

Year 5: Autumn 1

Why did Britain one rule the largest empire the world has ever seen?

National Curriculum subject content:

A study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066.

Key skills covered:

Continuity and change, Cause and consequence, Historical significance
Historical enquiry

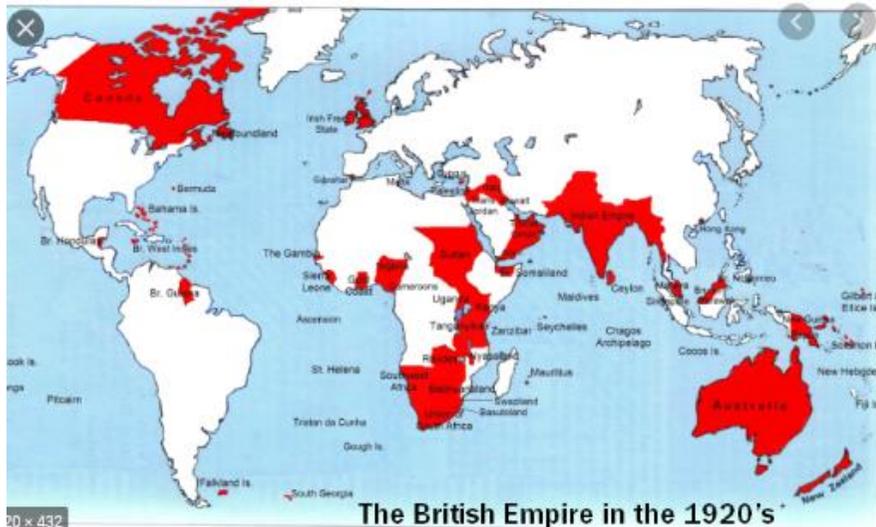
Key points:

To have an empire means that the leader or government of just one country rules over and controls what happens in many other nations around the world.

These nations are often known as colonies.

Britain's Empire was the greatest the world had ever seen.

In 1921, Britain's empire had reached its peak, ruling over 412 million people and an area of 35.5 million square kilometres.



A map of the countries in the British Empire (shown in red) in 1921

Timeline:

1558: The defeat of the Spanish increased England's maritime power.

1586: Sir Walter Raleigh organised a small settlement in America named Virginia in honour of Elizabeth I.

1620: The Mayflower ship set sail for America taking the first English colonisers called the Pilgrim Fathers.

1756-63: The Seven Years War resulted in England winning Canada from the French.

1770: Captain Cook claimed Australia for Britain. It became a penal colony.

1775-83: Britain was defeated in the American War of Independence and lost its 13 American colonies. Remembered in America on 4th July.

1807: The slave trade was abolished in Britain.

1815 – 1915: Britain's Imperial Century

1876: Queen Victoria was declared Empress of India.

1921: Southern Ireland won its independence from Britain.

1947: India gained its independence from Britain's Empire.

1960's: Most of Britain's colonies became independent countries.

2nd April – 14th June 1982: British forces fought a war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands.

1997: Britain formally handed Hong Kong back to China.

| Key vocabulary | |
|--------------------|---|
| Empire | A group of countries, people or land ruled by one single country referred to as the "mother" country. |
| Independence | A country gets its independence when it is no longer part of another country. |
| Transfer of Power | Where a country is taken from one person or group and given to another |
| Colony | A country that is part of an empire. |
| Withdrawal | The act of taking back or away something that has been granted or possessed. |
| Self determination | The right to have an independent country, free from Britain to run in the way they felt best. |
| Commonwealth | A group of countries that were once part of Britain's Empire. |
| Export | Sending goods like tea to other countries is called export. |
| Imported | Bring something into a country from another. |
| Missionary | A person sent on a religious mission, especially one sent to promote Christianity in a foreign country. |
| Native | A person born in a specified place or associated with a place by birth |
| Abolished | Put an end to something e.g. the slave trade. |
| Slave trade | The selling of people as slaves. |
| Territories | An area or region of land. |
| Inhabitants | A person or animal that lives in a place. |
| Jewel in the crown | The largest and richest part of Britain's Empire. |
| Imperialism | The act of building an empire. |
| Imperial Century | During this period there was a huge expansion of the empire: |
| East India Company | Trading company that gradually took control of India |

Key places:

Australia: Used as a location for criminals. Criminals would be shipped to Australia, where they would be used as a workforce.
 Caribbean: Sugar, cocoa and coffee were all grown and taken to Britain.

Africa: Britain used the people as slaves and made a lot of money selling them at auctions. The Gold Coast was important because it held lots of gold, ivory and silver, which were traded for fortunes.

India: Provided spices, jewels and silks that were traded across the Empire

Falkland Islands: A British overseas territory that Britain went to war with Argentina over.

What happened to the British Empire?

There are three main reasons why almost all of the colonies of the former British Empire are now independent and self determining.

- 1. After WW1 and WW2 Britain could not afford the expense of governing so many countries around the world**
- 2. The Royal Navy were no longer powerful enough to protect all of these possessions from other countries.**
- 3. Most importantly, in all the colonies it governed, such as India, people argued that they should have the right to have an independent country free of control from Britain. To run in the way that they felt best.**