

British Empire- Key Terms

Expand – to get bigger

Empire- a group of places controlled by one country

Colony- somewhere controlled by an empire

Economic- about trade, goods and money

Military- about armies

Cultural- about how people live

Plantation- a huge farm worked by slaves

Indigenous- native/there before settlers

Independence- being able to rule yourself

Sepoy- a native Indian soldier employed by the EIC

Nabob- a British merchant who grew rich in India

EITC/EIC- East India Trading Company

Mughal- the empire that held large parts of India before the British

Boer- Dutch farmers who had settled in South Africa

Zulu- a powerful military empire in southern Africa

The Empire At Home

- In Britain, having money meant having power. Wealthy British landowners caused hardship by keeping bread prices high with the Corn Laws. Nabobs and retired plantation owners bought seats in Parliament, and only a small number of men were able to vote.
- Changes to jobs, the enclosure of common land, and living conditions in the cities meant life changed for ordinary people. Working-class movements like the Chartists called for equal rights, and the Tolpuddle Martyrs paved the way for trade unions.
- Early feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft publicly demanded votes for women. Later reforms protected workers and guaranteed education instead of work for children.

The British Empire

There are **three** main reasons that countries build empires:

- To protect themselves from rivals (military)
- To make money (economic)
- To spread their culture (social)

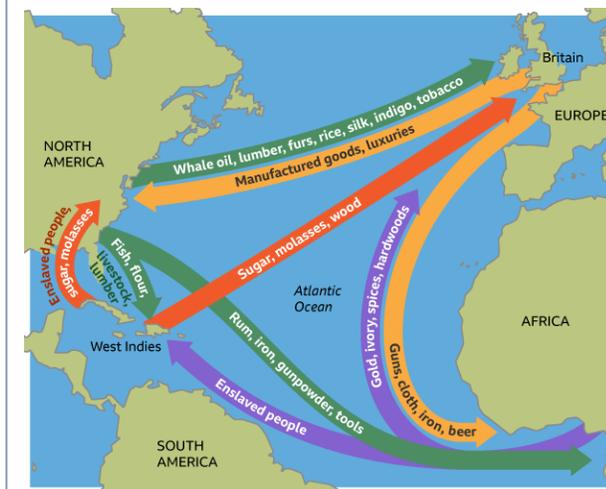


Creation

- Empires expand for three types of reason- military, economic, and cultural.
- The British Empire began for economic reasons when the first trading companies were set up by Queen Elizabeth I. She sent sailors to capture Spanish and Portuguese ships full of silver and gold from the “New World” (the Americas). Over time, the British set up colonies in North America, with varied relationships with the different Native American peoples.
- The British Empire expanded for military reasons, fighting off competition from rival Mughal princes in India and rival European powers in the Americas.
- There were also cultural reasons for expansion, with racist ideas of white superiority encouraging the Victorians to spread their beliefs in India and Africa.

The Slave Trade

- Approximately **12-15 million people** were forcibly transported from their homelands in Africa to European colonies and plantations **between 1500 and 1870**.
- Enslaved people were transported in horrific conditions, considered the property of those who “bought” them, and had no rights.
- Some slaves, like Harriet Tubman and Ona Judge, escaped slavery and resisted from within. Some started riots on slave ships crossing the Atlantic Ocean.
- Plantation owners, who made money from selling goods grown by slaves like sugar, tobacco and cotton, back to Europe, used that money to make more money. They invested in textile factories in Britain, and bought themselves political power.



