Content Reading Guide: Before WW I: The USA and Imperialism

**Imperialism** is when a strong nation tries to control another region in the world. For instance, by the 1900s, European nations controlled the vast majority of Africa. This meant the European nations used the economies and resources of African regions to make themselves wealthy. After the Spanish American War, the USA also practiced imperialism by controlling the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Imperialism created massive tension around the world for a variety of reasons. The European nations that practiced imperialism developed competition with one another as each tried to gain control of various areas in the world. In addition to this, natives resented being controlled by foreign powers. Rebellions broke out as weaker regions tried to force the European imperial powers out of their areas.

European and American businesses wanted to gain wealth by pursuing business endeavors in China. US Secretary of State, **John Hay**, feared that the European nations would damage the USA’s involvement in China. Hay issued the **Open Door Notes** to try and maintain peace. This policy suggested that the USA and various European powers share China. This meant each nation could trade in China equally. The European nations accepted the request.

While John Hay achieved a peaceful policy between the European nations and the USA, this did not protect the imperial powers from local rebellions. A group of martial artists called the Boxers rose up and determined to remove foreign influence out of China. They targeted missionaries, Westerners, and all affiliated with foreign influence. France, Germany, Japan, Britain, and the USA united their forces to crush the **Boxer Rebellion**. In 1901, the Chinese government signed the **Boxer Protocol** officially ending the rebellion.

Whether or not the USA should practice imperialism was a heavily debated topic in 1900. That year, **William McKinley**, a Republican, openly endorsed imperialism. His opponent, **William Jennings Bryan**, a Democrat, openly asserted imperialism was wrong and should not be practiced. McKinley’s Presidential victory, in the **Election of 1900**, displayed that most Americans endorsed the practice of imperialism, regardless of its potential to cause tension in the world.