

Document-Based Questions: An Example for the War of 1898

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[Editor's Note: DBQs (Document-Based Questions) are used by the College Board's Advanced Placement Test as a tool to evaluate a student's ability to understand and analyze primary source documents to answer historical questions. The following DBQ lesson was designed by a high school history class from Gill St. Bernard's School in Gladstone, New Jersey. We have included a typical student response to better illustrate the goals of this approach.]

This assignment will have you working in two groups. Each group will be responsible for assembling a DBQ that addresses a specific question concerning the United States' growing involvement in world affairs during the period 1865-1914.

Assembling a DBQ involves a thoughtful analysis of a thesis question. Source documents that allow writers to take differing historical positions must be uncovered. Though all documents should be primary sources, a mixture of written works, political cartoons, maps and data is generally favored.

To help assure that both DBQs are well constructed, each group should follow these guidelines:

- 1) use about seven to ten documents;
- 2) keep your documents relatively brief by editing long sources;
- 3) each document should be labeled *Document A*, *Document B*, etc.;

- 4) each document should have a specific source and/or author;
- 5) each DBQ should also include a bibliographical page which cites the sources of the documents;
- 6) each DBQ should use the Internet to find at least one usable source;
- 7) library time will be given...use it wisely.

DBQ #1

To what extent was late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century United States expansion a continuation of past United States expansionism and to what extent was it a departure?

Use the documents and your knowledge of United States history to 1914 to construct your answer.

DBQ #2

Assess the validity of this statement:

The debate over the Treaty of Paris (1899) in the United States following the conclusion of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War reflects the divisive attitudes towards expansionism existent at that time.

To conclude this assignment, each member of a group will answer the DBQ of the other group. Grades for these written essays will be assigned jointly by teachers and "DBQ producers."

Student Response: Divisive Attitudes Towards Expansionism and the Treaty of Paris

Megan Manner

In the late nineteenth century, as the U.S. began seeking new markets for their ever-growing economy, the liberty and rights of many weaker foreign nations were put at stake. The U.S. began taking colonies in many parts of the world, forming a great empire which catered to American economic needs. As the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War began, and the U.S. sought more colonies, Americans took sides. Economic, political and social debates rose over whether or not this imperialism was right. The nation was split as this became a national issue, which the documents show being sourced from various places like New York, Detroit, and Denver. Organized groups such as the American Anti-Imperialist League formed as people voiced their opinions. The debate over the Treaty of Paris in the United States following the war, which gave the U.S. control of Spanish territories, reflects the divisive attitude towards expansionism at that time.

As mass production took hold of the U.S. economy and supply began exceeding demand, the U.S. looked towards other countries as potential markets. America began making territories out of weaker nations by gaining political and economic control over the natives. These new colonies allowed a source of cheap raw materials, cheap labor, and gateways to trade. As these colonies were industri-

We have the right as conquerors to hold the Philippines. We have the right to hold them as part payment of a war indemnity. This policy may be characterized as unjust to Spain, but is the result of the fortunes of war. All nations recognize that the conqueror may dictate the terms of peace....

I am in favor of holding the Philippines because I cannot conceive of any alternative to our doing so, *except the seizure of territory in China*; and I prefer to hold them rather than to oppress further the helpless government and people of China. I want China to preserve her autonomy, to become great and prosperous; and *I want these results, not for the interests of China but for our interests. I am not the agent or attorney of China; and, as an American, I do not look to the promotion of China's interests, or Spain's, or any other country's, but simply of our own.*

Document A. @Imperialism and the Threat to Liberty,@ by Morrison I. Swift, 1899. (William Benton, *The Annals of America*, volume 12. [Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968], 237.)



Document AA. @The White Man@s Burden.@ (*The Detroit Journal*, 18 February 1899. Available at <http://home.ican.net/fjzwick/kipling/detroit.html>.)

alized and mechanized to help benefit U.S. economy, the natives were exploited to work long, hard hours for virtually no pay, stripped of their independence and culture, and forced to become Americanized, the debate grew over whether or not this exploitation was right. Imperialists argued for the expansion of the U.S. These colonies opened the door to China and other profitable Asian markets. As Document A shows, the U.S. only cared about its economy. “I want China to preserve her autonomy, to become great and prosperous; and I want these results, not for the interests of China but for our interests... I do not look to the promotion of China’s interests... or any other country’s, but simply of our own.” They relied on the argument that if the U.S. did not find new markets for their

Take up the White Man's burden~
 Send forth the best ye breed~
 Go, bind your sons to exile
 To serve your captives' need;
 To wait, in heavy harness,
 On fluttered folk and wild~
 Your new-caught sullen peoples,
 Half devil and half child.