Life Under The British Empire

America

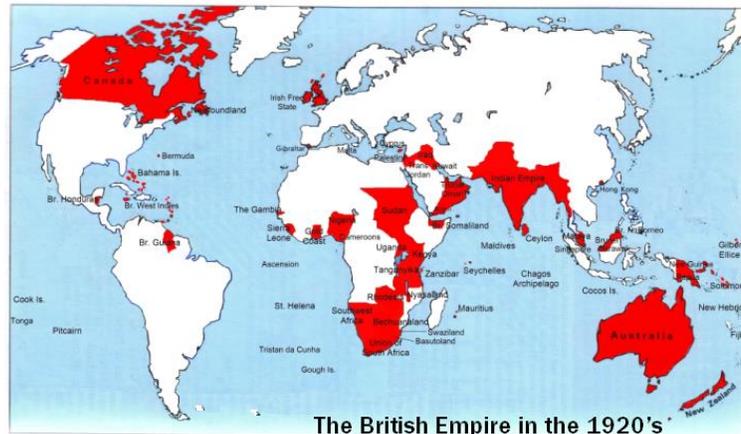
- Life in the American colonies was difficult for settlers, most of whom farmed or had a trade. Relations with different Native American peoples varied. Slavery was a key money-maker, especially for the Southern states, and many colonists who owned plantations grew rich, using that money to buy political power when they retired to Britain.
- The American colonies revolted, going to war with Britain from 1775 to 1783, because of the unpopular British monarch, King George III, being taxed without having representation in the British parliament, and Enlightenment ideas about liberty and democracy. After losing the revolutionary war, Britain signed the Treaty of Paris with America and its allies in 1783, ending the rule of the Empire there.

India

- British influence in India began with the East India Trading Company, established by Queen Elizabeth I, which traded with Mughal princes for indigo dye, cotton and spices. After the Battle of Plassey in 1757, Mir Jafar was made the puppet ruler of Bengal, controlled by the British. Some Mughal princes were removed from their positions by the EIC private army, others chose to work closely with the British in exchange for keeping their positions.
- Life under British control was difficult. Indian merchants were forced to sell their goods to the British at low prices, and famines, like the one in Bengal in 1770, killed millions.
- In 1857, the Sepoy Rebellion was sparked by Mangal Pandey refusing to use ammunition treated with animal fat, as it was against the religious beliefs of the Hindu and Muslim troops. The British government abolished the East India Company and ruled India as a colony, the “Jewel in the crown” of the Empire.

Africa

- After Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807, the British expanded into Africa for economic and cultural reasons. Not only did the British, including Christian missionaries, follow racist ideals that meant they could “justify” disregarding local beliefs, but they also found that palm oil from West Africa was in high demand, and controlling the Suez Canal in Egypt could make shipping goods from India much cheaper.
- At the Berlin Conference, 1884-1885, Britain was among the key European powers that divided Africa up amongst themselves, without asking anyone African. For example, in South Africa, men like Cecil Rhodes became rich discovering mines full of diamonds and gold. The British went to war with the Boers, Dutch settlers, from 1899-1902. By 1968, after both peaceful and violent processes, British colonisation of Africa ended.



The British Empire in the 1920's

Australia

- Until the 1830s, Britain transported its prisoners to work in Australia and New Zealand. After 1830, Edward Gibbon Wakefield formed a company to sell land to wealthy settlers, importing British labourers to work the farmland. This land was taken from native people in Australia (Aboriginal Australians) and New Zealand (Maori).
- Settlers made money from farming sheep and cattle, and in the 1880s refrigerated ships began transporting fresh meat to Britain. Gold discoveries in Australia in 1851 boosted the population from 400,000 to 1 million in less than 10 years. By 1900, Australia had nearly 4 million people, and a sixth of the world's sheep.

Ireland

- Most Irish Catholics worked on farmland owned by Protestant landowners. From 1845-1852, the Great Famine or Potato Blight caused 15% of the country to die, and another 15% to flee.
- The Fenians organised violent demonstrations in Ireland and England, and British Prime Minister Gladstone tried to reform Ireland to prevent further violence.
- The Home Rule Bills, 1886 and 1893, failed to pass, and tensions worsened in Ireland. Eventually, the union-loyal North was separated from the South in the 1921 partition, forming Northern Ireland, part of the UK, and Ireland, an independent nation.

CHALLENGE: Which experiences do our case studies have in common? And where do they differ?

