

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the United States expanded its power and control in areas around the world. The Spanish-American War resulted in U.S. control of areas in the Caribbean and the Pacific. U.S. support for groups that overthrew governments in Panama and Hawaii added new areas of control. However, not everyone agreed with the motives behind U.S. imperialism or the methods used to gain control. Imagine you are a U.S. citizen at the time involved in the public debate over American imperialism. Write an argumentative speech that supports or opposes U.S. actions. Your speech should demonstrate your understanding of the issues involved in the debate over imperialism and explain why your position is more consistent with American ideals and traditions such as free enterprise, limited government, democracy, and people's right to choose their method of government. You will then use your knowledge to participate in a debate with classmates representing different opinions.

The Last Stand of the Anti-Imperialists

In this cartoon, prominent members of the Anti-Imperialist League are shown sinking in quicksand labeled "public opinion."



Keppler, Udo J, artist. *The Last Stand of the Anti-Imperialists*. 1902. *Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Web.*

I. Describe Your Position on U.S. Imperialism

1. In this activity, you will represent either those supporting U.S. imperialism or those opposing it. As you plan to write your argumentative speech and participate in the debate, keep the following topic questions in mind:
 - What is my position on U.S. imperialism?
 - What evidence supports my position?
 - Why is my position more consistent with American ideals and traditions than the position of my opponents?

2. Then, study the selected resources that follow. In your particular group, you will either conduct research on supporting your assigned position or you will conduct “opposition research.” If you choose to do opposition research, examine the resources to anticipate arguments made by the opposition. In the graphic organizer that follows, take notes on the resources.

Source	Reasons to Support Imperialism	Reasons to Oppose Imperialism
Engagement Source		
1		
2		

Source	Reasons to Support Imperialism	Reasons to Oppose Imperialism
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Source	Reasons to Support Imperialism	Reasons to Oppose Imperialism
8		
9		

1. “The White Man’s Burden: American in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba” from *The Unfinished Nation: Imperial Ambition*

This video segment discusses how the U.S. acquisition of territory in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba affected the lives of citizens living in these countries.

2. “Diplomacy of Imperialism” from *The Unfinished Nation: Imperial Ambition*

This video segment discusses how imperialism helped the United States establish its position as a global leader.

3. Excerpt from remarks by labor leader Samuel Gompers, published in an Anti-Imperialist League pamphlet, 1898

Having been invited to deliver an address by the National Committee of the Chicago Peace Jubilee in connection with that event in Chicago, Illinois, October 18, 1898, the president of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, delivered the address from which these extracts are taken.

If the Philippines are annexed, what is to prevent the Chinese, the Negritos and the Malays coming to our country? How can we prevent the Chinese coolies from going to the Philippines and from there swarm into the United States and engulf our people and our civilization. If these new islands are to become ours, it will be either under the form of Territories or States. Can we hope to close the flood-gates of immigration from the hordes of Chinese and the semi-savage races coming from what will then be part of our own country? Certainly, if we are to retain the principles of law enunciated from the foundation of our Government, no legislation of such a character can be expected.

In a country such as ours the conditions and opportunities of the wage-earners are profoundly affected by the view of the worth or dignity of men who earn their bread by the work of their hands. The progress and improvement in the condition of the wage-earners in the former slave States have been seriously obstructed by decades in which manual labor and slave labor were identical. The South now, with difficulty, respects labor, because labor is the condition of those who were formerly slaves, and this fact operates potentially against any effort to secure social justice by legislative action or organized movement of the workers. If these facts have operated so effectually to prevent necessary changes in the condition of our own people, how difficult will it be to quicken our conscience so as to secure social and legislative relief for the semi-savage slave or contract laborers of the conquered islands?

Save the Republic: Anti Imperialists League Leaflet No. 11. Anti-Imperialist League. Washington, DC. 1898. Library of Congress. Web.

4. Excerpt from an editorial in the publication *City and State*, published in an Anti-Imperialist League leaflet, 1898

The United States, a great nation composed of seventy million souls, good and bad, stands today in the presence of a great national temptation, which has come upon us through the fortunes of war. A successful war may, in its after-effects, be as dangerous as an unsuccessful one. . . .

