

*History*  
UNFOLDING

# THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN THE 19TH CENTURY



THE LION'S SHARE.

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# Introduction

## Great Britain's World Empire

The British Empire was already two centuries old by 1800. At that time, in fact, some might well have concluded that it had seen its best days. The American Revolution deprived the British of one of their most valuable possessions. Moreover, the wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France left Great Britain isolated and vulnerable, at one point facing a continent nearly united against it.

Yet the nineteenth century was to be the British century. Britain's industrial supremacy would remain unchallenged well into the late 1800s. And its worldwide empire would expand to encompass a quarter of the globe. In some places the control of land and resources was the primary motivation for expansion. In other places, the need for port facilities or strategic naval bases led to acquisitions. The desire to relieve population pressure at home, competition with other European powers and humanitarian concerns and missionary aims all fueled this drive for empire. It was an unshakable confidence in its cultural superiority that gave Britain the ability to impose its rule on such a wide variety of cultures and regions.

The 12 visual displays in this booklet touch on all of these themes. They should provide a focus for debating all of the issues the age of imperialism still raises. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three of the illustrations to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **Britain Rules the Waves**

The illustrations here focus on British naval supremacy and the role of sea power as a constant British concern in the development of its empire.

### **India: Jewel of the Empire**

India's trade with Great Britain was always a central concern of those officials who developed the empire. And as Britain industrialized, India above all offered a limitless outlet for the products of its factories. Many other parts of the empire, from Gibraltar to Egypt, to Cape Colony, to Burma and Singapore derived their importance to the British as strategic locations along the lifeline to India.

### **The British in Asia and Africa**

China and Africa were two other central parts of the empire the British acquired in the 1800s—the first for the trade it could generate, the second for the land, natural resources and strategic bases it offered.

### **The Scramble for Empire**

A key factor in imperial expansion toward the end of the century were Britain's growing fears about the other rising industrial powers of Europe, France, Russia and especially Germany. The scramble for empire among these powers got out of hand precisely when it was also becoming harder to impose imperial rule within many colonial societies all over the world.

## Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

## How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

**A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET** This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

**DIGITAL IMAGES** The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS**

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will better understand how sea power was the key to Great Britain's ability to carve out such a huge empire.
2. Students will understand that the colonies served various purposes in Britain's empire.

# Britain Rules the Waves

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

A good place to begin the story of the British Empire in the nineteenth century is with the Battle of Trafalgar. The battle took place on October 21, 1805, at a key point in Britain's long war with Napoleonic France. In that battle, Admiral Horatio Nelson was able to surprise and destroy the combined French and Spanish fleet. No British ships were lost, although Nelson himself was killed. The British were already the world's foremost sea power. And their empire was already huge, despite the loss of the 13 colonies in the American Revolution. But the Battle of Trafalgar ended Napoleon's dream of invading England, and it helped insure Britain's naval supremacy for the rest of the 1800s.

**Illustration 2**

This cartoon portrays England as a "devilfish" with tentacles grabbing every land in sight. Yet though their empire was huge, the British did not seek to conquer and occupy lands wherever they could. They did acquire some colonies for their economic value—Jamaica, for example. Other colonies were taken mainly as naval stations to help Britain control the seas or to give it more political influence in a particular region. In the cartoon, Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus and Cape Colony fall into this category. In India, Britain's goal at first was just to trade. But its rivalry with France led it to take control of one part of India after another. As for Egypt, which this devilfish is reaching for, its value to Great Britain had mainly to do with protecting the key sea route to India.

**Illustration 3**

Even before the Suez Canal was built, Egypt was of concern to Great Britain. Its strategic importance vastly increased once the canal opened in 1869. The trip from England to India was shortened by thousands of miles. Instead of rounding Africa, ships could cross the Mediterranean and pass through Suez to the Red Sea and on to the Indian Ocean. The Suez Canal was built by a French-Egyptian company under the guidance of engineer Ferdinand Marie de Lesseps. But in 1875, Egypt's growing debts forced it to let Great Britain buy Egypt's shares in the canal. This gave the British direct control over the Suez Canal. The cartoon on the right points out that Britain's real interest in the canal was India, the "key" to its mighty empire.



## Lesson 1—Britain Rules the Waves

# Illustration 1



Stock Montage, Inc.

