



Teacher Notes: History: The Britons Peoples, Nation and Empire

AGE

17-18

Year 10
Year 11

CURRICULUM

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History

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Objectives

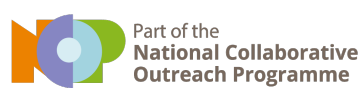
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Politics, Policy, and Reform

[Link to curriculum](#)

Britain: losing and gaining
 an empire, 1763–1914

RESOURCE NOTES

The resource comprises of excerpts from a pamphlet, titled *Proceedings of a Public Meeting for the Formation of the Northern Central British India Society*, held in the Corn Exchange, Manchester on 26 August 1840. It deals with the issue of how discussions and deliberations on policy-making and reform often had a 'trans-national' character (a glossary of useful terms has been provided in the handbook) within the larger context of the British empire. Also it is important to note how the concerns about empire often became a national question. Whilst the primary emphasis is on the needs of reform in India, the pamphlet highlights its intrinsic connections with the fate of the Britons themselves. Most prominent in this context is the presence of Daniel O'Connell, the famous Irish politician who campaigned for Catholic emancipation, who is highlighting the problems of the British rule of India. This topic and the primary source material should be understood in the context of the increasing British political prominence in India in the aftermath of the battle of Plassey (1757). Following the grant of Diwani (1765), the Britons went on to defeat indigenous rulers, usurping their territories, gaining an all-pervasive authority by 1820. Territorial conquests continued alongside exploitation of people for more and more revenues. Traditional industries in India declined due to lack of patronage under the Britons, resulting in deindustrialisation. Deindustrialisation led to decline of towns, and the lack of industries created pressure on land as more and more people took up agriculture as their livelihood thereby leading to ruralisation.



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Politics, Policy, and Reform

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ACTIVITY NOTES

- For this resource, the students are to do a snowball discussion activity.
- This activity is meant to enable them to express their ideas and to take those further by means of joining thoughts with other classmates.
- It is in this manner a historiographical school is formed where historians and researchers identify with a particular form of analysis or approach in dealing with certain historical problems.

Discussions can begin by asking pupils to think over the following questions (details of how to execute the activity have been provided in the handbook):

- What the thinkers designate as bad in terms of British imperial rule, and why?
- What do they consider as important for the Britons to consider in terms of their imperial interests in India?



Culture of Power, Representation And Display

Link to curriculum

Britain: losing and gaining an empire, 1763–1914

RESOURCE NOTES

This is a painting, and the reasons for using it as a primary source are two-fold: firstly, the historians need to be attentive to sources other than those purely textual in nature; and secondly, it is important to understand imperialism as a cultural process too. This is an allegorical oval shaped ceiling piece titled, The East Offering its Riches to Britannia, that the British East India Company commissioned for the Revenue Committee room in East India House in Leadenhall Street in London in the year 1778 from the famous artist Spiridione Roma. Whilst the rich details of figures as well as natural environment as represented in the painting are important, it is also necessary to pay attention to how it was displayed. Both of these considerations can help us understand the cultural politics of imperialism better. The following is a series of 'useful notes' from the National Archives, UK to facilitate the understanding of the image:

- This image was painted on the ceiling of the headquarters of the British East India Company in London in 1778.
- It uses a range of figures to illustrate different aspects of the work of the East India Company.
- Britannia is sitting on a rock to show how well established the empire was and is guarded by a lion to show its power.
- The children behind Britannia and under her protection represent the British East India Company.



Culture of Power, Representation And Display

Link to curriculum

Britain: losing and gaining an empire, 1763–1914

RESOURCE NOTES

- The stream of water at the bottom of the painting is the Indian river Ganges. Calcutta (the main settlement of the Company in Bengal) presents a basket with pearls and other jewels. A Brahmin (learned Indian man) is also looking up to Britannia on the right hand side.
- China is represented by jars of porcelain and a box of tea, and Bengal by an elephant and a camel. In the background a ship is taking the treasures of the east back to Britain.

Also should be noted the presence of Roman God, Mercury on the right who presides as the East hands over its riches to Britannia, and the presence of an East Indiaman, the vessel that carried on the British East India Company's trade with India. The river Thames is represented as the old man with the vessel in the forefront.