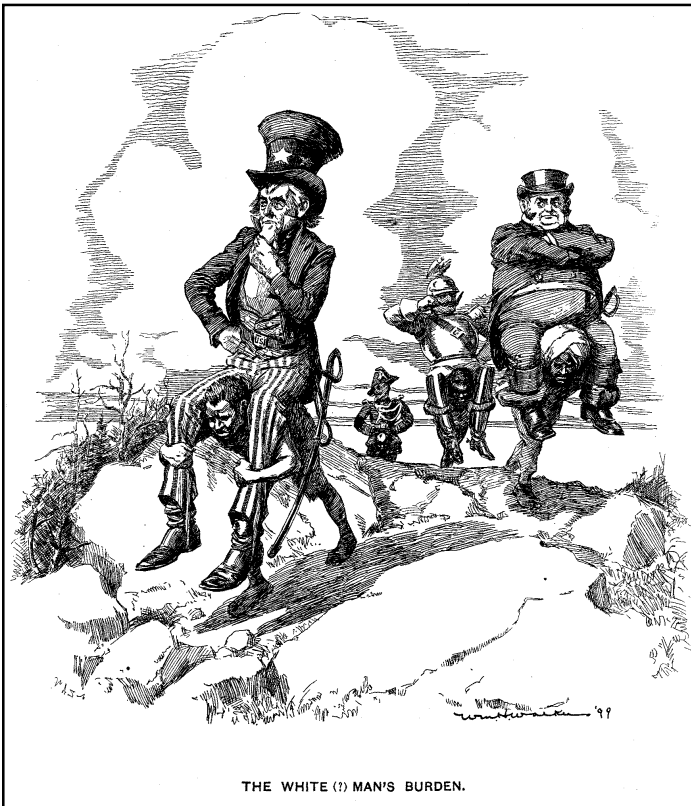
Take up the White Man's burden~
 In patience to abide,
 To veil the threat of terror,
 And check the show of pride;
 By open speech and simple,
 An hundred times made plain,
 To seek another's profit
 And work another's gain.

Document B. @The White Man@s Burden,@ by Rudyard Kipling. (*McClure@s Magazine*, 12 February 1899.)

Take up the White Man's burden;
 Send forth your sturdy sons,
 And load them down with whisky
 And Testaments and guns.
 Throw in a few diseases
 To spread in tropic climes,
 For there the healthy niggers
 Are quite behind the times.

And don't forget the factories.
 On those benighted shores
 They have no cheerful iron-mills
 Nor eke department stores.
 They never work twelve hours a day,
 And live in strange content,
 Altho they never have to pay
 A single cent of rent.

Document C. @The Real @White Man@s Burden,@@ by Ernest Crosby. (*The New York Times*, 15 Feb 1899.)



THE WHITE (?) MAN'S BURDEN.

Document D. @The White (?) Man@s Burden.@ (*Life Magazine*, 16 March 1899.)

products, American industry would collapse, and China, with its population exceeding one billion, was just the market the U.S. needed. The U.S. interest in foreign markets also brought out a fear in nativists in the U.S. These Anti-Imperialists argued that the exploitation of the weak abroad would lead to the exploitation of the weak at home. As Document D shows the U.S. and other countries being carried on the backs of colonists, there was a deep fear that this could be used against American workers. Cheap foreign labor could drive down American wages and workers could be imported as strikebreakers. All the U.S.'s hard work at labor reforms could be shot down by foreign exploitation. America already had enough problems, such as labor wars and race relations, and didn't need to take on another country's issues. With these fears in mind, the Anti-Imperialists argued for the well-being of the American working class whose daily lives were put in jeopardy by this expansion.

