

### **Critics: Theodore Roosevelt**

*A leader's actions may draw criticism. How do your students deal with critics who speak negatively about their actions or dreams? The following illustration details Theodore Roosevelt's response to the many criticisms he faced during his presidency.*

In 1898, voters elected William McKinley as President and Theodore Roosevelt as Vice-President. Commenting on Roosevelt, a colleague said, *"Do you realize that the only thing standing between that madman and the White House is a bullet?"* Within 2 years, Roosevelt became the 26<sup>th</sup> US President following the assassination of McKinley.

During Roosevelt's tenure as President, his critics...

- Called him a liar for claiming that he charged up San Juan Hill, not Kettle Hill.
- Blamed him for a financial panic, but complimented the bankers who caused it.
- Berated him for supporting a revolution that allowed the US to build the Panama Canal.
- Ridiculed him for his "self-serving showmanship."
- Denounced him for supporting Vice-President Taft's bid to become president.
- Accused him of trying to establish a "Republican monarchy."
- Rebuked him for inviting an African-American (Booker T. Washington) to a White House dinner.
- Scolded him for indicting black soldiers following a race riot in Brownsville, Texas.
- Mocked him for displaying bad manners.
- Condemned him for sending battleships around the world "to threaten other nations."

But the President had this response for his detractors:

*"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."*