

Read the article "The Yellowed Pages of a Newspaper" before answering questions 1 through 7.

The Yellowed Pages of a Newspaper

Have you ever stood in line at the grocery store and rifled through the periodicals near the cash register? You might see some ordinary newspapers and maybe a few glossy fashion or home-decorating magazines. The headlines most likely to grab your attention, however, belong to the tabloids. These publications, which often contain stories about unidentified flying objects, alien babies, or celebrities who have returned from the dead, all have one thing in common: sensationalism. Tabloids tend to focus on stories of the bizarre, the unexplainable, or the extraordinary. While these stories may be intriguing and suspenseful, they are usually quickly dismissed by readers and are certainly not considered good, concrete journalism. The sensationalistic—and sometimes even fabricated—stories in these types of publications are often referred to as "yellow journalism." Believe it or not, yellow journalism actually began in the late nineteenth century with a competition between two of the leading daily newspapers in New York.

Though today his name is associated with the most prestigious award in American journalism, the Pulitzer Prize, Joseph Pulitzer was one of the men responsible for the creation of yellow

journalism. Pulitzer was the owner of one of New York's most successful dailies, the *New York World*. The paper's bold headlines and flamboyant approach to the news appealed to many readers, including women, immigrants, and the poor. The ideas and opinions of these groups were often overshadowed in the other, more conservative newspapers. The Sunday edition of the *New York World* even included a colorful comic strip called "Hogan's Alley," which featured a popular character whose bright yellow clothing earned him the name the "Yellow Kid."

The success of the *New York World* led other newspaper owners to imitate Pulitzer's daring new format. Among them was the owner of the *San Francisco Examiner*, William Randolph Hearst. As a student at Harvard, Hearst had worked on the university's newspaper. Upon leaving school, Hearst decided to make journalism his life's work. To prepare for his chosen career, he served as an apprentice to Pulitzer at the *World*. Within a year, he had acquired his own newspaper, the struggling *San Francisco Examiner*, from his father. However, using Pulitzer's format, Hearst managed to transform the troubled paper into the best-selling newspaper in San Francisco.

After achieving success in California, Hearst set his sights on a new challenge: owning the top daily newspaper in New York. In 1895, he purchased the *New York Journal*, another small publication fighting to survive in the competitive New York market. Under Hearst's leadership, the *Journal* quickly became the *New York World's* biggest competition. In an effort to boost circulation, Hearst once again applied the bold approach to the news he had learned from Pulitzer. The headlines grew bigger and bolder, and the stories became more sensational and suspenseful. Hearst lowered the price of the paper to just one penny, which even the poorest citizens of New York City could afford. In an even bolder move, Hearst enticed most of the staff of Pulitzer's *World*, including the creator of the "Hogan's Alley" comic strip, Richard Outcault, to leave their positions and work for the *Journal*.

Not to be outdone, Pulitzer replaced Outcault with a new artist to continue the "Hogan's Alley" comic strip. Conservative daily newspapers in New York witnessed the battle of the Yellow Kids and dubbed Hearst and Pulitzer's brand of reporting "yellow journalism." The term remains in use today to describe journalism that relies on glaring headlines and sensationalistic stories to sell subscriptions.

Perhaps the height of yellow journalism occurred during the Cuban Revolution, which eventually led to the Spanish-American War. Most newspapers try to approach the news objectively. They provide both sides of the story and let readers decide for themselves which side is right. However, Hearst's *Journal* clearly stated its support for the Cuban revolutionaries fighting for their freedom from Spain. The *Journal's*

stories about the injustices committed against Cuban citizens by the Spanish government supplied American readers with the scandalous material they had come to crave.

At the same time, the competition between Hearst and Pulitzer was growing fiercer, and neither man was willing to lose. In efforts to outdo each other, Hearst and Pulitzer did whatever they could to sell the most newspapers. They often lifted news right from the pages of their competitors. This practice would eventually contribute to the demise of Pulitzer's *New York World*. In 1898, Hearst caught Pulitzer in the act of stealing news from his newspaper. Hearst placed a fabricated story in the *Journal* about the death of Colonel Reflippe W. Thenuz, which was a crafty juggling of the phrase, "We pilfer the news." The next day, the details of Thenuz's death were recounted in the pages of Pulitzer's *New York World*. This gave Hearst the ammunition he needed to sink the *World's* reputation.

Of course, Pulitzer wasn't the only yellow journalist guilty of questionable practices. According to legend, Hearst sent an illustrator to Cuba to capture the struggles of the Cuban citizens as they fought against Spanish control. Upon arriving, the illustrator sent a cable to Hearst explaining that there was no war to cover. Supposedly, Hearst responded with his own cable: "You furnish the pictures. I'll furnish the war." Hearst denied that this transmission ever took place, but it has long been included in discussions of yellow journalism.

As the problems in Cuba escalated, the *New York Journal* and the *New York World* continued their sensationalistic coverage, the height of which came when the American ship *Maine* blew up in a

Cuban harbor. The military cautioned against jumping to conclusions, but both the *Journal* and the *World* placed the blame for the explosion on Spain. They called for President William McKinley to declare war. The military eventually determined that the *Maine's* explosion was in fact caused by outside forces, and the United States declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898.

Many people feel that without the pressure of the yellow press, the United

States would not have entered into the war with Spain. Some have gone so far as to call it the "Newspapers' War." While newspapers may have fueled public opinion of the war, they certainly were not solely responsible for the United States government's decision to declare war on Spain. Nonetheless, the Cuban Revolution, the Spanish-American War, and yellow journalism will forever share a historical link, as will Hearst and Pulitzer.

Answer questions 1 through 7. Base your answers on the article "The Yellowed Pages of a Newspaper."

- 1 Read this sentence from the article.

Conservative daily newspapers in New York witnessed the battle of the Yellow Kids and dubbed Hearst and Pulitzer's brand of reporting "yellow journalism."

What does the word *dubbed* mean?

- A. changed
 - B. termed
 - C. adapted
 - D. expanded
- 2 People enjoyed reading Hearst's and Pulitzer's newspapers primarily because they were
- F. eloquent.
 - G. inexpensive.
 - H. thrilling.
 - I. colorful.

- 3 According to the article, the *New York World* was different from more conservative newspapers because it
- A. appealed to a wider variety of readers.
 - B. contained more pages of news.
 - C. focused on important social issues.
 - D. provided unbiased news stories.
- 4 How did Hearst prove that Pulitzer stole news from the pages of his newspaper?
- F. He enticed Pulitzer's entire staff of reporters and illustrators to join the *Journal*.
 - G. He sent a reporter to capture Pulitzer in the act of stealing a story.
 - H. He discovered a telegram between Pulitzer and one of his reporters.
 - I. He planted a fake story, which Pulitzer copied the next day.
- 5 Why did the author write this passage?
- A. to entertain readers with a story about successful newspaper owners
 - B. to inform readers about a form of journalism that relied on sensationalism
 - C. to convince readers that journalists were responsible for starting a war
 - D. to persuade readers to read newspapers on a regular basis
- 6 How is today's tabloid news industry similar to the yellow press of the late nineteenth century?
- F. It provides readers with attention-grabbing headlines and exciting stories.
 - G. It concentrates on getting the details of important news events first.
 - H. It is concerned only with selling the largest number of publications.
 - I. It challenges readers to search for the truth on their own.



- 7 Why is it hard to believe that Joseph Pulitzer went on to create the Pulitzer Prize? Support your answer with details and information from the article.