

# America Becomes a World Power

*The Emergence of Modern  
America (1890–1930)*



Expansionist policies

Territorial acquisitions

**Intervention**

## Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

**Icons:** For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about the changing attitude of the U.S. towards other nations and diplomacy, including policies on:

- The Panama Canal
- Revolution in Mexico
- The Russo-Japanese War
- International relations.



Although the U.S. has coasts on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the distance to travel between them by sea is huge. Ships had to navigate around the bottom of South America.

A canal cutting through Central America was deemed to be of importance to the U.S. so President Theodore Roosevelt set about trying to construct one.

Panama, then part of Columbia, was deemed a suitable location and is where the canal was built.



Why was creating a canal to connect the Atlantic and the Pacific considered so important?



# The Panama Canal



In 1901, Roosevelt sought to lease land from Columbia for a canal. Colombia rejected the terms, which were to relinquish all claims to the land.

Roosevelt then encouraged Panamanians to revolt for independence, paying some of them off, and informing them that the U.S. would support them in this bid.

In return, Panama signed the treaty, granting the U.S. control of the canal zone. Construction took from 1904 to 1914.





The **Mexican Revolution** was an ongoing series of internal rebellions and battles between 1910 and 1920. At different stages of the conflict the U.S. intervened. Watch the animation to find out more about it.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**



How might Mexicans feel towards the U.S. after this?



China was another target for U.S. commercial interests. As a large country with a potentially large market for foreign goods, China was interesting to many expansionist nations. Germany, Britain, Japan and Russia had all invested time and resources in trading with China.

In 1899, John Hay, the U.S. Secretary of State, asked the major powers for an **Open Door policy**, ensuring that no country trading in China would restrict the trade of any other country.



This policy was agreed and worked well because the U.S. had little claim to China otherwise.



The U.S. did not just pursue a course of expansion during this period. In coming out of isolation, it also involved itself in other matters, such as the Russo-Japanese War. Watch the animation to find out more about the U.S.'s role in this conflict.

Press **start** to begin.

start



The U.S. worried about the impact on China. Why?





Different presidents in this period had different approaches to international relations:

- **big stick diplomacy:** Theodore Roosevelt believed in the U.S.' supremacy. He used military force to intervene in international conflicts and to protect U.S. interests.
- **dollar diplomacy:** William Taft allowed U.S. business interests to fuel diplomatic affairs. Successful business ventures in other countries carried American values and culture with them.
- **moral diplomacy:** Woodrow Wilson refused to interact with regimes he deemed immoral and would only have diplomatic relations with other democracies.

Can you see how current U.S. foreign policy has its roots in these various policies?



As the U.S. became more heavily involved in world affairs, it practiced different foreign policy strategies in order to achieve its aims. Can you match each of these presidents to the form of diplomacy they practiced?

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





# Territorial acquisitions



At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the U.S. took possession of several new territories.

Can you remember where each of these territories are? Drag the labels to the correct places.

Press **start** to begin.

start



When did the U.S. acquire each of these territories?



In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. became a key player on the world stage.



The U.S. changed from a policy of isolation to one of expansion. It acquired new territories for economic, moral and imperial reasons. It also intervened in the affairs of other nations. This is significant in showing America's rising power and influence.

Of the different approaches to U.S. expansion and involvement, which do you identify with most? Why?



Test your understanding of America's rise to world power status by recapping key terms and important people using this glossary. Press on the tabs and then each term to see a definition.  
Press **start** to begin.

**start**

