



Prompt # 1 (Sarah Thompson, Alex
Rees)

In the late 1800s, the United States embarked on a new wave of expansionism during which it acquired overseas territories. Explain the reasons for this new wave of expansionism.

- ◆ America's switch from isolationist to imperialistic policies during the late 19th century can be attributed to the closing of the frontier, competition from European nations, and American idealism concerning democracy and race.

The closing of the Frontier

- ◆ The 1890 census showed that the frontier line, the point beyond which the population density was less than two people per square mile, no longer existed
- ◆ Before this point, Americans generally held Thomas Jefferson's view of the country as one of gentlemen farmers and frowned upon expansionism outside of the contiguous U.S., calling the purchase of Alaska in 1867 "Seward's Folly"
- ◆ After the closing of the Frontier, Americans saw a need for new, widespread markets outside of the contiguous U.S. and therefore looked to areas like Hawaii

Competition on the World Stage

- ◆ Following the Spanish-American War came the "American Century," during which the U.S. truly began to contend with other world powers of the time
- ◆ Most successful European nations possessed foreign colonies at the time, and many Americans felt that the U.S. ought to follow suit
- ◆ James G. Blaine, Secretary of State during America's pivot towards Imperialism, played a huge role in securing the country's Pacific colonies and dominance of the Caribbean
- ◆ There took place in the 1890s a European naval arms race which included the U.S. The dominant nation would require foreign ports and a strong navy, so America's involvement in the race was led by Alfred T. Mahan, an expansionist, strategist, and historian who believed that a successful navy was key to worldwide impact

The "White Man's Burden"

- ◆ Many Americans, like Josiah Strong, who helped lead the social gospel movement, felt that it was the duty of the U.S. to use its influence to bring christianity to all races and places
- ◆ The ideals of the European poet Rudyard Kipling painted Imperialism as a noble enterprise, leading to Eurocentric racism and the domination of Western aspirations in developing countries
- ◆ The perpetuation of the idea of the "White Man's Burden" (Kipling) led Americans to believe that they were doing good by their "little brown brothers" as they expanded into the Philippines and Cuba
- ◆ Roosevelt's statement that Americans were "the policemen of the world" reflected the strong American sentiment that it was needed to intervene in unjust and undemocratic situations around the globe