As to the Philippines, let us beware the tempting snare. We cannot retain the Philippines as a permanent possession without violating our fundamental principle. Whatever hold we have on those islands is by “right of conquest.” But Americans do not recognize such a right. Of itself, it is not more than the right by which the highwayman lifts the traveler’s purse or the burglar the householder’s plate. We are there in the process of freeing Cuba. We have no business to take incidentally any commercial benefit in payment for that act. Any commercial question must be considered and settled separately. We cannot give the Philippines back to the political and ecclesiastical tyranny from which we have accidentally rescued them. We must make some arrangement with Spain and with the other European nations that will give a better government to the islanders without laying us open to the charge of seeking our own interests. To stay in the Philippines by right of conquest is not only to become a national highwayman, but it is to adopt a policy that will cast us into the whirlpool of European jealousies and entanglements for an indefinite future. It will necessitate a great naval and military establishment and destroy the best American ideals. The principles for which we have stood will be largely destroyed by adopting any such policy, and the force and attention of the nation would be largely diverted from work on those internal problems and purposes which belong to a peaceful democracy. America is told to take her place among the nations. What is her place? It is not to imitate the methods and conditions of contending European powers, but to show their citizens the possibilities and achievements of self-government, so that the toilers of the old world ultimately will force their rulers to conform to the standards which the United States has set up in the new.

Save the Republic: Anti Imperialists League Leaflet No. 11. Anti-Imperialist League. Washington, DC. 1898. Library of Congress. Web.

5. Excerpt from *The Frontier in American History*, Frederick Jackson Turner, 1893

In a recent bulletin of the Superintendent of the Census for 1890 appear these significant words: “Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports.” This brief official statement marks the closing of a great historic movement. Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development. . . .

From the conditions of frontier life came intellectual traits of profound importance. The works of travelers along each frontier from colonial days onward describe certain common traits, and these traits have, while softening down, still persisted as survivals in the place of their origin, even when a higher social organization succeeded. The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. . . .

We are now in a position to see clearly some of the factors involved in the Western problem. For nearly three centuries the dominant fact in American life has been expansion. With the settlement of the Pacific coast and the occupation of the free lands, this movement has come to a check. That these energies of expansion will no longer operate would be a rash prediction; and the demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. Holt and Company. New York, NY. 1920. Web.

6. Excerpt from “Instructions to Peace Negotiators” by President William McKinley after Spain’s surrender in the Spanish-American War, 1898

The abandonment of the Western Hemisphere by Spain was an imperative necessity. In presenting that requirement, we only fulfilled a duty universally acknowledged. It involves no ungenerous reference to our recent foe, but simply a recognition of the plain teachings of history, to say that it was not compatible with the assurance of permanent peace on and near our own territory that the Spanish flag should remain on this side of the sea. This lesson of events and of reason left no alternative as to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the other islands belonging to Spain in this hemisphere.

The Philippines stand upon a different basis. It is nonetheless true, however, that without any original thought of complete or even partial acquisition, the presence and success of our arms at Manila imposes upon us obligations which we cannot disregard. The march of events rules and overrules human action. Avowing unreservedly the purpose which has animated all our effort, and still solicitous to adhere to it, we cannot be unmindful that, without any desire or design on our part, the war has brought us new duties and responsibilities which we must meet and discharge as becomes a great nation on whose growth and career from the beginning the ruler of nations has plainly written the high command and pledge of civilization.

Incidental to our tenure in the Philippines is the commercial opportunity to which American statesmanship cannot be indifferent. It is just to use every legitimate means for the enlargement of American trade; but we seek no advantages in the Orient which are not common to all. Asking only the open door for ourselves, we are ready to accord the open door to others. The commercial opportunity which is naturally and inevitably associated with this new opening depends less on large territorial possession than upon an adequate commercial basis and upon broad and equal privileges.

Chadwick, French Ensor, 1844–1919. *The Relations of the United States and Spain: The Spanish-American War*. New York, NY: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911. Web.

7. President McKinley explains his thoughts on Philippine annexation, 1903

When I next realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess I did not know what to do with them. . . . And one night late it came to me this way. . . . 1) That we could not give them back to Spain- that would be cowardly and dishonorable; 2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany-our commercial rivals in the Orient-that would be bad business and discreditable; 3) that we not leave them to themselves-they are unfit for self-government-and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's wars; and 4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died.

Olcott, Charles S. 1864–1935. *The Life of William McKinley*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916. Web.

