

Why did Britain want an Empire?



- Money! Colonies offered cheap natural resources e.g. sugar from the West Indies, cotton from Egypt, tea from India.
- Even more money! Britain could sell manufactured goods to the countries in the Empire.
- God. Some British Christians (missionaries) wanted to convert people to Christianity.
- The British wanted to spread their way of life and language as they felt it was superior.
- They wanted to use native people as cheap labour or as soldiers.

India The British government controlled most of India after the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

Many Indians fought for independence from Britain, but the most famous was **Mahatma Gandhi**. He encouraged people to protest peacefully using methods such as boycotts of British goods, meetings and marches.

In 1947 India gained independence and was divided into India and Pakistan. This 'Partition' led to much fighting and bloodshed.

The British Empire

Which countries were in the Empire?

The 8 main countries in the British Empire (and the raw materials they sent to Britain) were:

Canada (grain)

India (tea)

Australia (wool)

Egypt (cotton)

South Africa (gold and diamonds) New Zealand (meat)

Malaya (rubber)

Jamaica (sugar).



There were over 80 countries in the Empire. 23% of the world's population was ruled by Britain.

Key words and definitions

Colony: a country or region under the control of another, more powerful country.

Empire: a group of colonies together make up an empire.

Raw materials: products used to make other goods e.g. cotton.

Exports: Goods made in Britain (often manufactured in the factories) and sold abroad.

Imports: Goods brought into a country from abroad e.g. furs from Canada imported into Britain.

Native people: People born and living in a place e.g. Aborigines in Australia.

Australia was first settled by Europeans in 1788 when 11 British ships of convicts [prisoners] arrived in New South Wales. But Australia was already inhabited by the native 'Aboriginal' people, who had been there for over 60,000 years.

Australia Day is celebrated on the 26th January, the day Captain Cook landed there. Many Aboriginal Australians find this offensive as they see this as a celebration of the day Europeans (mainly British) arrived to commit genocide [mass murder] on their people.

Yes!

- The British brought British ideas of law and order to the colonies.
- They built schools and railways.
- They brought clean water, hospitals and modern medicine.
- The British were encouraged to buy goods from the colonies, which improved their economies.
- Once the British did abolish slavery in 1833, they invested huge amounts of money and effort into destroying the slave trade across the world.

Should we be proud of the British Empire?



No!

- The colonies were run to make the British rich – most native people stayed very poor.
- The British could be racist and treated the native people badly.
- They stopped local customs and religion.
- If the native people rebelled or objected to British rule then there would be war.
- The slave trade.