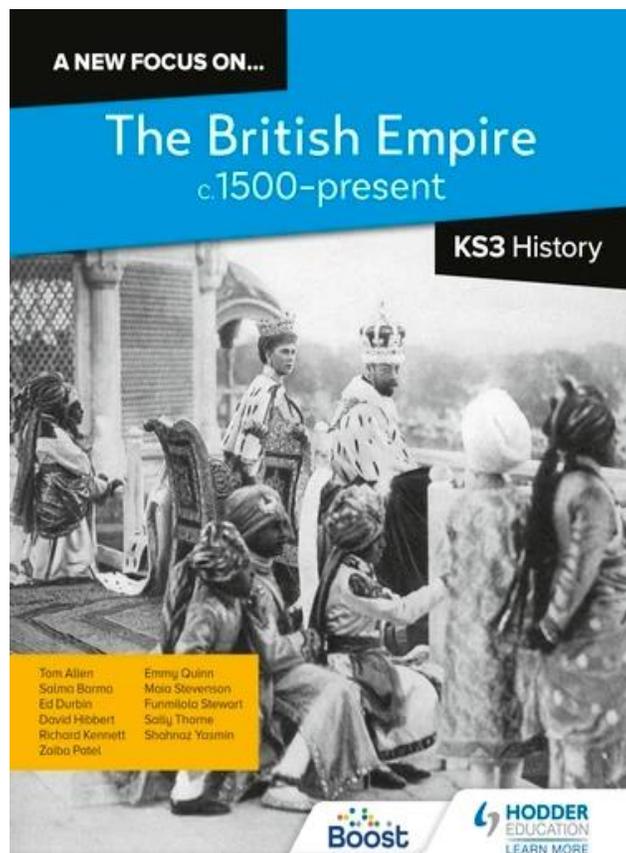


## A new focus on... The British Empire c1500–present

# Teacher guide

Guidance on how best to incorporate this textbook into your curriculum and use it in your classroom.



### Why should you teach about the British Empire?

#### *The curriculum intent*

The history of the British Empire *is* the history of the world. The British Empire affected every continent of the world and its consequences can be felt to this day, both in this country and in many others. It is arguably one of **the most** important topics that we can teach to any student. It is also, sadly, one of the most neglected topics in KS3 and in public examinations.

If our job as history teachers is to get our students to understand the past, then surely our students need to understand the British Empire.

The British Empire is a topic that gives our students a chance to understand the nuance and complexity of the past. It was different in different times, in different places and with different people. It is controversial and a current source of debate with historians, politicians and the general public. These are not problems that mean we should shy away from the topic, but reasons we should embrace it.

It is a topic that allows us to look at different perspectives (the British and the Indigenous) and geographical locations around the globe, and provides us with an opportunity to discuss fundamental issues such as race.

It is **the** topic that we should spend time on in our curriculums and **the** topic that we should spend time thinking about how, as teachers, we can best approach it. This textbook allows you to do both.

#### *The British Empire in the National Curriculum*

The British Empire is also part of the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Non-statutory examples that are <b>explicitly</b> related to the British Empire.	Non-statutory examples that are <b>implicitly</b> related to the British Empire.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The first colony in America and first contact with India</li> <li>● The Interregnum (including Cromwell in Ireland)</li> <li>● Britain’s transatlantic slave trade: its effects and its eventual abolition</li> <li>● The Seven Years War and The American War of Independence</li> <li>● The development of the British Empire with a depth study (for example, of India)</li> <li>● Ireland and Home Rule</li> <li>● Indian independence and end of Empire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Britain as the first industrial nation – the impact on society</li> <li>● The First World War and the Peace Settlement</li> <li>● The Second World War and the wartime leadership of Winston Churchill</li> <li>● Social, cultural and technological change in post-war British society</li> <li>● Britain’s place in the world since 1945</li> </ul>

### What are the challenges of teaching the British Empire?

Teaching the British Empire is not easy. There are a number of challenges and potential problems. Below we have described these challenges and also explained how this textbook can provide you with solutions.

When we describe the challenges below, we appreciate that not all schools are teaching the British Empire in this way. This is meant as a generalisation of a traditional approach. We recognise that many schools have already begun to address these challenges and are already providing solutions.

