



TIMELINE ACTIVITY: SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

Elementary School (4-6)

OVERVIEW:

This timeline is adaptable and can be used as an introduction, a review, or at any time throughout a Spanish-American War lesson/unit. Cards can be printed and ordered to quickly give students an overview of events in the Spanish-American War.

Teachers are encouraged to use the ideas and questions that would best support their learners. If students have never made a timeline before, Activity 1 would be the most relevant. If students are familiar with timelines, Activities 2 or 3 would provide them with more of a challenge. Similarly, do not expect to use all of the questions. It is recommended that you focus on one category of questions and choose 2-3 to discuss deeply or ask 1-2 a day as a warm-up or review.

Estimated time: 1 class period, 15-30 minutes depending on the activity chosen

STANDARDS:

Social studies standards vary by state. This lesson can be used to teach the following standards and similar wording may be found in your state standards.

National Council for the Social Studies Standards

- NCSS.D2.His.1.3-5: Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to compare developments that happened at the same time.
- NCSS.D2.His.14.3-5: Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will explain the relationships between events leading up to, during, and/or after the Spanish-American War, including causes, effects, and the possibility of different outcomes.
- Students will organize events related to the Spanish-American War on a timeline.

RESOURCES NEEDED:

- Whole class: 1 copy of Spanish-American War Timeline_Elementary School
- Small group: 1 copy of Spanish-American War Timeline_Elementary School per group



IDEAS FOR DISPLAYING TIMELINES:

- Flat on Floor: spread the years out evenly across a large floor area. Students put events in order on timeline. Events can partially overlap.
- On Wall: Use a large wall to display the timeline. Using tape or another material that adheres to your wall, attach the years equal distances apart. Students post events in order on the timeline. Events should not overlap but can be layered above/below each other as needed. String can be used to indicate the position of events on the timeline.
- On Clothesline: String a clothesline from one end of the room to the other. Attach years to clothespins equal distances apart. Students use additional clothespins to attach events.
- Human Timeline: Have students hold the cards and stand in order according to when their event occurred.

ACTIVITY 1: BUILD THE TIMELINE

- Lead a class discussion using the following questions:
 - What is a timeline?
 - Why are timelines useful for historians?
 - Events are caused and influenced by other events. Imagine, for instance, if you broke your bone, you wouldn't just wake up one morning to find it happened and it wouldn't be fixed by the time you went to bed. Things happened before the bone broke that *caused* it to break, and because it's broken, that will affect what happens after it broke. What could be some of the causes of this broken bone? What could be some of the effects?
 - We could put these events on a timeline and see the connections between these different events we discussed. Timelines allow us to see the connections between events and how they can influence each other.
 - Sometimes when we study history, we forget that things didn't have to turn out the way they did. People were making decisions with limited information because they didn't know what would happen in the future, just like we make decisions now. Seeing events in order can also help us understand what people knew and didn't know when they made choices. They didn't know how other people or countries would react to events. They didn't know exactly how things would turn out.
- Build the timeline:
 - Pass out cards to students and have them place the events in order on the timeline.
- Discussion:
 - Decide what you want to highlight from the timeline.
 - Use relevant questions from the Timeline Exploration at the end of this lesson to discuss the timeline and events with your students.



ACTIVITY 2: TIMELINE WITHOUT DATES

- The PowerPoint slides for the Timeline are editable and the dates may be removed. While the dates on the event cards make the timeline easy to build, removing the dates and using only a few events would require students to work cooperatively and focus on the relationships between different events as they try to order them.
 - Small groups of 4-5 students would give students more of an opportunity to voice their ideas and defend their thinking.
- Whole class: review the timeline events in order and discuss the relationships between the events.
- **Suggested Cards to use:**
 - Cuban War of Independence Begins (1)
 - Philippine Revolution Begins (3)
 - U.S.S. Maine Explodes (5)
 - U.S. Declares War (6)
 - U.S. Victory in the Philippines (7)
 - U.S. Victory at San Juan Heights (8)
 - U.S. Annexes Hawaii (10)
 - Peace Protocol Signed (12)
 - Philippine-American War Ends (14)
- **Possible Questions to Ask:**
 - What events were easy to place in relationship to each other? What made them easy to place?
 - Why is the annexation of Hawaii included in this timeline?
 - What events were difficult to place? Why were they difficult?

ACTIVITY 3: CATEGORIZE EVENTS

- Timelines create an obvious way to show relationships between events as they are organized sequentially. Finding alternate ways to sort the events requires students to think about them differently.
- Alternate ways to sort timeline events could include:
 - Helpful/harmful
 - Actions/reactions
 - Impact on society (high to low)
 - All these alternate ways to categorize are up to interpretation as there is no clear right or wrong. These categories could be used to help students recognize that history is more than factual memorization.
- Small group: Students work in groups of 4-5 to discuss and sort events according to the categories you have chosen.



- Whole class: After sorting events, discuss as a class where groups placed different events. Have groups explain their justification for their sort.
- **Possible Questions to Ask:**
 - Where did you put [specific event]?
 - Why did you sort it that way?
 - Were there other places you considered placing it?