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

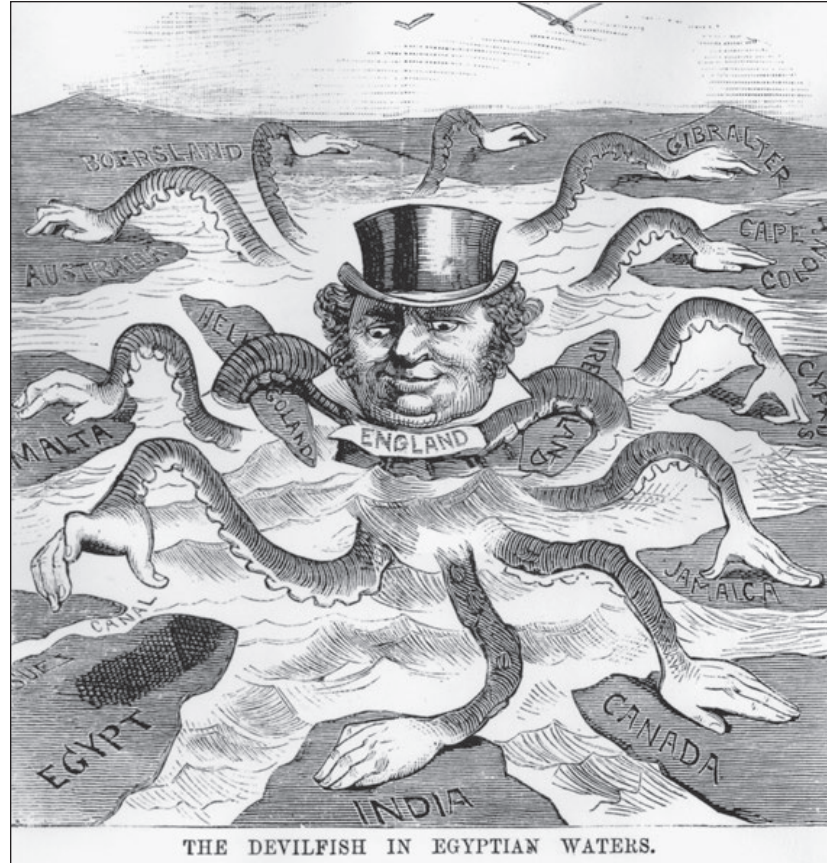
1. This is a drawing of a famous sea battle that took place in 1805. The battle was part of a war Great Britain had been fighting for 12 years against a man who hoped to conquer and control most of Europe. Can you name that man and the nation he led?
2. On October 21, the British fleet was completely victorious in the famous battle depicted here. In the course of the battle, the British destroyed much of the fleets of two powerful nations. Can you name the battle and the two nations whose fleets were destroyed during it?
3. The British did not lose a single ship in the Battle of Trafalgar. But the commander of the British fleet was killed in the battle. Can you name him?
4. Based on what you know about that time, can you explain why this battle was so important both in terms of the Napoleonic Wars and in terms of British power throughout the 1800s?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Key battles have often been turning points in the development of Great Britain's empire. During the Seven Years War, for example, two battles half a world apart had a major impact on the history of the British Empire. One was the Battle for Quebec in 1759, in which British forces were led by James Wolfe. The other was the Battle of Plassey in 1757, in India, where Robert Clive was in command. Read more about these two battles. Prepare a brief talk in class on the battles, on the role (if any) sea power played in them and on their overall importance in the growth of the British Empire.
2. What if Great Britain had lost the Battle of Trafalgar? Would the history of Europe and the British Empire have been all that different? Read more about the impact of the Battle of Trafalgar. Pretend that French Admiral Villeneuve had won instead. Now write a brief imaginary encyclopedia article on European history in the nineteenth century as you think it might have unfolded.

## Lesson 1—Britain Rules the Waves

# Illustration 2



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### Discussing the Illustration

1. In this cartoon, England is portrayed as a huge devilfish. Why do you suppose the artist added the top hat to this odd creature?
2. The cartoon is actually a way of picturing the entire British Empire in a single image. As you can see, the devilfish has a large number of tentacles. What are the tentacles doing, and what point do you think they are meant to make about the British Empire?
3. Britain's victory at Trafalgar gave it a huge lead over all other nations in sea power. The British held that lead throughout the 1800s. This cartoon seems to support the view that sea power was crucial to helping Britain maintain its huge worldwide empire. How does the cartoon support this view?
4. The devilfish is about to grab Egypt. The cartoon was published in 1882 when the British were acting to increase their control over that country. Can you name some other colonies not listed in the cartoon that were also a part of the British Empire by 1882?

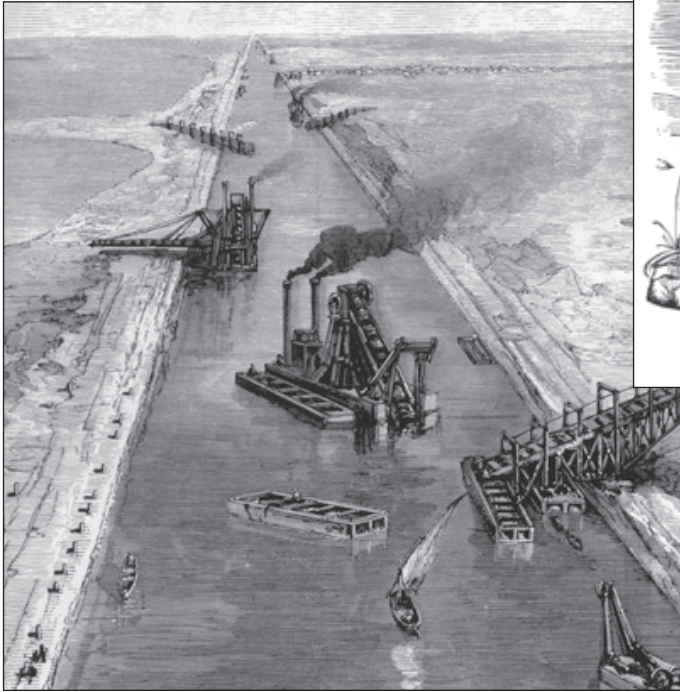
### Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** In the cartoon shown here, a strange sea monster with a top hat is used as a symbol for England. Editorial cartoonists use two broad groups of symbols. One group is made up of unique symbols, chosen only once simply because they help one particular cartoon make its point. The other group is made up of "standard" symbols, used time and time again to represent the same thing. Examples of this type of symbol are the donkey and the elephant, often used for our two main political parties, the Democrats and Republicans. Look through history books or collections of historical cartoons for editorial cartoons on Great Britain and the British Empire. Look for examples of both types of cartoon. Create a bulletin board display entitled "Cartooning the Empire." As a part of the display, group the cartoons into the two main types described here. Write brief paragraphs on the way the British are symbolized in each cartoon.