Challenge	What does this mean?	What solution can this book offer?
<b><i>Balance sheet</i></b>	<p>One of the biggest criticisms of the way that the history of the British Empire is viewed is that it is often seen through a 'balance sheet' approach. This is where the 'good' elements of the British Empire are weighed up against the 'bad' to make a judgement about how good or bad it was.</p> <p>This is problematic as this is a moral analysis and not a historical one. It is also problematic as it asks people to compare 'good' things against colonial violence. You obviously cannot and should not compare the benefits of something like the railways in India, with the violence of something like the public executions carried out by the East India Company during the 1857 Indian rebellion.</p> <p>This 'balance sheet' approach is often found in school teaching or older school textbooks where teachers ask questions such as '<i>Was the British Empire a good or bad thing?</i>' or '<i>Was British rule a good thing for the Indian subcontinent?</i>'.</p>	<p>We have avoided all questions that ask students to think about the British Empire through a balance sheet approach. The questions we use and ask in this book are all focused on the impact of the British Empire or the experience of British rule. This purposely avoids asking students to compare good and bad.</p> <p>We also directly challenge the balance sheet approach in the introduction to the book and in other chapters, for example India in Chapter 2.3.</p>
<b><i>Homogenising Empire</i></b>	<p>The British Empire lasted 400 years and covered the globe. British imperial rule was different in different periods of time and in different locations. Within each location and at each time it was different for different groups of people. It is complex.</p>	<p>Diversity of imperial rule is one of the key features of this textbook.</p> <p>The textbook is structured into three periods of time to show how imperial rule changed across its 400-year existence.</p>

	<p>Yet traditionally in textbooks and in school teaching, the British Empire is presented as a homogenised unit, something that was the same in all places, at all times, for all people. It is presented as THE British Empire. This is historically inaccurate.</p> <p>Teachers obviously have to simplify and generalise topics for students to understand, but homogenising the Empire is deeply misleading for our students.</p>	<p>Within each chapter we have tried to show how different people were affected.</p> <p>In the introduction to the book and in the section introductions we have purposely challenged the idea of homogeneity.</p>
<b><i>British perspective only</i></b>	<p>Traditionally, when the story of the British Empire has been told, it has nearly always been told from the perspective of the British. If you open any old textbook and find a chapter on the British Empire it will be told through the eyes of the British protagonists, for example Robert Clive. Often these men (and they are nearly always men) are presented as heroes despite the violence they often caused.</p> <p>The British perspective is important, but it is just one side of the story. The other side of the story, the perspective of the colonised, has nearly been entirely silenced in old textbooks or in school history teaching.</p> <p>Yet the story of the colonised is often far more interesting and more rich, and shows the legacy of Empire more clearly. This neglect needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>This book has purposely tried to be different. We have told stories from the perspective of the Indigenous People that were affected by the British Empire. We feel it is important to right the imbalance in school textbooks. Our 'Spotlight' feature is the greatest example of this. Nearly all Spotlights provide stories of those people who have traditionally been left out of the story of the British Empire.</p> <p>This does not mean, however, that we have ignored the British perspective. We have not. We have three chapters dedicated to the impact of the Empire on Britain and many other chapters include famous imperial British figures like Rhodes or Clive. But we have avoided portraying any figures in the book as heroes (or villains for that matter) as like all humans these individuals are complex. They have often done both good and bad things.</p>
<b><i>Geographical silences</i></b>	<p>The British Empire covered vast amounts of the globe, yet traditionally when we tell stories of the British Empire we focus on a few locations. For example, India often dominates the stories we tell in British schools.</p> <p>But there are other locations that are absent in the history of the British Empire we present. Close to home, Ireland is rarely included in our histories of the Empire, yet it was colonised and treated like a colony. Further away, the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in the British colonies in West Africa or New Zealand have also been silenced in British textbooks and British schools.</p>	<p>While we have not been able to cover every part of the British Empire (this would be impossible in a book of this length) we have included a larger number of geographical locations than previous textbooks. For example, we have included Ireland and the British Protectorate in Palestine – both of which have been left out of previous textbooks on the British Empire. The wider geographical reach of this textbook will provide you with the resources to pick and choose a curriculum for your classroom and your students.</p>

