Boldon School
INNOVATE: FOCUS: ACHIEVE

Knowledge Organiser

Year 8 History Half Term One

Week One: The British Empire

An **'empire'** is a group of countries ruled over by a single monarch or ruling power. The British Empire comprised of Britain, the 'mother country', and the colonies, countries ruled to by Britain. The British began to establish overseas colonies in the 16th century. The Empire meant that Britain was able to buy and sell more products like tobacco and sugar. By 1783, Britain had established an empire which comprised of colonies in Canada, America and the West Indies including New Zealand after Captain James Cook claimed it for the British crown in 1769, trading posts in India ,naval bases in the Mediterranean - Gibraltar and Minorca. **But:** Britain's defeat in the American War of Independence meant the loss of the American colonies and the end of the 'first British Empire'.

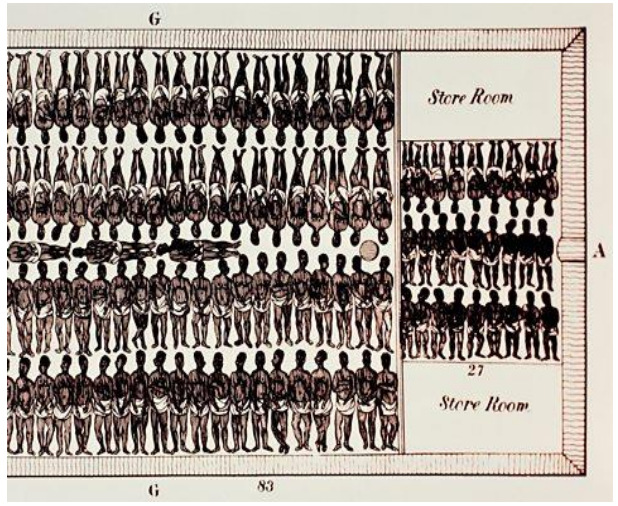
British Empire: India

•The East India Trading Company assumed control of areas of India in the 1600's to become involved in the Indian Spice Trade.
•Company control was unpopular and the Indians tried to rebel in 1857. Britain crushed it through violence •Britain restructured the hierarchy in India, with Victoria as the Empress, the Viceroy ruling the country and the Civil Service supporting him.
•The British used violent punishments to subdue and deter the Indians from further rebellion e.g. executions attached to a canon
•The British rule oversaw great famines in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Week Two: The Triangular trade and The middle passage

Triangular slave trade

At least 12 million Africans were taken to the Americas as slaves between 1532 and 1832 For the British slave traders it was a three-legged journey called the 'triangular trade': West African slaves were exchanged for trade goods such as **brandy and guns**. **Slaves** were then taken via the 'Middle Passage' across the Atlantic for sale in the West Indies and North America. Finally, a cargo of **rum and sugar** taken from the colonies, was taken back to England to sell.



Middle Passage

The voyage from Africa to the New World of the Americas was called the **Middle Passage**. Slave ships usually took between 6-11 weeks. Slave ships made large profits by carrying as many slaves as possible across the Atlantic to sell at auction, so conditions were incredibly cramped. It is estimated that 15–16 per cent of slaves died on the Middle Passage.

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Week Four and five: Life on plantations and Harriet Tubman

Life on plantations: Enslaved people were forced to work on large plantations (farms) growing and harvesting resources that were highly sought after, for example sugar, rice, tobacco, and indigo. Slaves would be heavily punished and mistreated if they did not work hard enough e.g. whippings.

The **house slaves** would be servants to their masters. **Field slaves** worked from dawn until sunset. They dug, hoed, weeded, planted and manured the sugar canes.
Slaves spoke many different languages because they came from many different African tribes. As families were often split up, the slaves would choose a 'good parent' to look after any children.

Harriet Tubman was born Araminta Ross. She would later adopt the name "Harriet" after her mother: Harriet Ross. The surname Tubman comes from her first husband, John Tubman, who she married in 1844.

Harriet was born a slave and raised on Maryland's Eastern Shore where the lines between slavery and freedom were often blurred. It was not unusual for families in this area to include both free and enslaved members. Harriet's own husband, John Tubman was a free black man. Her status, however, remained unchanged until she fled to Pennsylvania – a free state – in 1849. Her husband did not make the journey and ultimately re-married after Harriet's departure.

Harriet would return to Maryland many times over the next decade to rescue both family and non-family members from the bondages of slavery.

Harriet earned the nickname "Moses" after the prophet Moses in the Bible who led his people to freedom. In all of her journeys she "never lost a single passenger."

Tubman's work was a constant threat to her own freedom and safety. Slave holders placed a bounty for her capture and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an ever-present danger, imposing severe punishments on any person who assisted the escape of a slave.

Harriet wore many hats: She was an active proponent of women's suffrage and worked alongside women such as side Susan B. Anthony. During the civil war, Harriet also worked for the Union Army as a cook, a nurse and even a spy.

Just before Harriet's death in 1913 she told friends and family, "I go to prepare a place for you." She was buried with military honors in Fort Hill Cemetery in New York.

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Week six and seven. Should Britain be ashamed of its empire?

Abolition of the slave trade

The Slave Trade Triangle was abolished in 1807. Slavery was banned in the British Empire in 1833. There were several groups and individuals who were involved in the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Britain and the Empire:

William Wilberforce: A British MP and was a member of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

The Quakers: They wrote pamphlets that stated that the slave trade was immoral as they believed that every body was equal in God's image.

Olaudah Equiano: A former slave who wrote a book about his experiences.

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. Some of the arguments that have been made are listed below: The British Empire is NOT something to be proud of:

- 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. The British Empire us something to be proud of 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.

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.

Colonisation = The forced repression of other countries by the hegemonic (dominant) colonial power. Britain colonised ¼ world's surface at its height in the 1880s

Religious indoctrination = Where the British Empire deliberately aimed to spread its Christian faith against the wishes of other religious communities, such as the Sikhs and Hindus in India.

Transatlantic = Crossing the Atlantic

White Gold = A nickname given to sugar because it made people so much money.

Overseer = A person in charge of looking after enslaved people in the fields, monitoring their work.