## Lesson 1—Britain Rules the Waves

# Illustration 3



Stock Montage, Inc.



Cartoons from *Punch*

### Discussing the Illustrations

1. Throughout the 1800s, Egypt was a big concern to Great Britain's leaders whenever they were thinking about the empire. From Egypt's location, can you guess why it has always been of importance to the British when thinking about the needs of their empire?
2. Egypt's importance to Great Britain suddenly grew greater in 1869. From what you see here and your history reading, can you explain?
3. Egypt's government borrowed huge amounts of money from Great Britain in the late 1800s. To help Egypt's ruler, the Khedive, pay off his debts, Britain bought something from him in 1875. That's what the cartoon on the right is about. Do you know what the British bought from the Khedive?
4. The lion was often used as a symbol for Britain in cartoons in the 1800s. This cartoon suggests that the British lion got the best of the deal when it purchased the Khedive's Suez Canal shares. Can you guess why the "key" to this deal is labeled "India"?

### Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Ask your teacher or librarian to help you find books or other sources on the building of the Suez Canal. Based on what you learn, create an entire front page of a newspaper reporting on the canal as if it is 1869 and the canal has just been completed. Use the drawing of the canal shown here, or copies of other illustrations you are able to find. Also, create a map showing the canal, the route from England to India through the canal and the route around the southern tip of Africa. If you wish, include imaginary interviews with French engineer de Lesseps on the building of the canal or with British officials commenting on its significance.
2. Learn more about British relations with Egypt during the 1800s and the 1900s. Create a simple timeline showing the key changes in British control over Egypt. Use the timeline in a brief talk to the class about the slow and piecemeal way in which the British came to control Egypt as a colony.



**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will better understand the important role India played in Great Britain's worldwide empire.
2. Students will better understand the cultural tensions caused by British imperial rule in the 1800s in places like India.

# India: Jewel of the Empire

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

At first, British rule in India was in the hands of a private company, the British East India Company. Its purpose was to carry on trade between England and India. Over time, rivalry with France led the East India Company to extend its control to more and more of India's lands. Later, the British government took direct control of the colony. By then, perhaps one hundred thousand British officials and soldiers ruled a land of two hundred million or more. Some of these officials were cruel; others were honest and fair. In either case, as these drawings suggest, vast cultural and economic differences separated this small class of rulers from those they ruled. And for the most part, the British expected Indians to copy their manners, customs and beliefs. They did not expect to adopt any Indian traditions or beliefs for themselves.

**Illustration 2**

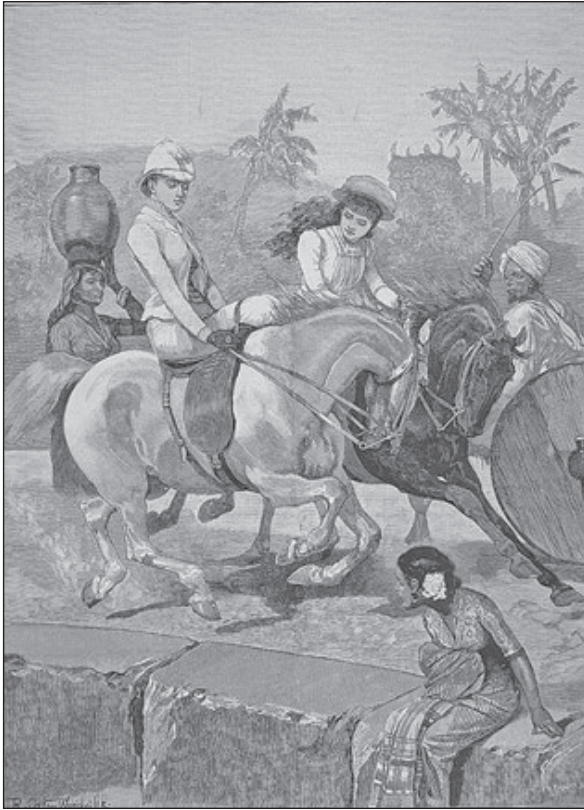
At first, the British made no effort to change India's customs. But in the 1800s, they did oppose certain Hindu practices, and many of them looked down on the Hindu and Moslem beliefs of India's masses. In 1857, anger about this triggered the Sepoy Mutiny. This huge revolt by Indian soldiers under British command began with rumors that new cartridges were greased with pork or beef fat. Soldiers biting open the cartridges would make contact with the fat, something both Hindu and Moslem religions forbade. The uprising was very violent. This cartoon portrays the British response to one massacre of British civilians during the uprising. Its depiction of the British as morally pure may itself help to explain the Mutiny. The Mutiny was a huge uprising, but it was not well organized. British forces soon put it down and re-established order.

