
Joseph Pulitzer

*This reading comprehension includes difficult vocabulary (in **bold**) defined at the end, as well as a reading comprehension quiz to check your understanding.*

Joseph Pulitzer (April 10, 1847 – October 29, 1911) was a Hungarian-American publisher best known for **posthumously** establishing the Pulitzer Prizes and (along with William Randolph Hearst) for originating **yellow journalism**.

Pulitzer was born in Makó, Hungary, Pulitzer **sought** a military career, but was turned down by the Austrian army for **frail** health and poor eyesight. He **emigrated** to the United States in 1864 to serve in the American Civil War. After the war he **settled** in St. Louis, Missouri, where in 1868 he began working for a German-language daily newspaper, the Westliche Post. He joined the Republican Party and was elected to the Missouri State Assembly in 1869. In 1872, Pulitzer purchased the Post for \$3,000. Then, in 1879, he bought the St. Louis Dispatch for \$2,700 and **merged** the two papers, which became the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, which remains St. Louis' daily newspaper. It was at the Post-Dispatch that Pulitzer developed his role as a **champion of the common man** with **exposés** and a **hard-hitting populist** approach.

In 1882 Pulitzer, by then a wealthy man, purchased the New York World, a newspaper that had been losing \$40,000 a year, for \$346,000 from Jay Gould. Pulitzer **shifted its focus** to **human-interest** stories, scandal, and **sensationalism**. In 1885, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, but resigned after a few months' service. In 1887, he **recruited** the famous **investigative journalist** Nellie Bly. In 1895 the World introduced the **immensely** popular The Yellow Kid comic by Richard F. Outcault, the first newspaper comic printed with color. Under Pulitzer's leadership **circulation** grew from 15,000 to 600,000, making it the largest newspaper in the country.

In 1890 Pulitzer's already **failing health deteriorated** rapidly and he **withdrew** from the daily management of the newspaper, although he continued to actively manage the paper from his **vacation retreat** in Bar Harbor, Maine, and his New York **mansion**.

In 1895, William Randolph Hearst purchased the rival New York Journal, which led to a circulation war. This competition with Hearst, particularly the **coverage** before and during the Spanish-American War, **linked Pulitzer's name with** yellow journalism.

After the World **exposed a fraudulent** payment of \$40 million by the United States to the French Panama Canal Company in 1909, Pulitzer was **indicted for libeling** Theodore Roosevelt and J. P. Morgan. The courts **dismissed the indictments** in a victory for freedom of the press.

In 1892, Pulitzer offered Columbia University's president, Seth Low, money to set up the world's first school of journalism. The university initially turned down the money, **evidently** unimpressed by Pulitzer's **unscrupulous** character. In 1902, Columbia's new president Nicholas Murray Butler was more receptive to the plan for a school and prizes, but it would not be until after Pulitzer's death that this dream would be **fulfilled**. Pulitzer left the university \$2 million in his **will**, which led to the creation in 1912 of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, but by then the first school of journalism had been created at the University of Missouri. Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism remains one of the most **prestigious** in the world.

Joseph Pulitzer died aboard his **yacht** in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina in 1911. He is **interred** in the Woodlawn Cemetery in The Bronx, New York. In 1917, the first Pulitzer Prizes were awarded, **in accordance with Pulitzer's wishes**.

In 1989 Pulitzer **was inducted into** the St. Louis Walk of Fame.

This exercise employs the [biography of Joseph Pulitzer at Wikipedia](#).

Vocabulary

unscrupulous - not scrupulous; unrestrained by scruples; conscienceless; unprincipled.

evidently - obviously; clearly

linked Pulitzer's name with - connected Pulitzer's name with

libeling - act of publishing false accusations or statements

to indict - to be charged with in a legal court

fraudulent - false; incorrect

to expose - make something public that was previously hidden

coverage - press or media reporting of news

mansion - extremely large and luxurious home

vacation retreat - a home that one goes to on vacation in order to relax

to withdraw - to leave; stop working

to deteriorate - become worse

failing health - health that is becoming worse

circulation - (in this context) amount of newspapers sold

investigative journalist - journalist who investigates news stories in-depth

immensely - extremely

to recruit - to find someone to work for you

sensationalism - media technique that takes advantage of articles that appeal to public opinion to sell newspapers

human-interest - focused on information about human situations

shifted its focus - changed its main idea

populist - appealing to the public

hard-hitting - very forceful

exposè - news story

champion of the common man - someone who tries to help normal people with their needs / problems

to merge - to combine two or more companies into one

to settle - to move to and begin to live in a community

to emigrate - to move and settle in a new country

frail - very weak

to seek - to actively look for

yellow journalism - Journalism that exploits, distorts, or exaggerates the news to create sensations and attract readers

posthumously - after the death of someone

will - final document stating who will receive money, property, etc. after someone dies

prestigious - very famous and important

yacht - luxury boat

to inter - to put in prison

in accordance with Pulitzer's wishes - as Pulitzer wished to do

to be inducted into - to be included in an important institution (usually a hall of fame)