8. Formal protest by Queen Liliuokalani to the treaty giving control of Hawaii to the United States, 1897

I, Liliuokalani of Hawaii, by the Will of God named heir-apparent on the tenth day of April, A.D. 1877, and by the grace of God Queen of the Hawaiian Islands on the seventeenth day of January, A.D. 1893, do hereby protest against the ratification of a certain treaty, which, so I am informed, has been signed at Washington by Messrs, Hatch, Thurston, and Kinney, purporting to cede those Islands to the territory and dominion of the United States. I declare such a treaty to be an act of -wrong toward the native and part-native people of Hawaii, an invasion of the rights of the ruling chiefs, in violation of international rights both toward my people and toward friendly nations with whom they have made treaties, the perpetuation of the fraud whereby the constitutional government was overthrown, and, finally, an act of gross injustice to me.

BECAUSE the official protests made by me on the seventeenth day of January, 1893, to the so-called Provisional Government was signed by me, and received by said government with the assurance that the case was referred to the United States of America for arbitration. BECAUSE that protest and my communications to the United States Government immediately thereafter expressly declare that I yielded my authority to the forces of the United States in order to avoid bloodshed, and because I recognized the futility of a conflict with so formidable a power.

BECAUSE the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and an envoy commissioned by them reported in official documents that my government was unlawfully coerced by the forces, diplomatic and naval, of the United States; that I was at the date of their investigations the constitutional ruler of my people. BECAUSE neither the above-named commission nor the government which sends it has ever received any such authority from the registered voters of Hawaii, but derives its assumed powers from the so-called committee of public safety, organized on or about the seventeenth-day of January, 1893, said committee being composed largely of persons claiming American citizenship, and not one single Hawaiian was a member thereof, or in any way participated in the demonstration leading to its existence.

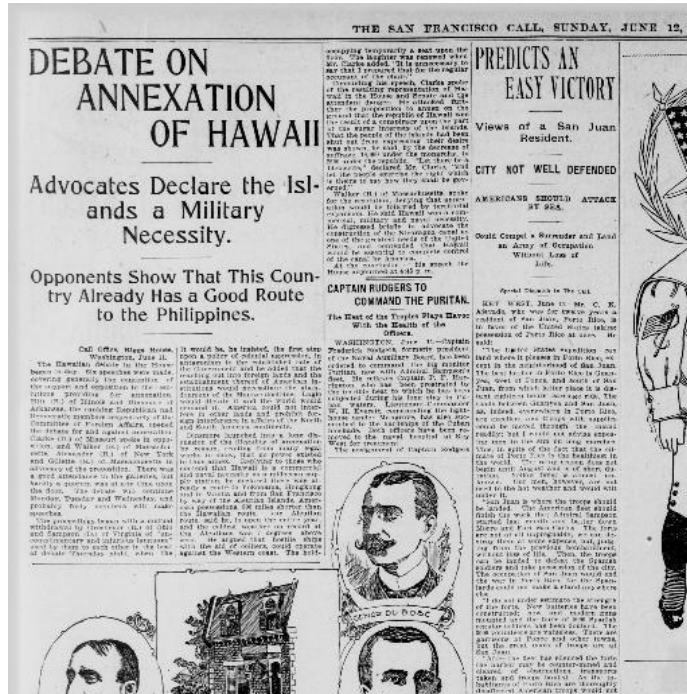
BECAUSE my people, about forty thousand in number, have in no way been consulted by those, three thousand in number, who claim the right to destroy the independence of Hawaii. My people constitute four-fifths of the legally qualified voters of Hawaii, and excluding those imported for the demands of labor, about the same proportion of the inhabitants. . . .

Therefore *I, Liliuokalani of Hawaii*, do hereby call upon the President of that nation, to whom alone I yielded my property and my authority, to withdraw said treaty (ceding said Islands) from further consideration. I ask the honorable Senate of the United States to decline to ratify said treaty, and I implore the people of this great and good nation, from whom my ancestors learned the Christian religion, to sustain their representatives in such acts of justice and equity as may be in accord with the principles of their fathers, and to the Almighty Ruler of the universe, to him who judgeth righteously, I commit my cause.

Done at Washington, District of Columbia, United States of America, this seventeenth day of June, in the year eighteen hundred and ninety-seven.

National Almanac and Year Book. Chicago, IL: The Chicago Daily News Co., 1885. Web.

9. News article on the debate in the House of Representatives on annexation of Hawaii, 1898



University of California. *The San Francisco Call*. 1898. *Chronicle America*, Library of Congress. Web.