**Illustration 3**

The Indian Mutiny of 1857 shocked the British and led to major changes. Instead of the East India Company, the British government itself took direct control of India. The cartoon on the left views this transfer of power as one in which a kindly Queen Victoria takes command of a grateful India. Yet after the Mutiny, the British could rarely be quite so sure of their hold over India. Unrest forty years later still reminded one artist of the horrors of the Mutiny. In his cartoon here, the ghost of a general from the time of the Mutiny warns that the Indian tiger is still not to be trusted.

## Lesson 2—India: Jewel of the Empire

# Illustration 1



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### ***Discussing the Illustrations***

1. These are two scenes of life in India in the 1800s during Great Britain's rule. In many ways, India was the most important part of the entire British Empire in the 1800s. What might be some of the reasons for its great importance?
2. India was a very old and highly civilized land, and it was of great economic value to Great Britain. But traditional textile workers in India such as the man shown here were not helped by British trade in the 1800s. That's mainly because of the Industrial Revolution in England and the key role of textiles in that Industrial Revolution. Can you explain?
3. As the other drawing suggests, British officials and their families in India tended to live just as they had in England. That is, they generally did not adopt any Indian customs. How does the drawing suggest this? Why do you think the British held on to their own ways of life so completely in India? Do you think this helped or hurt them in their efforts to govern India? Explain your answers.

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. British rule in the 1800s was hard on India's native weavers. That's because of British rule in India and the Industrial Revolution in England itself. Read more about the Industrial Revolution and its impact on textile manufacturing. Also, learn more about trade between England and India in the 1800s. Now write a brief essay describing Britain's economic impact on India in the 1800s. Explain how this impact affected Indian textile workers such as the one in this drawing.
2. The two British women shown here seem not to have adopted any Indian dress styles or customs in adjusting to life in India. How would you adapt to a new land? Pretend you are moving to a different country. List what you want to bring with you. Also list all the everyday activities you want to continue, such as eating patterns, dress, hobbies, sports, work activity, reading habits, religious practices, etc. How much of this would you be willing to change in your new home? Share your lists in a discussion with the rest of the class.

## Illustration 2



Cartoons from *Punch*

### Discussing the Illustration

1. For many decades, the British had little trouble ruling India. In fact, British India was actually governed by a private trading company at first. Can you name it?
2. For a long time, the British did little to change India's customs or religious traditions. What two major world religions do most people in India follow?
3. However, in the 1800s, British officials did show disapproval of some Hindu and other Indian customs. This created anger and suspicion, and in 1857, it helped trigger a violent uprising known as the Sepoy Mutiny. What do you know about this uprising?
4. This is a British cartoon. It is about Great Britain's angry response to a massacre of British subjects at Cawnpore during the Mutiny. Who do you think the female figure in the cartoon stands for? From what you know of the Mutiny, do you think the cartoon's reaction to it is fair? In general, what does the cartoon help to show about British attitudes toward India and its people?

### Follow-up Activity

1. One article on the Indian Mutiny says this:

*"[Indian] Nationalist historians have seen in it the first Indian war of independence. In fact, it was rather the last effort of traditional India."*

Read more about the Mutiny and what caused it. In an essay, comment on at least three of the following aspects of life in India in the mid-1800s:

British railroads, roads, and telegraph systems  
British schools for Indians  
The Indian caste system  
Indian officers in the Bengal army  
British missionary activity  
British prohibitions of certain Hindu customs

In your essay, explain how the three factors (or more) you have chosen do or do not back up the statement from the article quoted above.



## Lesson 2—India: Jewel of the Empire

### Illustration 3



Cartoons from *Punch*



Cartoons from *Punch*

#### Discussing the Illustrations

1. The great Indian Mutiny led to a transfer of direct control over India from the East India Company to the government itself, with the queen later named Empress of India. Can you name the woman who was Queen of England from 1837 to 1901?
2. On the left, a grateful woman kneels before Queen Victoria. This woman represents India's people. In spite of what the Mutiny showed, many Indians probably were grateful to the queen and to England. After all, the British had forced many of India's once warring princes to live in peace. What else about the British Empire might have made Indians grateful? Should they have been grateful? Why or why not?
3. Forty years after the Mutiny, John Lawrence's ghost, on the right, looks warily at a tiger. In smaller type, Lawrence, a British general during the Mutiny, says of this tiger, "Hope they understand him better now than they did in my time." What do you think the tiger stands for in this cartoon? What point do the words from Lawrence help the cartoon to make?

#### Follow-up Activities

1. Here is one British official talking about India:

*There laws exist not, and he who rules, must rule the people by his will. If his will be evil, the people will be far more miserable than it is possible for any people to be . . . but if his will be good as well as strong, happy are the people . . . for a benevolent despotism is the best of all governments.*

Write a brief essay about these two cartoons. In it, explain in what way, if any, each cartoon reflects the view expressed in the above statement. In what way, if any, does either cartoon take a different view?

