

**Yellow Journalism - Assignment # 5**

The Spanish-American War is often referred to as the first "media war." During the 1890s, journalism that sensationalized—and sometimes even manufactured—dramatic events were a powerful force that helped start the US war with Spain. Led by newspaper owners William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, journalism of the 1890s used drama, romance, and exaggeration to sell millions of newspapers - it became known as **yellow journalism**.

The term yellow journalism came from a popular **New York World** comic called "Hogan's Alley," which featured a yellow-dressed character named the "the yellow kid." Determined to compete with Pulitzer's **World** in every way, rival **New York Journal** owner William Randolph Hearst copied Pulitzer's sensationalist style and even hired "Hogan's Alley" artist R.F. Outcault away from the World. In response, Pulitzer commissioned another cartoonist to create a second yellow kid. Soon, the sensationalist press of the 1890s became a competition between the "yellow kids," and the journalistic style was coined "yellow journalism."

Yellow journals like the **New York Journal** and the **New York World** relied on sensationalist headlines to sell newspapers. William Randolph Hearst understood that a war with Cuba would not only sell his papers, but also move him into a position of national prominence. From Cuba, Hearst's star reporters wrote stories designed to tug at the heartstrings of Americans. Horrific tales described the situation in Cuba - female prisoners, executions, valiant rebels fighting, and starving women and children figured in many of the stories that filled the newspapers. But it was the sinking of the battleship **Maine** in Havana Harbor that gave Hearst his big story - war. After the sinking of the Maine, the Hearst newspapers, with no evidence, unequivocally blamed the Spanish, and soon U.S. public opinion demanded intervention.

Today, historians point to the Spanish-American War as the first press-driven war. Although it may be an exaggeration to claim that Hearst and the other yellow journalists started the war, it is fair to say that the press fueled the public's passion for war. Without sensational headlines and stories about Cuban affairs, the mood for Cuban intervention may have been very different. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the United States emerged as a world power, and the U.S. press proved its influence.

One of the most often repeated stories connected with the Spanish-American War concerns Frederic Remington. The artist was engaged by William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the **New York Journal**, to go to Cuba with noted writer Richard Harding Davis and provide illustrations to accompany a series of articles on the Revolution. Arriving in Havana in January of 1897, Remington soon became bored with seemingly peaceful Cuba and wired Hearst: "Everything is quiet. There is no trouble. There will be no war. I wish to return." The publisher's reply is alleged to have been: "Please remain. You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war."
Screaming newspaper headlines about the situation in Cuba in the 1890s helped fan the flames of war by influencing public opinion in the United States. You have no doubt seen modern headlines aimed at selling newspapers - rather than telling honest stories - at newsstands and in supermarket checkout lines. In your group, read the tabloid articles given to you and consider how truthful they are. Then, take a look at the front page of an actual newspaper from the 1890’s and article printed to cause America to get angry with Spain.

**Use the Tabloid Article:** There are 4 tabloid articles. Feel free to read all of them, then choose 1 to describe.

(Title of Article you chose)

What did the headlines of your tabloid article make you think the story was about? Was the actual story any different from what you thought? ____________________________

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How truthful do you think the tabloid article is? List examples of its exaggerations of the truth.

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**Use the Historical Article:** (Title of Article)

Look at the headlines from the 1890’s paper, then read the information we know about those events today. Was the original headline true or was the headline misleading? ____________________________

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What were the facts of the situation your historical article covered? ____________________________

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**Compare journalism today to past journalism:**

How does the tabloid article compare to the newspaper from the 1890’s? ____________________________

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Are any EXAGGERATED stories more or less harmful than others? ____________________________

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**YOUR OPINION:** Do you think we can blame the journalists of the 19th century for the war with Spain? Why or why not? ____________________________

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"In the opinion of the court, the MAINE was destroyed by the explosion of a submarine mine... The court has been unable to obtain evidence fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the MAINE upon any person or persons."

Remember the Maine, to Hell with Spain!
Immediately after the sinking in 1898, President William McKinley ordered a naval inquiry into what caused the Maine to explode. Survivors and eyewitnesses testified for the court, and several navy divers explored the sunken ship, hoping to find clues as to what may have caused the disaster. Though several volunteered, no experts outside the Navy were called upon for advice. The Sampson Board concluded that the Maine had been blown up by a mine. (Proven wrong years later!)
Cuban Babes Prey to Famine: Thousands of Children of the Concentration Camps Perishing in Island Towns: Sights that Sicken Strong Men
by: Julian Hawthorne

Hawthorne wrote that "All around ... squatted little forms whose days of schooling were done forever in this world. All they could do was to endure a few days or hours longer the dull gnawing pain and exhaustion, and then sink noiselessly into nothingness ... The victims of starvation appear to succumb more easily and quickly than do the Hindoos (sic), who to be sure are in the habit of starving all their lives."

Spaniards were described as "more pitiless than Kurds," and buzzards were floating over the dying, according to the article.

The United States watched the course of the uprising with mounting concern. Most Americans were sympathetic with the Cubans (especially as the United States had about $30-50 million in Cuban investments and as much as $100 million in import-export trade in 1896), but President Grover Cleveland was determined to preserve neutrality. But clamor for intervention continued to rise and the yellow press would not let the issue die. Under the Presidency of McKinley America does enter to help the Cubans.

General Valeriano “The Butcher” Weyler
by: William Randolph Hearst

The Butcher is appointed Spanish ruler in Cuba. Weyler throws nuns into prison. Butcher wages brutal warfare on helpless women. Weyler began a policy known as reconcentrado, where the Cuban people would be concentrated into camps, where they could be "defended" from the Cuban rebels -- and prevented from joining or supplying them.

