

THE UNITED STATES BECOMES A WORLD POWER - THE ANNEXATION OF HAWAII

Directions: *Please read the following and answer the questions that follow.*

Period: 1890 - 1920

After a century of American rule, many native Hawaiians remain bitter about how the United States acquired the islands, located 2,500 miles from the West Coast.

In 1893, a small group of sugar and pineapple-growing businessmen, aided by the American minister to Hawaii and backed by heavily armed U.S. soldiers and marines, deposed Hawaii's queen. Subsequently, they imprisoned the queen and seized 1.75 million acres of crown land and conspired to annex the islands to the United States.

On January 17, 1893, the conspirators announced the overthrow of the queen's government. To avoid bloodshed, Queen Liliukalani, yielded her sovereignty [power], and called upon the U.S. government "to undo the actions of its representatives." The U.S. government refused to help her regain her throne. When she died in 1917, Hawaii was an American territory. In 1959, Hawaii became the 50th state after a 90 percent of the islanders supported statehood.

The businessmen who conspired to overthrow the queen claimed that they were overthrowing a corrupt, immoral regime in order of advance democratic principles. They also argued that a western power was likely to acquire the islands. Hawaii had the finest harbor in the mid-Pacific and was viewed as a strategically valuable coaling station and naval base. In 1851, King Kamehameha III had secretly asked the United States to annex Hawaii, but Secretary of State Daniel Webster declined, saying "No power ought to take possession of the islands as a conquest...or colonization." But later monarchs wanted to maintain Hawaii's independence. The native population proved to be vulnerable to western diseases, including cholera, smallpox, and leprosy. By 1891, native Hawaiians were an ethnic minority on the islands.

After the bloodless 1893 revolution, the American businessmen lobbied President Benjamin Harrison and Congress to annex the Hawaiian islands. In his last month in office, Harrison sent an annexation treaty to the Senate for confirmation, but the new president, Grover Cleveland withdrew the treaty "for the purpose of re-examination." He also received Queen Liliuokalani and replaced the American stars and stripes in Honolulu with the Hawaiian flag.

Cleveland also ordered a study of the Hawaiian revolution, which concluded that the American minister to Hawaii had conspired with the businessmen to overthrow the queen and that the coup would have failed "but for the landing of the United States forces upon false pretexts respecting the dangers to life and property." Looking back on the Hawaii takeover, President Cleveland later wrote that "the provisional government owes its existence to an armed invasion by the United States. By an act of war...a substantial wrong has been done."

President Cleveland's recommendation that the monarchy be restored was rejected by Congress. The House of Representatives voted to censure the U.S. minister to Hawaii and adopted a resolution opposing annexation. But Congress did not act to restore the monarchy and in 1894, Sanford Dole, who was beginning his pineapple business, declared himself president of the Republic of Hawaii without a popular

vote. The new government found the queen guilty of treason and sentenced her to five years of hard labor and a \$5,000 fine. While the sentence of hard labor was not carried out, the queen was placed under house arrest.

The Republican party platform in the presidential election of 1896 called for the annexation of Hawaii. Petitions for a popular vote in Hawaii were ignored. Fearing that he lacked two-thirds support for annexation in the Senate, the new Republican president William McKinley called for a joint resolution of Congress (the same way that the United States had acquired Texas). With the country aroused by the Spanish American War and political leaders fearful that the islands might be annexed by Japan, the joint resolution easily passed Congress. Hawaii officially became a U.S. territory in 1900.

When Capt. James Cooke, the British explorer, arrived in Hawaii in 1778, there were about 300,000 Hawaiians on the islands, but infectious diseases reduced the native population. Today, about 20 percent of Hawaii's people are of native Hawaiian ancestry, and only about 10,000 are of pure Hawaiian descent. Native Hawaiians were poorer, less healthy, and less educated than members of other major ethnic groups on the islands.

Sugar growers, who dominated the islands' economy, imported thousands of immigrant laborers first from China, then Japan, then Portuguese from Madeira and the Azores, followed by Puerto Ricans, Koreans, and most recently Filipinos. As a result, Hawaii has one of the world's most multicultural populations.

In 1993, a joined Congressional resolution, signed by President Bill Clinton, apologized for the U.S. role in the overthrow. The House approved the resolution by voice vote. The Senate passed it 65 to 34.

Questions:

1. Who was responsible for overthrowing Queen Liliukalani?
2. Describe why Hawaii was seen as an important territory to the United States.
3. Explain how President Cleveland reacted to the efforts of American businessmen to annex Hawaii.
4. Evaluate the annexation of Hawaii from the following perspectives:
 - a) American businessmen –
 - b) Native Hawaiians -