2. The British are often criticized for being intolerant of India's Hindu and Moslem practices. But some of those practices still horrify people, for example, suttee—the burning to death of a Hindu widow on her husband's funeral pyre. Learn more about suttee and British efforts to end it. In your group, debate this question: "Who was more guilty of intolerance: the British for trying to ban suttee or the Indians for wanting to practice it?" Share your views in class.



**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will understand how widespread British imperial activities were in the 1800s.
2. Students will better understand the varying motives and interests of Britain and British individuals active in the colonies.

# The British in Asia and Africa

*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

In India, the British saw themselves as bringing civilization to a backward people. This attitude was even stronger among the British in Africa in the 1800s. But this sense of superiority took many forms. On the left here is a missionary worker in Africa. Missionaries may have viewed African beliefs as backward, but they often took the side of Africans in conflicts with local British officials or settlers. The other cartoon portrays businessman Cecil Rhodes as a giant bringing material progress to all of Africa. Rhodes was bold and ruthless. His dream was for an Africa modernized by British mines, railroads, telegraphs and other industries—and held together by British rule. Perhaps it is no accident that this cartoon portrayal of him and his dreams for Africa includes no actual Africans.

**Illustration 2**

Unlike in India, the British never took control of much land in China. But China definitely became a part of the British Empire anyway. Britain's main objective was to trade with China to buy its tea, silk and porcelain. However, the British had nothing the Chinese wanted to buy in return. So British merchants began importing opium from India into China. The Chinese government's efforts to ban this trade finally led to war in 1839. As this illustration makes clear, the Chinese could not equal British naval or military technology. China lost this first Opium War and was forced to open several ports to British trade.

**Illustration 3**

Two more Opium Wars followed. As a result, China was forced to open more trading ports, let British citizens in China be tried in British courts and admit Christian missionaries. Other Western nations won similar rights. Soon a scramble was on to divide up China. At that same time, the Islamic Ottoman Empire in the Middle East faced similar threats. But Great Britain backed the Ottoman rulers against Russian threats to them. The British did not want Russia to win easy access to the Mediterranean or to get too close to India. As a result, Britain convinced Europe to work together for a time to keep the Ottoman Empire alive. In this cartoon, the Ottoman Sultan reassures a “sick” China that it, too, can count on this kind of cure from the Europeans.

## Lesson 3—The British in Asia and Africa

# Illustration 1



Stock Montage, Inc.



Cartoons from *Punch*

### Discussing the Illustrations

1. In the 1800s, the British took control of huge parts of Africa. These two drawings picture two very different types of British colonists. On the left, a missionary makes his way across the African countryside. What do you think led missionaries to risk the dangers of life in Africa or other parts of the empire?
2. On the right a powerful businessman is seen with a telegraph wire in his hands. In the late 1800s, this man had enormous power in one British colony in Africa. Can you name him and that colony?
3. Rhodes dreamed of uniting much of Africa under British control and bringing the benefits of civilization to it. From the cartoon and what you know of Rhodes, can you explain what his vision for Africa was?
4. In what ways do you think those who went to Africa as missionaries might have agreed with the views of empire builders like Rhodes? In what ways would they have disagreed? What do you think the artist who drew Rhodes wanted us to think of him?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Read a biography of Cecil Rhodes. Write a brief biographical sketch of Rhodes in which you answer these questions: What do you admire most about Rhodes? What do you most disapprove of? In what ways does the above cartoon portray Rhodes accurately? In what ways is it inaccurate? Does it portray him fairly, too favorably or too unfavorably?
2. **Small-group activity:** The British Empire actually led the world in the 1800s in trying to end slavery and the slave trade. To discuss this further, have each group member learn more about one of the following historical figures and his attitudes toward the empire and toward the abolition of slavery:

William Wilberforce  
David Livingstone  
Charles Dickens

Cecil Rhodes  
Benjamin Disraeli  
Rudyard Kipling

In role as these men, hold a debate before the class on this question: "The British Empire's role in ending slavery was the only truly worthwhile thing about it."



## Illustration 2



Stock Montage, Inc.

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. In the 1800s, the British expanded their control over India and began to carve out a huge empire in Africa. Meanwhile, they had to work very hard to convince another huge Asian nation just to trade with them. In fact, they fought several wars with that nation over this issue. A battle from these wars is shown here. Can you name the types of ships fighting the British here and the country for which they fought?
2. In the 1700s and early 1800s, China's rulers had refused to trade with any of the European nations, Great Britain included. From what you know about China in these centuries, can you explain why?
3. In 1839, the British fought the first of three so-called "Opium Wars" over trading rights in China. Why were they called the Opium Wars, and what changes did they lead to in China's dealings with Great Britain?
4. In your view, would it have been better for China to open itself to trade with Great Britain from the start? Why or why not?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Fifty years before the first Opium War, China was still powerful enough to look down on the British and send them away empty-handed. This was what happened to Lord Macartney in 1792 when he visited China to convince its rulers to trade with Great Britain. Read more about this trip and its results. Also read more about how China changed from 1792 to 1839. Give a brief talk in class about these changes and how they affected the outcome of the Opium Wars.
2. **Small-group activity:** As a result of the first Opium War, China turned over Hong Kong to Great Britain. Learn more about Hong Kong's history from the time of the British takeover until today. Find photos and other illustrations of Hong Kong during this time. Use these in a bulletin board display titled, "Hong Kong: Imperialist Conquest or British Empire Success Story?" Create a timeline of Hong Kong history for the display, and write brief paragraphs for all the illustrations. In these paragraphs, try to suggest answers to the question the display title raises.