<p><b>Thematic silences</b></p>	<p>There are other silences in the traditional teaching of the British Empire in schools – those of colonial violence, and in particular the theme of race. The neglect of these issues was highlighted during the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020 when many British students wrote letters to schools deriding their neglect.</p> <p>These topics have probably been avoided as they are controversial and teachers probably have felt uncomfortable approaching them. However, by neglecting them we are neglecting some key features of the British Empire. We are not doing justice to history.</p>	<p>This book does not shy away from the themes of violence and race. In our 'A closer focus on' chapters we go into depth about these themes as well as the legacies of the British Empire. These chapters have been thoroughly reviewed by historical academics to ensure the content is accurate and appropriate to use in the classroom.</p> <p>Other chapters throughout the book also include violence and race in their narratives.</p>
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### How can you approach this book?

This book has **not** been designed to be taught in its entirety. There is purposely more detail here than you will need. We did this so that the book can be used flexibly and so that you can design a unit or units on the British Empire that fits into **your** curriculum and works for **your** students.

Each of the chapters has been written so that it can work on its own without the prior knowledge needed in other chapters. This means that you can dip in and out of chapters and use them together in a myriad of ways.

Below are some suggested approaches to how we might use this book to teach about the British Empire in KS3.

Please note you do not need to follow just one approach. You could easily combine multiple approaches, e.g. a chronological approach combined with some of the thematic approaches.

#### **The chronological approach**

Traditionally, in many schools, there has only ever been a single unit taught on the British Empire. We strongly feel that this does not do justice to the topic as it forces you to present the Empire in a homogenised way.

As an alternative, we recommend instead doing multiple, shorter units as this will give your students the best understanding of the British Empire.

The easiest, and we think the best, way of doing this is by looking at the British Empire in different eras, just as we have done in the structure of the textbook. The British Empire was very different in different eras and we feel that a chronological approach, where you teach three separate smaller units, one on each of the key periods of time in this book, would be highly effective.

We suggest the following. Each of these is a just a suggestion – chapters could easily be swapped out or material cut. For example, you could focus on two or three locations if time was restricted.

<p><b>What were the key features of the Early Empire?</b></p>	<p>Five lessons where you look at the topics of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1.1 Ireland</li> <li>● 1.3 America</li> <li>● 1.4 Caribbean</li> <li>● 1.5 India</li> </ul> <p>The fifth lesson could then be used to compare and discuss similarities and differences of the early Empire.</p>
<p><b>What was the experience of Empire in the nineteenth century?</b></p>	<p>Five lessons where you look at the topics of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2.2 / 2.3 India</li> <li>● 2.5 Australia</li> <li>● 2.7 Africa</li> <li>● 2.8 Ireland</li> </ul> <p>The fifth lesson could then be used to compare and discuss similarities and differences of the experience of the nineteenth-century Empire.</p>
<p><b>What is the story of the British Empire in the twentieth century?</b></p>	<p>Five lessons where you look at the topics of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3.4 Palestine</li> <li>● 3.5 / 3.7 India</li> <li>● 3.6 Second World War</li> <li>● 3.8 Decolonisation</li> </ul> <p>The fifth lesson could then be used to compare and discuss similarities and differences of the experience of the nineteenth-century Empire.</p>

Note: We recommend that if you are going to follow this approach that at least one country remains constant throughout the three units. India is probably the obvious example as it features heavily in all three sections.

### *The geographical approach*

If time is an issue, a really deep understanding of the British Empire in a single location would be equally beneficial. This ensures your students have a deep understanding of one place rather than a shallow one of many, which could lead to historical misconceptions. India is the obvious choice for this as it appears in multiple chapters of the textbook. It is also a really rich and interesting narrative. Below is an example of how the five chapters that focus on British rule in India could be combined:

<p><b>How did the experience of British rule in India change over time?</b></p>	<p>Six lessons which cover the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1.5 India: How did a British company begin an empire?</li> <li>● 2.2 India: How did Indians resist expanding Company Rule?</li> <li>● 2.3 India: How did the British Raj change the lives of Indian people?</li> <li>● 3.5 India: How did Indians challenge British rule after the First World War?</li> <li>● 3.7 India: Why was 1947 such a significant year in the history of the Indian subcontinent?</li> </ul> <p>Followed by a sixth lesson where you spend time thinking about change and continuity across the 200-year period of British rule.</p>
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This could be done in one single unit (possibly in Year 8) but it could alternatively be taught as three smaller units in each year of Key Stage 3. For example, the first lesson on how a British company began an empire could be done in Year 7, perhaps after a unit on the Tudors. The two lessons on British rule in the nineteenth century could be done in Year 8, perhaps after a unit on the Industrial Revolution. The remaining units on the twentieth century could then be done in Year 9. In many ways this might be more effective, but teachers would need to build in time to recap prior knowledge and ensure that knowledge is built over time.

Ireland would be an excellent alternative country to focus on as it also appears in all three time periods in the textbook.

### *The comparative approach*

One of the most important things that students can learn about the British Empire is that it was very different in different locations, e.g. the British Empire in Australia was very different from the British Empire in the Caribbean.

Asking students to look at the similarities and differences in the British Empire in two locations would be a really effective way of teaching students about the complexity of this history. The following chapters would make very effective comparisons:

- **Early Empire:** You could compare 1.5 India with 1.4 Caribbean
- **19th century:** You could compare 2.5 Australia with 2.7 Africa
- **20th century:** You could compare 3.3 Iraq with 3.4 Palestine

### *The single British Empire unit approach*

While we would not advise that you do a single unit on the British Empire, we understand that in some schools, especially those with a two-year KS3, this might be unavoidable. You could obviously follow the geographical approach (described above), but if you wanted to do something broader you might want to follow the suggestion below:

What is the story of the British Empire?	
Lesson 1	Early Empire – 1.4 Caribbean
Lesson 2	Early Empire – 1.5 India
Lesson 3	Changing Empire in the 19th century – 2.5 Australia
Lesson 4	Changing Empire in the 19th century – 2.7 Africa
Lesson 5	Empire in the 20th century – 3.2 First World War
Lesson 6	Empire in the 20th century – 3.8 Decolonisation
Lesson 7	A closer focus on: Race and racism in the British Empire

#### *The sideways glance or 'imperialising' existing units approach*

The British Empire touched nearly all aspects of British history. There are probably many topics you currently teach where you could have an extra lesson linking this traditional topic to the British Empire. 'Imperialising' existing topics is a good way to increase the amount of teaching time you spend on the Empire, without much effort.

We have provided a number of chapters throughout the book that allow you to add an imperial angle to an existing traditional topic. Below are a list of topics and accompanying chapters to 'imperialise' your curriculum:

- **Elizabeth I** – 1.2 America: What can we learn from the story of the Roanoke colony?
- **English Civil War** – 1.1 Ireland: What did colonisation mean for the Irish people?
- **Industrial Revolution** – 1.7 Britain: How did the early British Empire change Britain?
- **First World War** – 3.2 How did the people of the British Empire experience the First World War?
- **Second World War** – 3.6 What did the Second World War mean for the British Empire?

#### *The thematic approach*

There are obviously clear themes that run like the letters in a stick of rock through the history of the British Empire. We have explicitly addressed two of the most important, and controversial, themes in our 'A closer focus on' chapters in the textbook – **race** and **violence**.

Either of these themes could be turned into a scheme of learning on its own, for example '*How was violence a central feature of the British Empire?*'. If you want to follow this approach, we recommend you use the 'A closer focus on' chapters and then use elements from other chapters to illustrate.

This type of thematic approach would work best in conjunction with another approach so that students have a solid understanding of the Empire before they look at a key theme.

### How should this book be used in the classroom?

#### *Using the text effectively*

The writing in this textbook is unashamedly a bit more academic than previous textbooks. Teachers around the country have shown that students can cope with adult history scholarship so we have purposely increased the volume of words on the page and we have not shied away from technical vocabulary. This has allowed us to provide you with a richer historical narrative.

Below are some tips for using this type of text in your classroom to lead to more effective learning.

