

Empire

YEAR 6 | Autumn 1



OVERVIEW

The British Empire was a worldwide system of dependencies – colonies and territories – that over the span of three centuries was brought under the control of Great Britain. Britain spread its rule and power beyond its borders through a process called **imperialism**. This brought huge changes to societies, industries, cultures and the lives of people all over the world.

Built over many years, the British Empire grew to include large areas of North America, Australia, New Zealand, Asia and Africa, as well as small parts of Central and South America, too.

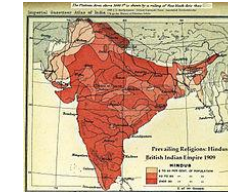
At its height in 1922, it was the largest empire the world had ever seen, covering around a quarter of Earth's land surface and ruling over 458 million people.



KEY PLACES

India

The period of direct British rule over the Indian subcontinent from 1858 until the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 is called the British Raj



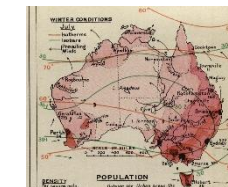
Canada

In 1867, four British colonies (Quebec, Nova Scotia, Ontario, & New Brunswick) joined together as the "Dominion of Canada" and became a self-governing state within the British Empire.



Australia

On January 26, 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip guides a fleet of 11 British ships carrying prisoners to the colony of New South Wales, effectively founding Australia.



Singapore

The Colony of Singapore was a British Crown colony for a total of 140 years, interrupted by Japanese invasion during World War II.



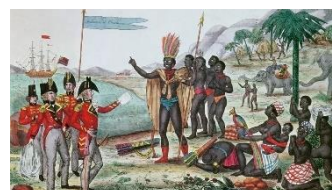
EMPIRE

Empire is a term used to describe a group of countries



COMMONWEALTH

An international association consisting of the UK together with states that were previously part of the British Empire



COLONIALISM

Acquiring control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.



PLANTATION

An estate on which crops such as coffee, sugar, and tobacco are grown.



INDIGENOUS

Originating or occurring naturally in a particular place e.g. "the indigenous peoples of Somalia"



TIMELINE

c. 1500 Beginning of the British Empire

1600 – The East India Company is founded

1500

1600

1700

1773-85 - The American colonists prevail in the American Revolution and Britain recognises the United States as an independent nation.

1800

1833 – Slavery abolished in the UK

1837 – Queen Victoria becomes queen at 18

1900

1997 – Hong Kong, the last significant British colony, is returned to China

1651 - The great Navigation Act is passed. All colonial exports have to be shipped on English ships to the British market, and all colonial imports have to come by way of England.

1788 - The British Empire gains new settlements in Australia. The empire's Canadian colonies grow.

1857 – Indian mutiny

1884-85 - European nations meet in Berlin to divide Africa. Britain wins the most territory, which stretches from South Africa to Egypt.

The height of the Empire was between 1815 and 1914 – the 'British Century'

SLAVERY

Enslaved people – people who were made the property of others and forced to obey their owners' demands – helped develop the wealth of the British Empire.

When European imperialists arrived in Africa in the 15th Century, they began the most organised slave operation the world had ever seen – the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Over the next 400 years, **European traders bought and sold an estimated 12 million African people**, who were forcibly taken from their homes, shipped across the ocean and forced to work.

Of those 12 million Africans, British slave traders are estimated to have bought and sold over 3 million people – although only 2.7 million are believed to have survived the journey.

Britain banned the trading of enslaved people in its empire in 1807, (known as Abolition) but it was a further 26 years until it outlawed slavery altogether (known as Emancipation).



BUILDING THE EMPIRE

The first English colonies were in North America, at the time known as the 'New World'. In 1607m Captain John Smith founded the first permanent English colony at Jamestown in Virginia.

'First British Empire' - Over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, England gained major colonies in North America and further south in the West Indies, today known as the Caribbean Islands. Trading settlements were also created in India by a company called the **East India Company**. This company became so powerful, it allowed England to control of the trade of luxury goods like spices, cotton, silk and tea from India and China, and it even influenced politics. Between 1773-1783, Britain lost a large part of its empire in the American War of Independence.

