



PROFILES IN COURAGE

Teacher's Guide

HAMILTON FISH

CREDITS:

Starring Henry Jones, Mark Richman, Edward Asner, Frank Silvera, Crahan Denton, Howard Caine, and Robert Emhardt. Written by David Karp. Directed by Harvey Hart. Produced by Gordon Oliver and Robert Saudek Associates. Inspired by John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning book. **50 minutes.** Guide prepared for Social Studies School Service by Robert D. Barnes, 1983.

OBJECTIVES:

- To examine the debate of military action vs. non-violent negotiation.
- To discuss America's desire to support other countries in their struggles for freedom and independence.
- To understand the meaning of moral courage.

PROLOGUE AND POSTSCRIPT:

Early in the administration of President Ulysses S. Grant, a revolution in Cuba presented the United States with a tempting opportunity. We could recognize the Cuban rebels, quickly defeat proud but weak Spain in the war that was bound to follow, and exploit the relationship that would develop with our new "independent" neighbor. Public sentiment, the popular press, and many serving in government favored seizing the opportunity. While Grant, thanks to the persistence of his Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, resisted the temptation to go to war, the story does not have an honorable ending. New Cuban insurrections in 1873 and 1895 highlighted the misery of the Cuban people and excited American passions. After an explosion aboard the American battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor, we went to war with Spain. In 1898, Cuba was freed, and we acquired Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

SYNOPSIS:

"Is Cuba worth a war?" Hamilton Fish, Grant's Secretary of State questions. Most Americans at the time thought that the answer was "Yes." Most important, key men in Grant's administration including John A. Rawlings, Grant's trusted adjutant and now Secretary of War, had by accepting bribes put themselves in a position where a war was deemed essential.

We see Hamilton Fish working virtually alone to keep the United States out of another war. "War means death, destruction," said Fish, "...no one will ever convince me that it can be waged for moral reasons."

Fish initiates a plan of negotiation, proposing that the United States offer financial backing to Cuba to enable the island to buy her freedom from Spain. As the negotiations drag on, as Spain changes the requirements, Grant and his supporters grow impatient. We see Fish resolutely defend his no-war policy at the risk of both his reputation and his position.

VOCABULARY:

The following words and phrases appear in the program. Teachers may wish to check for student understanding:

diplomat	thin skinned	rebuke
consulate	expansionists	stalemated
stuffed shirt	vexing	gulled
confidentially	armistice	adjutant
annexation	stipulations	eloquent
recipient	exceeded	warmonger
incompetent	mediation	negotiate
oblivion	pessimism	blighted
consumption	unimpeachable	mute
prognosis	hoisting their	formidable
recognize the	own petard	manipulate
rebels	pussyfoot	nonaggression
candid	hedge	keystone

reluctance moral compulsions belligerent

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Undersecretary of State Bancroft Davis questions Fish, "Why did you accept President Grant's offer as Secretary of State?" Why does Davis ask this question? What is Fish's reply?
2. What problems confront John A. Rawlins, Grant's Secretary of War? What positive qualities does he exhibit? Give several examples.
3. Grant argues for Cuban independence on the principle that "people ought to be free to run their own "affairs." How does Fish respond? Grant's answer?
4. Fish presents Grant with a solution to the Cuban problem that will avoid war with Spain. What are the basic terms of the "informal" agreement? What problems are inherent in the negotiations?
5. Morales Lemus, representing the Cubans, receives several different messages in Washington. Does he appear to be confused? Explain.
6. In a private meeting with Grant, and later in his final Cabinet meeting, Rawlings attacks Fish, both as a person, and as a diplomat. His arguments are convincing, blunted mainly because we realize that he has been bribed and that his arguments are almost entirely self-serving. Our knowledge makes Rawlings's "eloquence" simple hypocrisy. Suppose we did not know the truth. Would you be for Rawlings? Consider argument, physical stature, public attitude. Is there a valuable lesson for us here? Explain. Give examples.
7. Grant argues that "moral compulsions" drive nations into war. Fish holds that war is never waged because of "moral compulsions." Why is war caused according to Fish?
8. After a vicious personal attack by Rawlings, Fish responds, "Sometimes the measure of [a man's] usefulness is the variety and intensity of the names he's called." Can you give examples to support Fish's point?

9. After the death of Rawlings, it is confirmed that he held \$28,000 in Cuban bonds. Do you agree with Fish's position? "There is no profit in malice, Mr. Davis. Let it rest." Considering the circumstances, would this have been your attitude? Explain.

ACTIVITY:

Divide the class into two groups, the "hawks" and the "doves." Select a current world trouble spot, perhaps in Central America, Africa, or the Middle East. Encourage the "hawks" to develop as many reasons and arguments as possible for American involvement. Urge the "doves" to advance more moderate proposals. This class event can follow research or it may be spontaneous. If the "debate" becomes spirited, listen for name-calling.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION:

1. In 1898, American clamor for war became too great to resist. Find out why we went to war with Spain. What issues were involved?
2. In October, 1962, President John F. Kennedy had his own "Cuban Crisis." This came after his ill-fated Bay of Pigs Invasion in April, 1961. Conduct research to learn about these extraordinary events. Be sure to examine the role of American ambassador Adlai Stevenson.