400,000 CUBAN’S DIE IN CAMPS

The Spanish Army had no way to supply adequate food or water to those camps and the suffering was great. By 1898 more than 400,000 Cubans -- almost a quarter of the island's population -- have died during the revolution. The number was probably about half that, but it didn't matter to the press, the damage was done. American papers showed drawings of emaciated Cuban children, reported on atrocities and many mass executions of prisoners and sympathizers in the camps. Although there was some exaggeration, many of the reported events were true.

Stories about the Cuban rebellion sold papers, and continued to appear. Every little bit drew public attention.
**Mistreatment of Women:**

**Does Our Flag Shield Women?**

Indignities Practiced by Spanish Officials On Board American Vessels

Richard Harding Davis Describes Some Startling Phases of the Cuban Situation - Refined Young Women Stripped and Searched by Brutal Spaniards While Under Our Flag on the Ollivette

Davis' return trip from Cuba, he had been seated at dinner beside a Senorita Clemencia Arango, who told the writer that she and two other young women were being expelled from Cuba for suspected Rebel sympathies. Miss Arango had a brother serving with the insurgents. The three girls were ordered to leave on a certain day. That morning, a detective arrived at each of the girls' homes and strip searched them for documents or letters to the Cuban Junta in New York. On board the steamer during the dock, the procedure was repeated and 15 minutes later aboard the OLLIVETTE, an American ship, they were again taken to a cabin and forced to submit to a strip search.

The story was illustrated by a Remington drawing, crafted in New York, of a young maiden with a bared backside, her clothes being gone through by a pair of leering Spanish officials. The story was a huge sensation and circulation booster, largely on the strength of Remington's drawing. However, when Senorita Arango arrived in New York she pointed out that the searches had been done not by leering Spanish officers, but by Police Matrons. The World gleefully attacked the Journal for the inaccuracy of its report and Davis felt compelled to point out that nowhere in his article did he say the searchers were men, it was Remington's illustration which led the public to that conclusion. Later, Remington and Hearst felt somewhat vindicated when other Cuban women stepped forward and reported they HAD been strip searched by male Spanish officials.

Above: Male Spanish officials strip search an American woman tourist in Cuba looking for messages from rebels; front page "yellow journalism" from Hearst (artist: Remington).
Article 3: De Lome Letter (Spanish treachery)

Spanish Diplomat degrades President McKinley
2/9/1898
"... McKinley is: weak and catering to the rabble, and, besides, a low politician, who desires to leave a door open to me and to stand well with the jingoes of his party."

This event fired up an otherwise inactive President McKinley and helped push US public sentiment in favor of the Cuban Revolutionaries and against the Spanish, and is seen as one of the principal triggers of the Spanish American War of 1898.
The DeLome Letter: The following letter is the controversial De Lome letter. The United States diplomat to Spain wrote a letter that was critical of U.S. President McKinley and the prospects for peace over the Cuban Revolution. It was leaked to the U.S. press, where it was published in papers—forcing the recall of the highly capable minister. DeLome fled the US and went back to Spain.

Spanish Diplomat to the US; ENRIQUE DUPUY DE LOME

Exmo Senor DON JOSE CANALEJAS:

My Distinguished and Dear Friend: - You need not apologize for not having written to me; I also ought to have written to you, but have not done so on account of being weighed down with work and nous sommes quites.

The situation here continues unchanged. Everything depends on the political and military success in Cuba. The prologue of this second method of warfare will end the day that the Colonial Cabinet shall be appointed, and it relieves us in the eyes of this country of a part of the responsibility for what happens there, and they must cast the responsibility upon the Cubans, whom they believe to be so immaculate.

Until then we will not be able to see clearly, and I consider it to be a loss of time and an advance by the wrong road - the sending of emissaries to the rebel field, the negotiations with the Autonomists not yet declared to be legally constituted, and the discovery of the intentions and purpose of this government. The exiles will return one by one, and when they return, will come walking into the sheepfold, and the chiefs will gradually return. Neither of these had the courage to leave en masse, and they will not have the courage thus to return.

The message has undeceived the insurgents who expected something else, and has paralyzed the action of Congress, but I consider it bad.

Besides the natural and inevitable coarseness with which he repeats all that the press and public opinion of Spain has said of Weyler, it shows once more what McKinley is: weak and catering to the rabble, and, besides, a low politician, who desires to leave a door open to me and to stand well with the jingoes of his party.

Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, it will only depend on ourselves whether he proves bad and adverse to us. I agree entirely with you; without a military success nothing will be accomplished there, and without military and political success, there is here always danger that the insurgents will be encouraged, if not by the government, at least by part of the public opinion.

I do not believe you pay enough attention to the role of England. Nearly all that newspaper canaille which swarms in your hotel are English, and at the same time are correspondents of the Journal, they are also correspondents of the best newspapers and reviews of England. Thus it has been since the beginning. To my mind the only object of England is that the Americans should occupy themselves with us and leave her in peace, and if there is a war, so much the better; that would further remove what is threatening her—although that will never happen.

It would be most important that you should agitate the question of commercial relations, even though it would be only for effect, and that you should send here a man of importance in order that I might use him to make a propaganda among the senators and others in opposition to the Junta and win over exiles.

There goes Amblard. I believe he comes deeply taken up with little political matters, and there must be something very great or we shall lose.

Adela returns your salutations, and we wish you in the new year to be a messenger of peace and take this New Year's present to poor Spain.

Always you attentive friend and servant, who kisses your hands.