American Imperialism

and the Spanish-American War
-Students will learn about American imperialism in the late 1800s

-Students will be able to describe the causes, main events, and resolution of the Spanish-American war
Basics of American Imperialism
American Imperialism: The economic, military and cultural influence of the United States on other countries

America’s influence after the Spanish-American War: from the Philippines to Puerto Rico
How did American Imperialism begin?

-The United States was founded on imperialism: ever since Columbus discovered America, settlers have been colonizing American land at the expense of the native people

"From the time the first settlers arrived in Virginia from England and started moving westward, this was an imperial nation, a conquering nation."
- Paul Kennedy, Yale historian
What are the main reasons that drove American Imperialism?

-Why is America known for getting involved with other countries, even today?

2 main reasons:

- **Cultural**: American Exceptionalism ***

- **Economic**: America profits from exchanging goods with other nations
Cultural Factor: American Exceptionalism

American Exceptionalism:

- Belief that America is "special" compared to other countries, and therefore morally superior

- Why is America special?: Because of its values of *liberty, democracy, and Christianity*

- These values led to an attitude that America has a moral duty to ‘take care’ of other countries, like a big brother

"The solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and the sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government, from hence it is to be lighted up in other regions of the earth, if other regions of the earth shall ever become susceptible of its benign influence."

- Thomas Jefferson, final presidential speech, 1809
American Exceptionalism
Economic Factor: Profit

-Like all countries, America profits from exchanging goods with other nations.

-By controlling trade with a country, America can gain more profit, receive more goods, and dictate the terms of the trade.

-This leads to economic power and an economic advantage.
"American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours."

-Senator Albert Belveridge, 1898
"I wonder why my relationship's so bad with all you nations that aren't as good as me."
Lecture Break!

**Video:** Rihanna, “American Oxygen”

- **Reflects American exceptionalism:** pride in being American and in America’s economic freedom; also shows problems that American values have caused

  “We sweat for a nickel and a dime, turn it into an empire”

  “This is the American dream”

  “You can be anything at all in America”
The Spanish-American War
Background

- Spanish empire in decline

- Cuba, Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico all controlled by Spain

- Cuba fighting Spain for its independence since 1868

- Growing belief in the United States that America should help Cuba gain independence. Belief caused by “American exceptionalism”
The Start of the War
A painting of the event that instigated the war: The sinking of the USS Maine
The USS Maine

- US warship docked in La Havana, Cuba
- Mysteriously sank, killing almost 300 American soldiers
- This event caused the US to declare war on Spain

American propaganda after the sinking of the USS Maine. American perspective: “Spain purposefully sunk the ship.”
More American propaganda, implying that the sinking of the ship was purposeful.
The End of the War

- War lasted only 10 weeks: “splendid little war”
- US victory over Spain
- War ended with Treaty of Paris, signed on Dec 10, 1898
- US acquired Spain’s territories: Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico
- Cuba gained independence but stayed under the protection of the United States
Consequences of the War

- This war was the first of many United States interventions into foreign affairs

- Established US as a rising power in the international world; the "defender of democracy"

- Was the last war fought by Spain against another country

- Marked the end of the Spanish empire
“As the old Spanish throne topples, up goes the Cuban flag of independence”
The End!