

Knowledge Organiser – The British Empire

KEY TERMS

- ❖ **Empire** = a collection of areas of land or countries that are ruled over and controlled by one leading or 'mother' country.
- ❖ **Colonies** = the places controlled by the 'mother' country.
- ❖ **British Empire** = an empire made up of 56 colonies, which at its peak contained one quarter of the world's land and population.

A map showing the British Empire in 1901



1. Why did Britain want an empire?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To get valuable raw materials and riches So Britain could sell goods to the colonies and make money To become a powerful country Because Britain thought it was the right thing to do
2. What was India like before the British arrived?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw materials: iron ore, copper, gold, silver, gemstones, spices, tea & timber Conquest: people from all over the world have visited India or tried to conquer it since ancient times. Religion: three of the world's major religions originated in India: Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Christianity, Islam and Judaism have arrived since, By the early 1500s India was divided into lots of kingdoms, most were run by Hindu princes. Many were united under the Muslim Mughal Empire in the 1500s.
3. How did Britain gain control of India?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East India company set up trading posts throughout India. It had its own army which it used against the rulers of India. By the mid 1850s most of India was controlled by the British and in 1858 was placed under the direct rule of the British government.
4. Events in India 1857-58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sepoys (Indian soldiers) rioted over cartridges that were rumoured to be made from pork and beef fat. Major battles broke. Peace was declared in 1858 but the mutiny had shocked the British – the running of the country was taken away from the East India Company and was replaced by direct rule by the British government.
5. Interpretations of Britain's take over of India	<p>India was the largest and richest of all the countries in Britain's Empire. Queen Victoria started calling herself 'Empress of India'. It was called the 'Jewel in the Crown'.</p> <p>British control and influence in India has always been interpreted differently. Some argue that India benefitted from British rule in some ways, but others argue that India suffered and Indians were exploited for the benefit of the British rule.</p>
6. The Opium Wars	<p>Two armed conflicts in the mid 19th century, between the forces of Western countries and the Qing dynasty which ruled China. In each case the foreign powers were victorious and gained commercial privileges and territory.</p>
7. Should Britain be proud of its empire past?	<p>The British Empire is a topic in which people have different opinions. It is a controversial and sensitive history because there are strong feelings about it both and the time and today.</p> <p>Some of the arguments that have been made are listed below:</p> <p>The British Empire is NOT something to be proud of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It caused great suffering across the world and was motivated by power and money. Britain did some awful things – their role in the slave trade, the Amritsar Massacre, the use of concentration camps in the Boer War. The British left chaos behind when they left such as the division of India and Pakistan and many former colonies in Africa. <p>The British Empire is something to be proud of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The British brought good things to places like India and parts of Africa (railways, hospitals, law and order). The British Empire was better than other empires at the time. The British left great universities, team sports, the English language and the idea of democracy.

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS

1607 Britain's first permanent settlement established in America - Jamestown	1770 Captain Cook landed in Australia	1775 The American War of Independence – lasts until 1783	1788 The first ships carrying convicted criminals arrived at Botany Bay, Australia	1800 The First Boer War	1839-42 The First Opium War	1840s Potato famine in Ireland	1841 Britain occupied the island of Hong Kong	1850s Much of India was controlled by the British	1856-60 The Second Opium War	1857 The Indian Mutiny	1858 India was placed under the direct rule of the British government	1899 The Second Boer War	1901 Britain handed over direct rule to Australia	1921 The partition of Ireland	1947 Declaration of Indian independence: partitioning of India & Pakistan	1982 The Falklands War	1997 Hong Kong handed back to the Chinese
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