## Illustration 3



Cartoons from *Punch*

### Discussing the Illustration

1. By the late 1800s, China was a troubled land whose weak rulers seemed unable to restore its power. Which of the figures in this cartoon stands for China at this time? How can you tell this figure is China?
2. The other figure in this cartoon is supposed to be the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. What was the Ottoman Empire and where was it located?
3. By the late 1800s, the Ottoman Empire was being called the “sick man of Europe.” But Britain often tried to help it. That’s mainly because the British were worried about Russia. Can you explain what they were worried about and why their fears led them to prop up the Ottoman Empire?
4. For a while, the British were able to convince other European nations to help keep the Ottomans strong. In the cartoon, the Sultan recommends “a dose of Concert of Europe” to China. What do you suppose he means? Why do you think this “cure” would not have worked for China?

### Follow-up Activities

1. In this cartoon, the Ottoman Sultan tells a sick China, “Going to pieces, Old man? Nonsense! All you want is a dose of Concert of Europe.” Read more about the Ottoman Empire, the “sick man of Europe” in the 1800s. Also read about the European competition to divide up China in the late 1800s. Based on what you learn, create a dialogue between the two figures in this cartoon. In this dialogue, have the Ottoman Sultan explain what he means. Then have China reply in detail as to why he does or does not agree with the suggestion the Sultan is giving him.
2. The cartoon shown here was published in 1898, at a time when the “Concert of Europe,” as the Ottoman Sultan calls it, seemed to be working for him. That would soon change. Read about the history of the Ottoman Empire from 1878 to 1914. Now, pretend you are the Sultan in this cartoon. It is August 1914. Write a long letter to the China figure in the cartoon expressing your feelings now about the “Concert of Europe.”



**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will better understand how European competition fueled a frantic scramble for colonies in the late 1800s.
2. Students will assess the impact and lasting importance of the British Empire.

# The Scramble for Empire

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

For a long time, Great Britain ruled the seas and controlled an empire without having to worry about other powerful industrial nations. But in the late 1800s that began to change. In Asia, for example, France, Russia, Germany and Japan all began to compete with the British to carve up the weakening Chinese Empire. In 1894–95, Japan won a war with China. In this cartoon, Japan is scooping up its winnings. Three other European nations are complaining about this to John Bull (Great Britain). But John Bull is unwilling to stop Japan from playing this game. In fact, the British hoped to befriend Japan as a way to check the ambitions of the other European powers in Asia.

**Illustration 2**

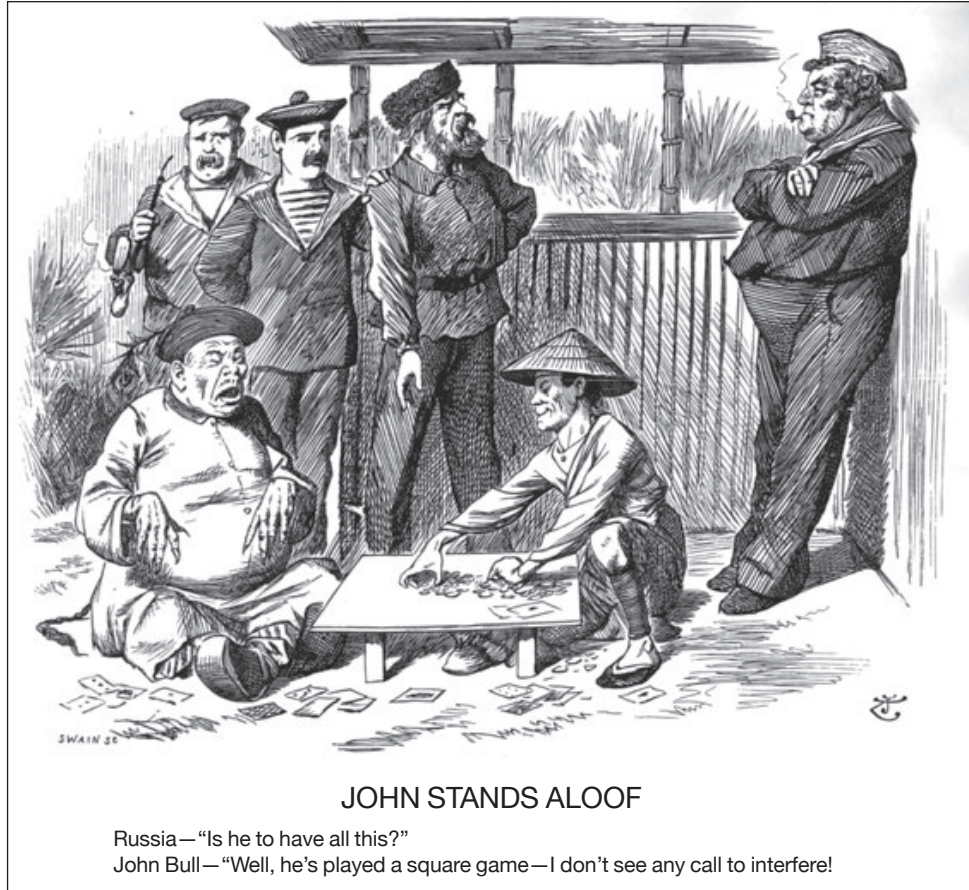
In the late 1800s, both France and Germany became powerful industrial nations. Germany especially began to build a big navy that worried the British. And both nations soon became rivals of the British in Africa as well as Asia. The cartoon on the left comments on a tense standoff between the British and French in Nigeria in Western Africa. On the right, Cecil Rhodes is making a deal with the German kaiser for the right to extend his telegraph line through German East Africa. The Kaiser says he has no objection, “for a consideration.” The growing suspicion between these European powers fueled an intense scramble for Africa. By the early 1900s, practically the entire continent had been carved up.