Political arguments fostered the debate as well. Imperialists argued that these colonies were strategically necessary to the U.S. They acted as stepping stones to Asia and allowed for key refueling points for American ships (Doc. F). They also provided the U.S. with important military points to protect our markets against competitors. Politically, they argued, the U.S. was doing what needed to be done for it to stay on top economically. Leading competitors such as England, Germany, and France were eager for such territories and already were creating empires of their own in India, China, and other weaker nations (Doc. D). If America were to give up the Philippines, others would quickly jump on them. "Shall we turn these people back

to the reeking hands from which we have taken them? Shall we abandon them with Germany, England, Japan hungering for them?" (Doc. G). Yet Anti-Imperialists were against these political reasons as well. They argued that America could acquire foreign markets without having to subjugate foreign people. They argued that this exploitation was unnecessary and that these countries deserved their Independence. America, who prided itself on Democracy, they argued, was denying democracy to the world. "And now what have we to say?... Must we engrave on that column: 'We repealed the Declaration of Independence. We changed the Monroe Doctrine from a doctrine of eternal righteousness and justice, resting on the consent of the governed, to a doctrine of brutal selfishness, looking only to our own advantage'" (Doc. H). Not only could this undermine foreign democracy but a fear rose that this could undermine America's own democracy as the president didn't need Congressional approval to send troops overseas, thus undermining the system of checks and balances. Anti-Imperialists demanded this war against liberty be stopped as it was not necessary and did more harm than good.

Social issues were brought to attention as the territories were being forced through a modernization of industry and culture. As the debate over Americanization of natives began, Imperialists argued much along the same line they did with the slavery issue. They took a paternalistic view, saying it was their duty as the supreme race to uplift and guide lesser life forms. As Document AA shows, white men were working hard to civilize the "savages" and to educate and uplift them. They argued that it was the white man's burden to emancipate

We demand the immediate cessation of the war against liberty, begun by Spain and continued by us. We urge that Congress be promptly convened to announce to the Filipinos our purpose to concede to them the independence for which they have so long fought and which of right is theirs.

Document E. @Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League, @ 18 October 1899. (Jim Zwick, ed., @Anti-Imperialism in the U.S., 1898-1935. @ <http://www.accinet.net/fjzwick/ail98-35.html>.)

the "half devil and half child" (Doc. B) from ignorance and help these people live productive lives. "Take up the White Man's burden/ Send forth the best ye breed/ Go, bind your sons to exile! To serve your captives' need" (Doc. B). Many argued it was their duty to spread Christianity and save the souls of the wildmen. Yet Anti-Imperialists refuted these arguments saying this paternalistic view was just a cover for the economic drive behind taking territories. "Take up the White Man's burden/ Send forth your sturdy sons,/ And load them down with whiskey/ And Testaments and guns/ ...And don't forget the

factories./On those benighted shores/ They have no cheerful iron-mills/Nor eke department stores/ They never work twelve hours a day,/ And live in strange content,/ Altho they never have to pay/ A single cent of rent" (Doc. C). Humanists argued Imperialization too as Americans reeked havoc on native culture, spreading diseases, forcing on them American ideas, and killing many insurgents. "And now what have we to say? ...We crushed the only republic in Asia... We vulgarized the flag. We introduced perfidy into the practice of war. We inflicted torture on unarmed men to extort confession. We put children to death. We devastated provinces. We baffled the aspirations of a people for liberty" (Doc H). With such breaches of human rights and such evident exploitation to back them up, Anti-



Document F. (*Rocky Mountain News*, 1898.)

And, regardless of this formula of words made only for enlightened, self-governing people, do we owe no duty to the world? Shall we turn these peoples back to the reeking hands from which we have taken them? Shall we abandon them, with Germany, England, Japan, hungering for them? Shall we save them from those nations, to give them a self-rule of tragedy?

Document G. @The March of the Flag,@ by Albert Beveridge, 1898. (Daniel Boorstin, ed., *An American Primer* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966], 644.)

Imperialists argued for liberty and independence from imperialistic nations.

As the war ended and the Treaty of Paris was put to vote, Imperialistic views and the promise of wealth clouded people's eyes with greed. Despite horrible exploitation and injustice being done in the territories, Americans passed the Treaty of Paris fifty-seven to twenty-seven, giving the U.S. claim to the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The U.S., now with politically, economically, and militarily important strategic posts all over the world, could dominate all foreign markets and take its place as the number one nation going into the twentieth century. □

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And now what have we to say? What have we to say? Are we to have a place in that honorable company? Must we engrave on that column: "We repealed the Declaration of Independence. We changed the Monroe Doctrine from a doctrine of eternal righteousness and justice, resting on the consent of the governed [*sic*], to a doctrine of brutal selfishness, looking only to our own advantage. We crushed the only republic in Asia. We made war on the only Christian people in the East. We converted a war of glory to a war of shame. We vulgarized [*sic*] the American flag. We introduced perfidy into the practice of war. We inflicted torture on unarmed [men] to extort confession. We put children to death. We devastated provinces. We baffled the aspirations of a people for liberty."

Document H. @Against Imperialism,@ by George Frisbie Hoar, May 1902.