Daily Warm Up**

- 1. What is bias?**
- 2. How do you determine if a source is credible?**

## Explosion of the U.S.S. *Maine*, Havana Harbor, February 15, 1898



### ***Awake United States!***

*This song was rushed into print between the sinking of the Maine on February 16, 1898 and the declaration of war on April 25, 1898.*

Eagle soar on high, and sound the battle cry!

How proudly sailed the warship Maine,  
a Nation's pride, without a stain!  
A wreck she lies, her sailors slain.  
By two-faced butchers, paid by Spain!

Eagle soar on high,  
And sound the battle cry  
Wave the starry flag!  
In mud it shall not drag!

- According to the song on the previous slide, who sunk the Maine?
- Does this prove the Spanish blew it up?

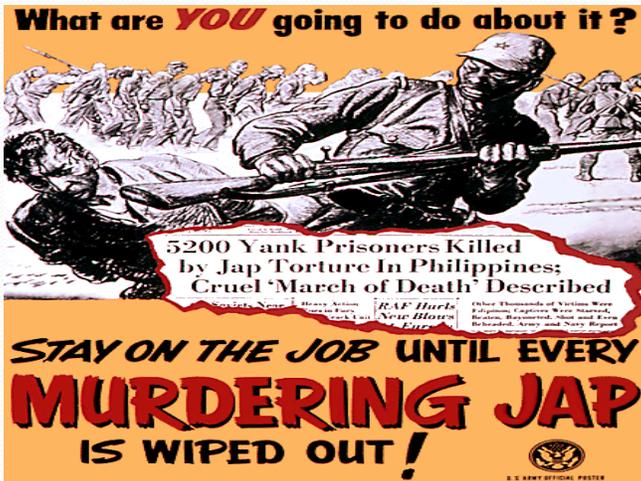
## What is propaganda?

- Propaganda is a form of communication that is aimed at influencing a person or group to feel a specific way about a given topic.

## Propaganda examples...

- What are the artists trying to convey in these picture?





Resource 3: Times/Journal articles

**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.*

Resource 4: Graphic Organizer

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Explosion of the *Maine* Graphic Organizer**

***Which account do you find more believable?***

**On the back of this sheet or in your notebooks:** Compare the evidence used by both newspapers to support their claims about what happened to the *Maine*. Which newspaper uses stronger evidence? Explain.

**Document Publication**

**Date**

**According to this article, what happened to the *Maine*?**

**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***

## Resource 5: Maine Lesson Plan

### Explosion of the *Maine* Lesson Plan

#### Central Historical Question:

*What sank the Maine?*

#### Materials:

- Maine* Powerpoint
- Copies of *Journal* Document
- Copies of *Times* Document
- Maine* Guiding Questions
- Maine* Graphic Organizer

#### Plan of Instruction:

1. Put the following headlines on the board:

- Search for Missing Bride Continues
- Bride Missing! Groom's Family Blame History of Mental Illness

Have each student respond in writing:

- How do these headlines differ?
- Consider the wording and how a reader might respond to each article.

2. Discussion:

- What does each headline imply?
- If these were articles, which would you have wanted to read first?
- Which do you think would have been the most reliable story? Why?
- Why might different newspapers choose to present the same event so differently?

3. Transition and Powerpoint: Today we are going to be comparing two newspaper accounts of an event that happened in 1898.

Show slide of *Maine* exploding and explain the following:

- Cuba was colonized by Spain.*
- Cuban rebels had been fighting for independence.*
- Spain was thought to be brutal in repressing the rebellion.*
- U.S. had business interests in Cuba.*
- President McKinley had sent the Maine to Cuba (Why? To protect American interests? To prepare for war? To intimidate Spain? This is debated by historians. . .).*
- Maine explodes on Feb 15, 1898.*

#### Explosion of the Maine

Introduce inquiry question: Who sunk the *Maine*?

Show slide of "Awake! United States." Read out loud.

Discussion questions:

- According to this song, who sunk the *Maine*?
- Does this prove the Spanish blew it up?

4. Hand out *Journal* document and *Times* document and have students read and fill out the graphic organizer.

5. Whole class discussion:

- Do you know what happened to the *Maine*?
- What evidence do you have for your answer? Give an example where the reporter uses solid evidence to support a claim made in

the article.

- Do you think these articles would have been received differently by their readers in 1898? How so?
- What effect might the *Journal* article have had on its readers?
- What effect might the *Times* article have had on its readers?
- How significant do you think the *Maine* explosion was to the American people at this time? Why?

#### 6. Assessment

Writing prompt: Which account is more believable? Why?

First section: Compare the evidence used by both papers to support their claims that the *Maine* was blown up by attack or by unknown causes.

Which uses stronger evidence? Use at least three specific examples/phrases/words from the articles to support your position.

Second section: Does this difference in accounts matter? Why or why not?

Citations:

"Destruction of the War Ship Maine was the Work of an Enemy," *New York Journal and Advertiser*, (Feb. 17, 1898).

<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/spanishamericanwar/0/inquiry/intro/>

"Maine's Hull will Decide," *New York Times*, (Feb. 17, 1898).

<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/spanishamericanwar/0/inquiry/intro/resources/10/>

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