US Imperialism

9-12 Grades AP World History/World History Periods 5 and 6

This activity is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

Two to three class periods of 45-60 minutes

Description of activity: Students analyze documents and answer guiding questions to review US foreign policy, justifications for it, and reactions against it.

Focus Question: In what ways was the US part of the imperialism of the late 1800s? What made this acceptable or desirable? How did the US justify its actions? For what reasons was the US criticized for its actions? How should these actions by the US be understood today?

Context: This activity is meant to solidify and expand students' understanding of US international policy of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Objectives: Students will identify and describe US military and diplomatic actions, the reasons and justifications for them, and the geopolitical consequences for the US.

Assessment: Document analysis as formative assessment, class discussion, and summative task.

Virginia SOLs
STANDARD WHII.1a, b, c, e, f
The student will improve skills in historical research and geographical analysis by
a) identifying, analyzing, and interpreting primary and secondary sources to make generalizations about events and life in world history since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
b) using maps, globes, artifacts, and pictures to analyze the physical and cultural landscapes of the world and to interpret the past since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
c) identifying geographic features important to the study of world history since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
d) analyzing trends in human migration and cultural interaction from 1500 A.D. (C.E.) to the present;
e) analyzing the impact of economic forces, including taxation, government spending, trade, resources, and monetary systems, on events from 1500 A.D. (C.E.).

STANDARD WHII.9d, e
The student will demonstrate knowledge of the effects of the Industrial Revolution during the nineteenth century by
d) explaining the rise of industrial economies and their link to imperialism and nationalism;
e) assessing the impact of European economic and military power on Asia and Africa, with emphasis on the competition for resources and the responses of colonized peoples.
AP World History
Key Concepts 5.1.II; 5.1.V; 5.2.II; 5.2.III; 5.3.III.D
Historical Thinking Skills Contextualization, Author’s purpose,

Activity Details
Primary Sources: see below
Procedure: Students analyze the documents and answer the accompanying questions. using outside sources if needed. Have a class discussion in which small groups lead the class in a debrief of their assigned document.
As a summative assessment, each student should response to the short answer question.
To what extent was the US an imperialistic nation in the late 1800s and early 1900s?
What were its motives? How did it justify its actions?
Compare the actions of the US with those of other Western powers of the time.

What you will need before implementing: Ideally all students will have their own devices and internet access. If that is not possible, you will need color copies of every document and description information on the back as well as paper copies of the activity.
Improving Historical Thinking Skills through Source-Based Instruction
Paige K Solomon, Norfolk Collegiate

Celebrating July 4th, 1898 - "the triumph of the American battle-ship"
Udo Keppler.
Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1898 July 6.
https://www.loc.gov/item/2012647579/

Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
What was the artist’s motive or purpose?

For once, science and religion agree
Udo Keppler.
Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1898 September 7.
https://www.loc.gov/item/2012647468/

Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
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What was the artist’s motive or purpose?

Another shotgun wedding, with neither party willing
Charles Jay Taylor
Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1897 December 1.
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.28757/

Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
What was the artist’s motive or purpose?

Columbia’s Easter bonnet
Samuel D. Erhart after a sketch by Louis Dalrymple
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010651396/
Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
What was the artist’s motive or purpose?

*School begins*
Louis Dalrymple
Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1899 January 25.
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012647459/

Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
What is the artist’s motive or purpose.

*If they’ll only be good*
Samuel D.Ehrhart
https://www.loc.gov/item/2010651302/

Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
What was the artist’s motive or purpose?
An unforeseen emergency
https://www.loc.gov/item/2012647596/

Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
What was the artist’s motive or purpose?
What details did the artist include in an attempt to diminish China culturally and politically?
The duty of great nations
Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1899 February 15.
https://www.loc.gov/item/2012647397/

Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
What was the artist’s motive or purpose?
Explain how it was a product of the time and dominant thinking about the role of the US in the world.
His 128th birthday—“Gee, but this is an awful stretch!”
Udo Keppler
Illus. in: Puck, v.55, 1904 June 29, cover.
https://www.loc.gov/item/98511150/

Explain the event to which this referred.
Explain the message and symbolism of this cartoon.
What was the artist’s motive or purpose?

**Short Answer Question**
A. To what extent was the US an imperialistic nation in the late 1800s and early 1900s?
B. What were its motives? How did it justify its actions?
C. Compare the actions of the US with those of other Western powers of the time.

**Summative Task:**
Develop an argument as to whether or not imperialism is justifiable. Evaluate the actions of the United States. How do they compare to the actions of other imperialistic nations of the period?