<p><b>Treat the text like a story</b></p>	<p>These chapters have been designed to be read out loud, by either you as the teacher or the students themselves.</p> <p>When you read out this text do so like you would a story. Pause and ask the students to reflect on what might happen next. Get the students to think about the impact of what they have just read. Ask them if they are surprised by what they have just read.</p>
<p><b>Pause on the keywords</b></p>	<p>There are lots of keywords in this textbook. The most difficult have either been defined in the text or are defined in the glossary in the back of the book.</p> <p>It is important that you pause on these keywords to check that students understand them.</p>
<p><b>Linger on the images</b></p>	<p>All of the images in this book have been carefully chosen. They are designed to accompany the text and enrich it. You need to linger on the images.</p> <p>Ask your students to reflect on what they might tell us about the story. Get them to think about what the purpose of such an image might be. Analyse the author of the image and why they might have either painted or photographed that image.</p>
<p><b>Analyse the 'Spotlights'</b></p>	<p>The 'Spotlight' feature of this book is designed to showcase individuals involved in these stories who might have traditionally been left out of the normal traditional textbook stories.</p> <p>Really emphasise these stories in your class. Make a big deal of them. Get your students to empathise with these individuals. Think about their perspective on the wider events.</p>

### Using the questions

Questions are the bread of butter of good history. You will notice that most chapters (apart from a few like the 'A closer focus on' chapters) have two main types of question:

- **Chapter question** – the enquiry question that frames the whole chapter.
- **Summary questions** – at the end of a chapter.

Some chapters also have **source questions** that are designed to get students to reflect on a specific issue in the images we have used.

We have purposely avoided traditional textbook tasks to make the book as flexible as possible for teachers. Both chapter and summary questions can be used as a task if needed.

All the questions could be used by students to make notes on these topics or to be answered in prose. We have provided potential answers to these questions in a separate document.

Please note that although chapter questions frame the content, if you feel that this specific question would not fit in with your scheme of learning, the text was written to be generic enough to fit your own question on the same topic.

### *Enriching the text*

As with any textbook we have worked to a budget. We would have loved to write a book which was double this length and was filled with more images. This was unfortunately not possible. However, we highly recommend that when you use this textbook in your class, you supplement the text with even more images. There are wonderful paintings, artefacts and photographs for each of the time periods covered, that could be used creatively to further enrich the text.

### *Guidance on language and teaching sensitive topics*

When you teach the British Empire it is important that you get language right. It is easy to cause offence. Firstly and most importantly you need to create the conditions in your classroom where students can make mistakes but be challenged. This is important. We will all make mistakes at times but it is important that students can be challenged without fear of repercussions.

It would be impossible to make a full list of the terms you should and should not use when teaching the British Empire. Firstly, as the list would be endless but secondly, the list is forever changing. The two most common terms you may want to consider which will help you teach a decolonised history are:

- **Indigenous not native.** Until fairly recently it would have been common in school textbooks to refer to the original inhabitants of a country as the 'natives'. This term however comes with the assumption that these people are not advanced or civilised. As you will read in our textbook, this was far from the case. Throughout the text you will see that instead we have used the term 'indigenous'. This is the term now preferred by most modern scholars.
- **Enslaved person not slave.** Referring to individuals put into slavery as 'slaves' removes any agency from these individuals. It does not highlight the horrific conditions and treatment they endured. Using the term 'enslaved person' does the opposite. It emphasises that this was something forced upon the individual and leaves the individual with agency.

If you would like a more comprehensive list of terminology, the Nottingham Museum service has put together an outstanding guide for terminology when teaching transatlantic slavery and race. Many of these words obviously crossover with the British Empire. [A Glossary of Terminology for Understanding Transatlantic Slavery and 'Race](#)

## Recommended books and podcasts

### *Books*

#### **Sathnam Sanghera – *Empireland – How Imperialism has Shaped Modern Britain***

A hugely readable history of Empire and why the British need to understand it more.

**William Dalrymple – *The Company Quartet – The Anarchy, White Mughals, Return of a King, and The Last Moghal***

Dalrymple's four books on India are exquisite examples of historical narrative. *The Anarchy* directly inspired our chapter on the East India Company.

**Priya Satia – *Time's Monster: History, Conscience, and Britain's Empire***

Satia looks at how historical imagination has shaped our understanding of Empire. All the authors of the textbook love this book.

### **Podcasts**

#### **Empire**

William Dalrymple and Anita Anand present the best podcast dedicated to Empire. The first series focused on India and covers large amounts of the material in the textbook.