

**KS3 History knowledge organiser:
Year 8 Summer term 2: How far should Britain be proud of the history of its Empire?**

Section 1: Timeline of the decline of the British empire

1880-1900	Over 80% of Africa is divided up among European countries and part of their empires.
1907	1907 Australia and New Zealand given 'dominion' (self-governing) status
1914	Indians fought alongside British soldiers in WW1
1919	British soldiers massacred a peaceful gathering at Amritsar, India
1919-21	Ireland rebellion,. Leads to an independent Irish Free State but Northern Ireland remaining as part of Britain.
1926	British government agree Canada, Australia, New Zealand & South Africa independent countries
1931	Commonwealth formed of all former & current colonies. Today this is 54 countries, 1.3 billion people.
1935	After protests led by Gandhi, a Government of India Act gave Indians the right to control nearly everything except the army.
1939-1945	As in WW1, many Indians fought alongside British soldiers in the Second World War. 2.5 million Indians fought in the largest volunteer army in history.
1947	Britain stopped ruling India. It was replaced by two independent countries: India for the Hindus and Pakistan for the Muslims. The million Sikhs in India would have to decide where they live. It led to many problems that still go on today.
1948	Nationality Act passed giving UK citizenship to everyone in Commonwealth
1950s	Sudan; Gold Coast becomes independent, re-named Ghana
1960s	1960s Cyprus, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Gambia become independent states
1980	1980 Rhodesia becomes independent state, re-named Zimbabwe.

Section 2: How 'great' was the British Empire?

The impact and **legacy** of empire is one of the most controversial and passionately debated topics in British history. In the past people were strongly encouraged to celebrate the idea of the British empire and the countries that were part of it. This picture from the early 1900s is a typical example of this:



- ✓ Established English as global language
- ✓ Gave common law and democracy to colonies (eventually...)
- ✓ Infrastructure - Britain gave its colonies better roads and railways
- ✓ Brought about a modern, global economy (though Britain mostly benefitted)
- ✓ Three of richest largest countries are former colonies (America, Canada and Australia)
- ✓ Helped to abolish slavery
- ✓ Built school and universities in Africa
- ✓ Led to formation of Commonwealth which now brings over 50 former colonies together and has led to diverse population of Britain
- ✓ Sports – helps bring together nations through shared sports



One example of historians who highlighted the positive impact of the British Empire was **Lawrence James** who wrote : ' *At first the British Empire was about making money, but during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the British Empire improved the lives of millions of people.*'



Other historians like **Denis Judd** have offered an alternative view: '*When Imperialists boasted that 'the sun never set on the British Empire', critics said that this was because God didn't trust the British in the dark. Much of what the British got up to in their empire was selfish and destructive.*'

As a historian yourself you need to make consider the evidence and make your own judgements about the impact and legacy of the British Empire. When judging how great the British Empire really was you should consider:

- Who did it affect?
- How did it affect them
- Did it affect some people differently to others
- Did its effects on people vary at different points over the 400 year history of it?

There is a huge range of evidence to choose from and this cannot all be covered in lessons but below are a few examples of evidence for both sides of the argument :

- X Much culture and resources ruined or taken from Africa, including people as slaves
- X Countries could not rule themselves.
- X Many British politicians, businessmen and traders were simply concerned with making money
- X British first to use concentration camps in South Africa against the Boers
- X Europeans created new countries in Africa that cut through tribal regions
- X Religion - missionaries sent with Empire forced Christianity to colonies, stop other religions
- X Former colonies not always helped to become self-governing and this allowed corrupt leaders to take power and former colonies suffer from war, famine and genocide
- X Colonies had to provide soldiers who fought and died for Britain WW1 and WWII.