

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title -Analyzing the De Lome Letter

Grade - 11

Length of class period - 53 minutes

Inquiry - What influence did The De Lome Letter have on US involvement in the Spanish-American War?

Objectives-

Students will:

Identify the steps taken by the US government to obtain the De Lome Letter.

Defend or refute arguments McKinley used to urge congress to war against Spain.

Recognize how the power of words can drive even the most powerful leader on earth to violence.

Materials-

Teacher Only- *Copy of Summary of the De Lome letter (may be used for students as well)*

The De Lome Letter (1898) *Attached is a printer friendly copy of a transcript of the De Lome Letter. The original is hand written in Spanish.*

De Lome Letter Question and Note Sheet

McKinley's War Message to Congress April 11, 1898 *Attached is a copy of the McKinley's message to congress urging the nation to war because of Spanish actions in Cuba. This is partially a result of The De Lome Letter.*

Activities-

(5 minutes) Activator- Post this question for students to answer in their notebooks as they walk into class: If a friend of yours gave you a note he found in the lunch room from another student badmouthing you, how would you react? Why?

Discuss this concept taking a few responses from the students. Students will most likely mention that this would irritate, anger or hurt them in some way. Their plan to react to finding such a letter may include a potentially negative response to the student that wrote the letter.

(5 minutes) Introduce the De Lome Letter (It will be beneficial, but not necessary, to have previously taught the students about the role of Yellow Journalism and the destruction of the USS Maine) Tell the students that this letter you are going to hand out served as 'fighting words for president.

(15 minutes)Have the students read silently and then discuss possible answers to the following questions with a partner: Who is the letter from? Who is it to? What part or parts of this letter might be taken as fighting words by the president and why? How do you think the President got word of this letter?

Prepare a chart on the board separated by each question on the board while they are reading and answering questions.

(5 minutes) After reading and answering questions, take responses from the students filling in different possible scenarios on the board. After seeing different possibilities presented by the students, see if you find a new general consensus about what theories are most accurate.

(5 minutes) Tell the students the real story, keying on the student responses that were close or accurate to give them credit for their theories. Students should note the correct information on their handout. (You may give the students the teacher handout if you feel they need it.)

Now that they understand and recognize the letter as insulting to the president, ask the students how McKinley should respond. Students will most likely predict war is coming.

Handout McKinley's address to congress and inform the students that this is the president's attempt to gain support for war against Spain.

(15 minutes) Ask the students to volunteer to read the 4 main justifications the President used to promote a US declaration of War. After each justification ask a different student to restate in his or her own words. Students should either rewrite the main ideas in their own words or high light the key points in each section.

(3 minutes) Closure- Ask, "so what role did the De Lome Letter play in the Spanish-American War and do you agree with the Presidents response?" Take a couple responses from students and add your own input or perspective.

Assessment will come through checks of understand initially. Check for student comprehension through discussion and monitoring ongoing assignment during class. General information on the De Lome Letter and the Spanish American War may be used by the students on most assessments addressing America's role as a growing imperial power.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards -

- 3. Trace the changing role of US participation and influence in world affairs.*
- 5. Assess the influence of geography on the development of the United States.*