The Cuban Revolution &
The Rise of Fidel Castro

What was the Cuban Revolution?

Who is Fidel Castro and what image does he have in the US?
What was the Cuban Revolution?

- The Cuban Revolution was a conflict between supporters of the government of Cuba & anti-government rebels
  - Gov. leader = Fulgencio Batista
  - Rebel leader = Fidel Castro

- The war would draw on Cold War ideas & involve both superpowers
The Spanish Sugar Industry (1500’s - 1898)
The Spanish-American War (1898)
American “occupation” of Cuba (1898 - 1959)

American troops remained in Cuba long after the war with Spain ended, much to the resent of the Cuban people.
Who is Fulgencio Batista?

- Batista was a former military officer who rose to power with the help of the US
  - A big anti-Communist supporter
  - Allowed US companies in Cuba

- Batista used secret police & terror to control the country
  - Ruled from 1933 till 1959
The “US’ Man” = Gen. Fulgencio Batista
Batista & “The Mob”
Batista: The Dictator
Who is Fidel Castro?

• Fidel Castro is a former lawyer turned revolutionary
  – A believer that reform is needed in Cuba without US help

• Leads a group of rebels known as the “26th of July Movement”
  – Gifted speaker & organizer
The name “26th of July Movement” refers to Castro’s first real act of rebellion against the government of Batista. On that day in 1953, Castro and his supporters attacked a military barracks. Thought defeated, a movement was born…
What major issues did Fidel & his followers have with Batista?

- Castro & the “26th of July Movement” wished to see democratic reforms brought to Cuba
  - Open elections
  - More civil rights
  - Economic / education reforms

- Castro & his supporters also wanted to remove the US’ dominance of Cuba’s economy
How did Fidel wage his war against Batista?

- Fidel & his followers waged a guerilla war against Batista’s government
  - Attacked from Sierra Maestra Mountains

- Used hit-and-run tactics against Batista’s troops
  - Popular among the poor people of Cuba
Happy New Year 1958! Batista’s last
How did Castro eventually defeat Batista & gain control of Cuba’s government?

• Two (2) things:
  – Batista looses the support of the people
  – The US withdraws its support

• Without American backing, Batista is forced to flee
  – Castro takes control of the government
Castro’s victorious entrance into Havana where he assumed power as the country’s new president.
Castro’s Victory Speech in Havana, cir. 1959
How is Castro’s victory viewed by the US?

• The US did not like Castro’s policies towards American companies
  – Forced them off the island

• Refused to trade or recognize Castro’s government
  – Castro turned to the USSR for aid
The US government came up with numerous schemes to take out Castro using the CIA, hired assassins, and the Mafia.

All were a failure…
Bay of Pigs Invasion

- In 1961, President John F. Kennedy approved of a plan by the CIA to overthrow Castro’s government with the help of Cuban refugees living in the US.

The plan is a complete FAILURE!!!!
The Cuban exiles who invaded at the Bay of Pigs were promised American air and naval support in their invasion. It never came…

118 men were killed and over 1,200 were captured.
Many of the survivors of the Bay of Pigs were treated horribly by their Cuban captors.

Eventually, the survivors were ransomed back to the US.
How is Castro viewed today in the US and Cuba?

• Castro is still seen in a very negative light in the US
  – Trade / travel restrictions remain

• In Cuba, Castro is seen as a national hero
  – Brother Raul runs the country now
  – Cuban people deeply divided over new leadership