TIMELINE EXPLORATION:

- **Explore the timeline:**
 - Do you notice any patterns in where events are on the timeline?
 - Do you see any themes in the events of the timeline?
 - Are there any events that you think might not belong on a timeline of the Spanish-American War?
 - Why do you think it doesn't belong?
 - What's a justification for including it?
 - Are there any important events from the war that weren't included that you think should have been?
 - What event(s) would you add to the timeline?
 - Choose an event. Why was this included in the timeline?
- **Explore relationships:**
 - Choose two events from the timeline. Is there a relationship between these events?
 - If so, what is it? If not, why are they both included in this timeline?
 - How does the timeline for this war compare to other conflicts the U.S. has been involved in or other wars we've studied?
 - Which events on the timeline still affect us in the U.S. today?
 - What's the message of the timeline?
 - What theme could describe the timeline?
 - What title/subtitle could we give this timeline?
 - Which events are related to primary sources we've studied?
- **Explore alternate history:**
 - Choose one event from the timeline. How would history be different if this event hadn't happened?
 - Choose one event from the timeline and change it. How would this have affected future events? (Events that occur later on the timeline.)
 - Knowing what happened in the Spanish-American War, if you could time travel back to this period, what advice would you give to people?
 - Would you give the same advice to everyone or have different advice for Americans/Cubans/ Filipinos/Spaniards/soldiers/civilians/etc.?



- What was a key mistake or error that was made in the timeline?
 - How could it have been fixed?
 - How would that have changed history and even the present?
- What decision could a leader have made differently that would have created a better outcome?
 - Would the outcome have been better for everyone or only some people?

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS:

By 1898, the United States was 122 years old and had expanded all the way across North America to the Pacific Ocean. With hundreds of immigrants arriving each day, the population was rapidly expanding and diversifying. U.S. businesses increasingly engaged in international trade, and politicians argued about what role the United States should play on the world stage. European powers like England, France, and Spain were still expanding their empires, and some Americans believed the United States should also establish foreign colonies. Others opposed imperialism and colonization, but believed the United States should support other democracies, especially those in the Western Hemisphere.

Just south of the United States, Cuba had been a Spanish colony since 1492, and its many sugar cane plantations were an important asset for Spain's economy. Beginning in 1868, Cubans made multiple attempts to overthrow Spanish rule and establish Cuba as an independent nation. In reaction to these attempted revolutions, Spain enacted a policy that forced rural families into fortified towns or "reconcentration camps," where, it is estimated, more than 100,000 died of starvation and disease. American newspapers published reports of Spanish atrocities toward the Cuban people, which generated sympathy for a revolution and increased support for American intervention. The United States also had significant economic interests in Cuba as a major trade partner, and leaders in business and government hoped conditions on the island would stabilize quickly.

In January 1898, riots broke out in Havana, and President William McKinley sent the armored cruiser U.S.S. Maine to Cuba to monitor the situation and safeguard American interests. On February 15, 1898, an explosion in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, ripped open the hull of the USS Maine, sank the ship and killed more than 260 of the American sailors on board. Historians are still unsure what caused the explosion, but popular sentiment in the U.S. at the time blamed the Spanish.



Fueled by concern for the condition of the Cuban rebels, general opposition to European colonization of the Americas, and public outrage over the destruction of the *Maine*, the U.S. declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898. Because Spain held territories worldwide, the war was fought on multiple fronts in the Caribbean and Pacific, including the Philippines, where, like Cuba, an independence movement was contesting Spanish colonial rule.

The war did not last long. In the Pacific, U.S. Navy ships sailed into Manila Bay and quickly destroyed the Spanish squadron stationed there. Then in Cuba, U.S. Army forces charged the San Juan Heights, seized control of the island and forced the Spanish fleet stationed in the Caribbean out to sea, where U.S. Navy ships quickly sank them. By August 12, the Spanish had surrendered, and the war was effectively over.

Although the Spanish-American War ended in less than four months, it had tremendous historical impact. The U.S. acquired international territories, established itself as the dominant nation in the Western hemisphere, and began a new era as a major world power.

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IMAGES:

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Page 2: Strohmeyer & Wyman. *Reconcentrados in Remedios, Cuba*. Photograph. ca. 1898.

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Page 3: U.S. Army Signal Corps, *Insurgent (Filipino) soldiers in the Philippines, 1899*. Photograph, 1899.

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Page 5: *Wreckage of the USS Maine*. Photograph, 1898. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/301647>

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Page 6: Strohmeyer & Wyman. *Marine guard drilling on Battleship USS Iowa*. Photograph. ca. 1899.

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Page 7: Muller, Luchsinger & Co. *The Battle of Manila*. Painting. June 21, 1898.

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Page 8: Dinwiddie, William. *[Colonel Roosevelt and his Rough Riders at the top of the hill which they captured, Battle of San Juan]*/by William Dinwiddie. Photograph. 1898. <https://www.loc.gov/item/96521936/>

Page 9: Landi, R. Verdugo. *Spanish destroyer Furor attacked by USS Iowa, Indiana, and New York out of Santiago de Cuba*. Illustration. "Nuevo Mundo," Madrid, Spain, July 13, 1898.

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Page 10: Prince, George. *Queen Liliuokalani*. Photograph. Published in "Hawaii, Our New Possessions," by John Roy Musick (1898), ca. 1898.

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Page 11: *The Battle of Santiago*. Lithograph. New York, ca. 1899. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.59429/>

Page 12: Johnston, Frances Benjamin. *Signing of the Peace Protocol - Washington - Aug. 12th, 1898*. Photograph.

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Page 13: *Taking it Easy During a Lull, 20th KS*. Photograph. ca. 1899. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013645568/>

Page 14: *[Philippines, Manila, 1899: U.S. soldiers and insurrecto prisoners at the cathedral, Walled City]*.

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