**Illustration 3**

In southern Africa, the British faced a different kind of conflict. There, an early group of Europeans, the Afrikaners, battled the British for control over what is now South Africa. The Afrikaners, or Boers, were mainly farmers descended from Dutch settlers. They had been in Africa long before the British took control of Cape Colony in 1806. They resented the British who, among other things, demanded they give up their black slaves. Fighting in the late 1800s led finally to the Boer War of 1899–1902. It was long and brutal. Illustrations such as the one on the left present it as a fight full of glory and heroism. But tough Boer soldiers like the two on the right made it clear to the British that the days of easy control over their empire were rapidly passing.

## Lesson 4—The Scramble for Empire

# Illustration 1



Cartoons from *Punch*

### Discussing the Illustration

1. In this 1895 cartoon, the man scooping up his winnings stands for an Asian nation that won a war that year against the nation portrayed by the other man at the table. Can you name these two nations and briefly explain what the war between them was all about?
2. Japan's victory that year surprised many Europeans. Why do you think they were so surprised?
3. Four European nations are portrayed in the cartoon. Three of them are complaining to the fourth about how much Japan is gaining from its victory against China. How many of these European nations can you identify? What helps you to identify each one?
4. All of these nations at this time were working hard to gain greater control over parts of China. Three of them are unhappy about what Japan has won from China. But Great Britain won't join with them over this. Why do you suppose the British were less concerned about Japan than the others were?

### Follow-up Activities

1. This cartoon uses stereotypical facial features and gestures to help readers quickly identify each of the nations represented in the cartoon. Such stereotypical images can at times be insulting. Are any of these stereotypes insulting? Write a brief essay about this cartoon's use of stereotyping. In the essay, try to explain which stereotypical features are meant to help readers link each figure with a nation. Identify any stereotypes that seem to you to be insulting and explain why you find them insulting.
2. Read more about the war between Japan and China in 1894–95. Also, find out what various European powers involved in China at the time thought about Japan's victory. Based on what you learn, create a dialogue among all six figures in this cartoon that adds to the point it makes. Make a copy of the cartoon, and draw in your dialogue in the form of cartoon word-bubbles over the heads or to the side of each figure.