DEBATE ON ANNEXATION OF HAWAII

Advocates Declare the Islands a Military Necessity.
Opponents Show That This Country Already Has a Good Route to the Philippines.
Washington, June 11, 1898.

Referring to the strategic importance of the Islands, [Representative Robert Hitt from Illinois] said they constituted a small territory, but nevertheless nineteen great powers kept constantly there their representatives to protect their interests because of their peculiar location. Hitt quoted many naval authorities in asserting that the possession of the islands was of great importance, and pointed out that no fleet could come from Asiatic waters to operate against the western coast without touching at Hawaii for supplies and recoaling. The control of the islands would be practically an effectual barrier to attack upon our Western interests. As illustrating the value of the islands, Hitt spoke of the recent victory of Admiral Dewey and the necessity of sending re-enforcements to him. This work of re-enforcement could not be accomplished without the American ships putting into Hawaii to recoal. . . .

Dinsmore, the ranking Democrat upon the Committee on Foreign Affairs, opened the debate in opposition. He opposed annexation as being; undesirable. | It would be, he insisted, the first step upon a policy of colonial aggression, in antagonism to the established rule of the Government and he added that the reaching out into foreign lands and the establishment thereof of American institutions would necessitate the abandonment of the Monroe doctrine. Logic would dictate it and the world would demand it. America could not interfere in other lands and prohibit foreign interference in affairs of the North and South America continents.

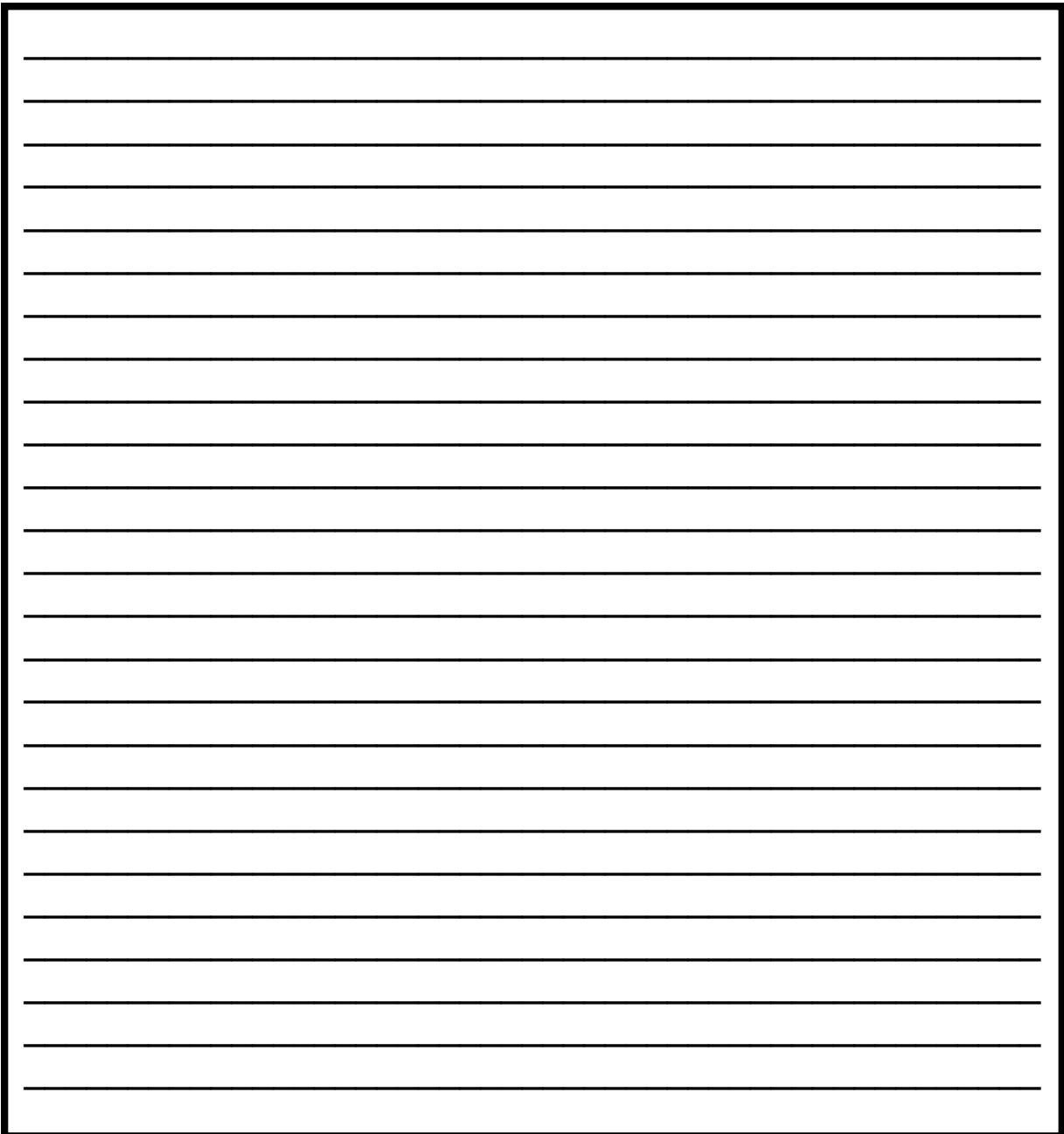
Dinsmore launched into a long discussion of the illegality of annexation by reason, reading from many legal works to show, that no power existed to thus annex. Replying to those who contend that Hawaii is a commercial and naval necessity as a midocean supply station, he declared there was already a route to Yokohama, Hong Kong and to Manila and from San Francisco by way of the Aleutian Islands, American possessions, 800 miles shorter than the Hawaiian route. The Aleutian route, said he, is open the entire year, and the coldest weather on record at the Aleutians was 7 degrees above zero. He argued that hostile ships with the aid of colliers could operate against the Western coast. The holding of Hawaii would necessitate the keeping of a powerful naval force there and would not relieve in any sense the necessity for keeping a great force at the seaports of the Western coast. Speaking of the suggestion that Hawaii would be essential to the control of the Nicaragua canal, Dinsmore said San Francisco was 1000 miles nearer the proposed mouth of the canal than Hawaii.