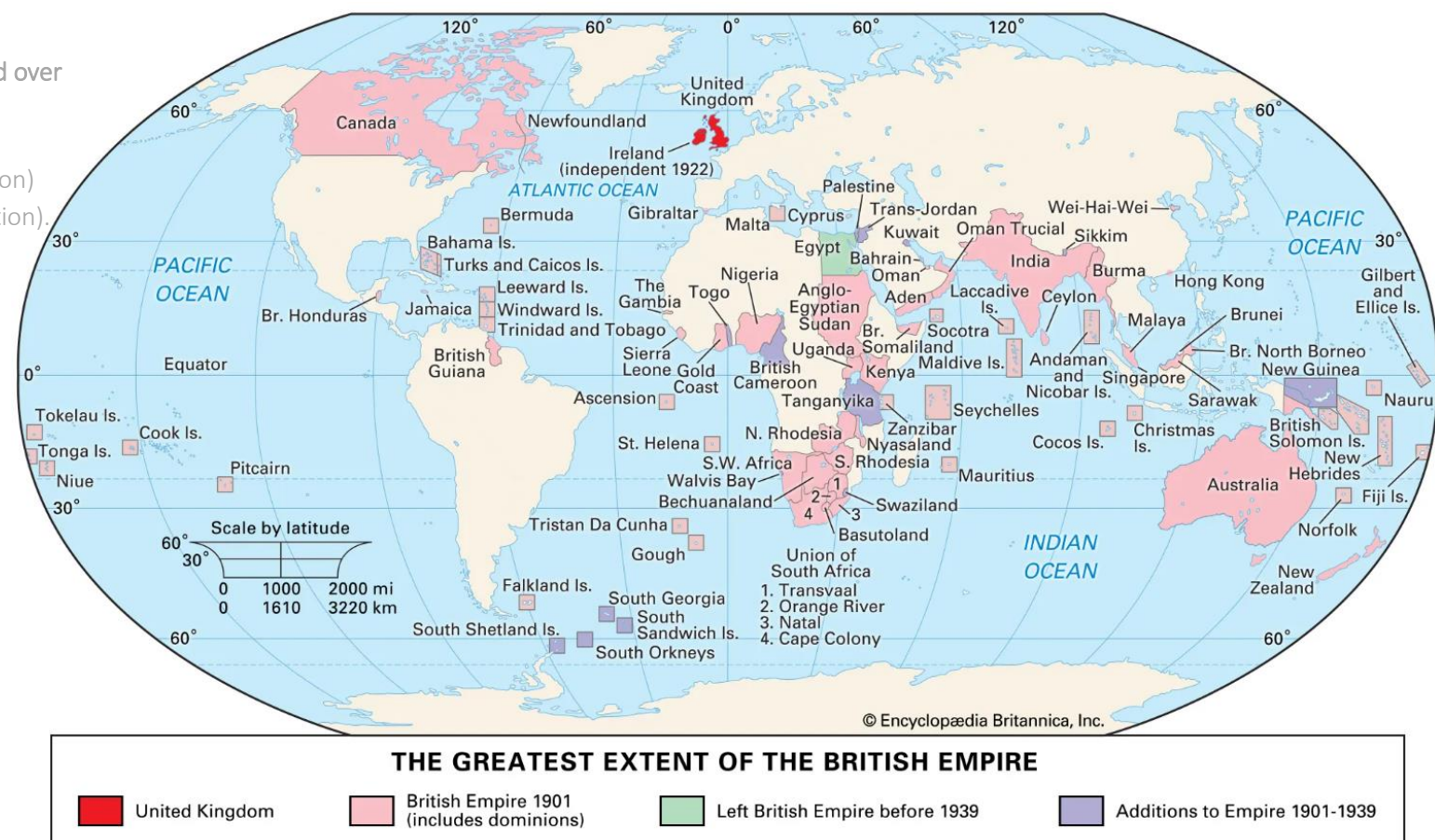
'Second British Empire' - Britain claimed new lands in the late 18th Century and early 19th Century. Colonies were founded in parts of Australia, and later Trinidad and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Singapore and Hong Kong (China) as well as other parts of Asia. From 1881 to 1902, Britain competed with other European empire-builders in what became known as the 'Scramble for Africa'. By the early 1900s, huge parts of Africa – including Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and large areas of southern Africa – all came under British rule.

COLLAPSE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Over the course of the 20th century, Britain's empire broke down in stages. After the First World War (1914-1918) there was a feeling of 'nationalism' sweeping the globe, whereby countries should have the right to be independent and rule themselves. In 1926, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa became independent, meaning they were no longer under British control.

After the Second World War, Britain no longer had the wealth or strength to manage an empire overseas.

In 1947, India won its independence, and from the 1950s to 1980s, African colonies also fought for and won their independence. The last significant British colony, Hong Kong, was returned to China in 1997.



BBC Bitesize - Empire

Explanation of different elements of the British Empire



British Empire explained in 10 minutes

Youtube video taking you through the key moments



National Geographic: Facts

Extra information about the British Empire



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
PRIMARY SCHOOL