ACTIVITY NOTES

1. Using the painting as a primary source would enable students to think about the variety in the nature of sources that can be used for the study of British imperialism.
2. Through the discussion activity of think, pare and share, a variety of analyses of the painting would come forward. These variety of responses would be indicative of how individual pupils understand and interpret the past.
3. Understanding the painting in respect of its time would help students learn the art of contextualisation that is vital to all pursuits of historical enquiry.



War, Diplomacy, and Expansion

Link to curriculum
Causes and consequences
of Boer War

RESOURCE NOTES

The resource for this topic are excerpts from Olive Schreiner's novel, *An English-South African's view of the situation: words in season*, published in 1899 on the eve of the First Boer War. Her work is reflective of the concerns of her times and her distaste towards warfare that made her critical of the British role in her native land of South Africa. Knowledge of the events leading to the First Boer War would be helpful (these have been provided in the handbook).

ACTIVITY NOTES

1. The essential skill for every historian is to be able to summarise their findings from a given source by identifying its intricacies. This exercise of writing summaries would do just that. Some useful pointers listed in the handbook would help students write effective summaries of the text.
2. Students would also develop the habit of close reading which would be vital for historical studies.



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State, Society, and Family

Link to curriculum

Britain: losing and gaining an empire, 1763–1914

RESOURCE NOTES

The resource for this topic is a lullaby titled, *Papa's Keepsake* was composed by George Swindon when he served the British government in India for his children in Britain, and was published in 1829. The lullaby largely addresses Swindon's encounter with the India's natural environment and its wilderness. Ultimately, it is a narrative of the glorification of British nationhood in its role of civilising and humanising India. This richly illustrated text bears the testimony of how empire came to be brought home in the nineteenth-century cultural imagination.

ACTIVITY NOTES

1. Through the jigsaw discussion format, students would develop habit of analytical, close reading.
2. The students would also understand how to study primary sources, driven by specific research questions.



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Trade, Industry, and Economy

Link to curriculum
Losing and gaining an
empire, 1763–1914,

RESOURCE NOTES

The resource for this topic is a Coggle mind map (the information given in the mind map has been simplified in a table in the handbook) that brings together the views of the Indian nationalists in the second half of the eighteenth century regarding the British impact on Indian economy. Broadly known as the economic critique of colonialism, it emphasised on how Indian economy was subordinated to the demands of England which included the deindustrialisation as well as the 'drain of wealth' in terms of taxes and revenues from India to England, and as a result became ruralised and underdeveloped. Knowledge of British economic history in the second half of the nineteenth century that is part of their curriculum can be useful.

ACTIVITY NOTES

1. Debates can be said to be one of the most important skills of a historian.
2. By arguing for and against an argument, the students can get to know the historical topic in question in great depth.



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Nationhood, Identity, and Diversity

Link to curriculum
 Losing and gaining an
 empire, 1763–1914

RESOURCE NOTES

The source for this topic is Walter Crane's Imperial Federation Map of the World Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886, retrieved from Cornell University's digitised Persuasive maps: PJ Mode Collection. Published during the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, this map celebrates the expansiveness of British control over vast territories and varied peoples. Maps are wonderful source materials for historians as they can give an insight both into the territorial and cultural politics of their times. Knowledge of the political expansion of British empire can be useful here.

ACTIVITY NOTES

- This activity would enable the students to read a map, geographically, politically and culturally.
- It would challenge them to think beyond the given contours of territories, and understand the politics of mapping.
- Also, the representations of exotic peoples and places would help them to think about the racial politics that became increasingly prominent in the second half of the nineteenth century.



Nationhood, Identity, and Diversity

Link to curriculum
Losing and gaining an
empire, 1763–1914

ACTIVITY NOTES

1. What does the author think about British responsibility in the colony: The author believes that the Britons in India have a duty to civilise and humanise her.
2. How are animals treated? The animals are often referred to in a humiliating and moralising tone, although Britons are also marvelled by the variety of different animals found in India. Animals often become objects of curiosity as they are profusely painted and the dead ones are preserved and stuffed for museum display. It is important to note that East India Company had its own museum in Leadenhall Street, London where exotic animal and plant specimens from the colonies were preserved and kept.
3. How do Britons express pride and love for their country? By participating in the civilising mission of their country, and raising sword in the name of their king and country whenever needed.



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