Dinsmore argued that annexation would mean foreign entanglements and in this connection he protested against the suggested Anglo-American alliance as being something much to be desired by England, but to be avoided by the United States. Protesting finally against taking the islands, he said: "If we take them, God help us."

University of California. *The San Francisco Call*. 1898. *Chronicling America*, Library of Congress. Web.

II. Write Your Argumentative Speech and Prepare Your Debate

1. Once you have completed your research, you can begin to write your speech. Using what you have learned from your research, write an argumentative speech in support of or in opposition to imperialism during this period. As you write, be sure your speech clearly establishes your position on U.S. imperialism and how your position supports American ideals and traditions. Use evidence from the sources to support your argument.



- Now that you have written your speech, it is time to debate your position with your classmates. You will “defend” your position and argue against those presented by students representing the opposing side. Use the following outline to plan your argument.

Opening Statement (Start with the most compelling argument or an overview of all arguments.)	
Topic Question 1	What is my position, and why is it most consistent with American ideals and traditions?
Response to Question 1	
Evidence	
Rebuttal to Anticipated Counterargument (How will the opposition respond to your position? How will you refute their argument?)	
Evidence	

Topic Question 2	Why is the opposition's position less consistent with American ideals and traditions?
Response to Question 2	
Evidence	
Rebuttal to Anticipated Counterargument (How will the opposition respond to your position? How will you refute their argument?)	
Evidence	
Closing Argument (Summarize and provide synthesis.)	

3. Prepare note cards with your key points from the graphic organizer above. You will use the note cards for reference during your debate. You may want to use the following format for your note cards:

Political Issue:

Source Information (Title, Author, if applicable):

Important Information from the Source that Addresses the Issue:

III. Present Your Debate

1. Form a group of four students. Groups should be evenly divided so each group contains two supporters and two opponents of American imperialism. You will follow these steps:
 - Present your opening statements to one another. Each pair should be given two minutes to present their opening statement.
 - Pause to reflect on what you heard and why it was a compelling argument. Consider whether the opposing parties' statements helped you change or rethink your position.
 - Present your responses and rebuttals to the first topic question to one another. Students should be given an equal amount of time to present their responses and rebuttals.
 - Pause to reflect on what you heard and why it was a compelling argument. Consider whether the opposing parties' responses helped you change or rethink your position.
 - Repeat this procedure for the remaining topic question and closing argument.
2. After you complete your debate, write a paragraph explaining your experience.
 - What surprised you about the opponents' positions on American imperialism?
 - What did this mock debate reveal to you about the issues related to imperialism during this period?
 - Based on this debate, why do you think government officials proceeded as they did in taking actions to support imperialism?