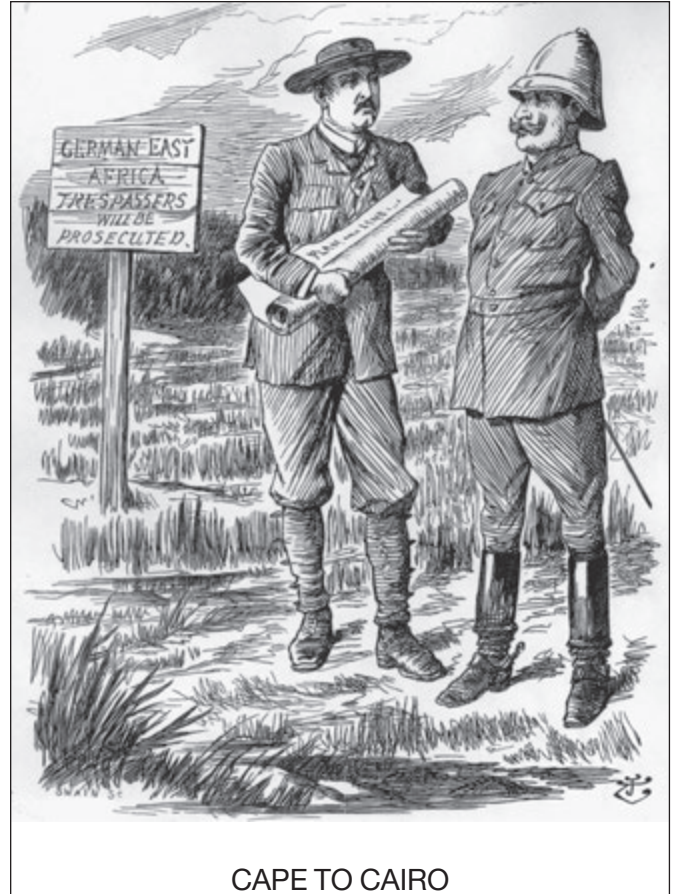
## Lesson 4—The Scramble for Empire

# Illustration 2



A BOUNDARY QUESTION

Cartoons from *Punch*



CAPE TO CAIRO

Cartoons from *Punch*

### Discussing the Illustrations

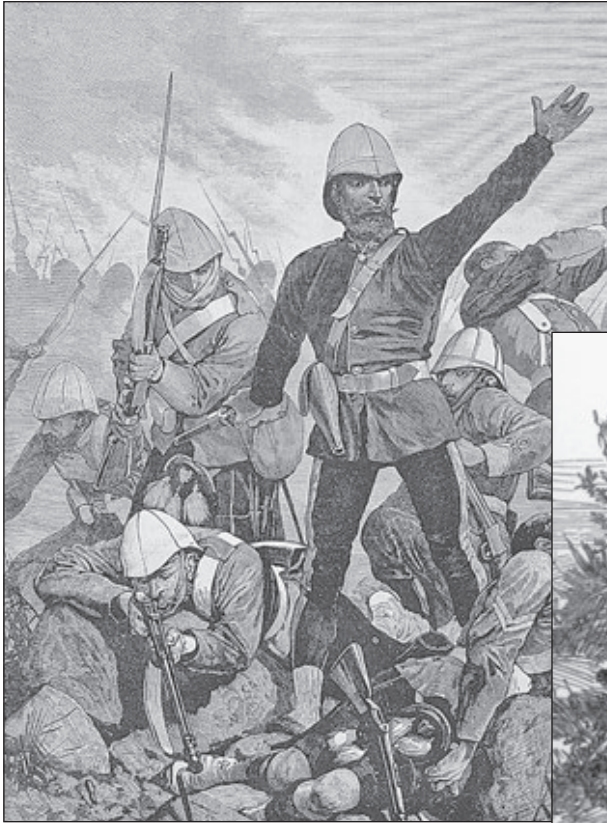
1. Well into the 1800s, Great Britain still did not control all that much territory in Africa. But in the late 1800s, a rapid scramble for colonies in Africa began. The scramble was between Great Britain and several other powerful European nations. These cartoons should help you name two of those other nations.
2. In West Africa in these years, the British and the French often argued about the boundary lines between their colonies. Can you name some British and French colonies in West Africa in these years?
3. In the cartoon on the right, Cecil Rhodes is asking Germany if he can run his telegraph line through German East Africa. Germany was actually the nation the British worried about most in the 1890s and the early 1900s. But Germany did not have many colonies in Africa or anywhere else. Why do you think the British were so worried about Germany?
4. What else do you know about the European rivalries that led to such a scramble for empire in these years?

### Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** The scramble for Africa resulted in many boundaries that made little sense. Study one former British colony in Africa. Prepare a map of this colony showing the location of tribal or ethnic groups at the time the colony was established. Show major resources and other features. Indicate any boundary changes since the colony became independent. Use your map in a talk explaining the problems these boundaries caused or still may be causing.
2. Many English writers celebrated the British Empire in song and poetry. Among the most famous was Rudyard Kipling. But Kipling could sometimes be critical of the empire. Read some of Kipling's poetry. Try to find one poem that seems to be just a patriotic celebration of the empire or some event in its history. Now try to find a poem that contains a warning or a criticism of the empire. (You may need to do some background reading to fully understand some of Kipling's poems.) Share your poems in a class discussion, and explain why you chose each one.

## Lesson 4—The Scramble for Empire

### Illustration 3



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#### ***Discussing the Illustrations***

1. In addition to rivalries with other European colonial powers, Great Britain also had growing problems with people in its own colonies in the late 1800s. These two scenes are of fighting between the British and another large group of whites in what is today South Africa. A full-scale war was fought with these other whites from 1899 to 1902. Can you name this group of whites and briefly explain who they were?
2. The Boers, or Afrikaners, resented British efforts to get them to give up their black slaves. But the British did not always side with blacks against the Boers. In 1879, in fact, the British waged a bitter six-month war to defeat a large and powerful African tribe. Can you name that tribe? What do you know about that war and its aftermath?
3. The Boer war was bitterly fought, at times by tough guerrilla fighters like the two on the right. As the century ended, the troubles in South Africa might be seen as a sign of what the new century would mean in general for the British Empire. Can you explain?

#### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Read more about the course of the Boer War from 1899 to 1902. Pretend it is late in 1901. You are a war correspondent sent by a British newspaper to report on the war and the morale of British troops. Write a long newspaper account of the current state of the fighting. Include the two illustrations here. They are from an earlier Anglo-Boer conflict in 1881, but they can still help you report to your readers on the true nature of the warfare taking place.
2. One group of British colonies were the so called "white dominions"—Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. "White" does not mean that there were no non-white people. It means these colonies were to become home to large numbers of white settlers from Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe. Learn more about one of these colonies. Which illustrations in this set, if any, can best help in understanding the history of the colony you have chosen to learn about? Write a brief essay that answers this question.





# **Image Close-ups**



**Britain Rules the Waves**

# Illustration 1

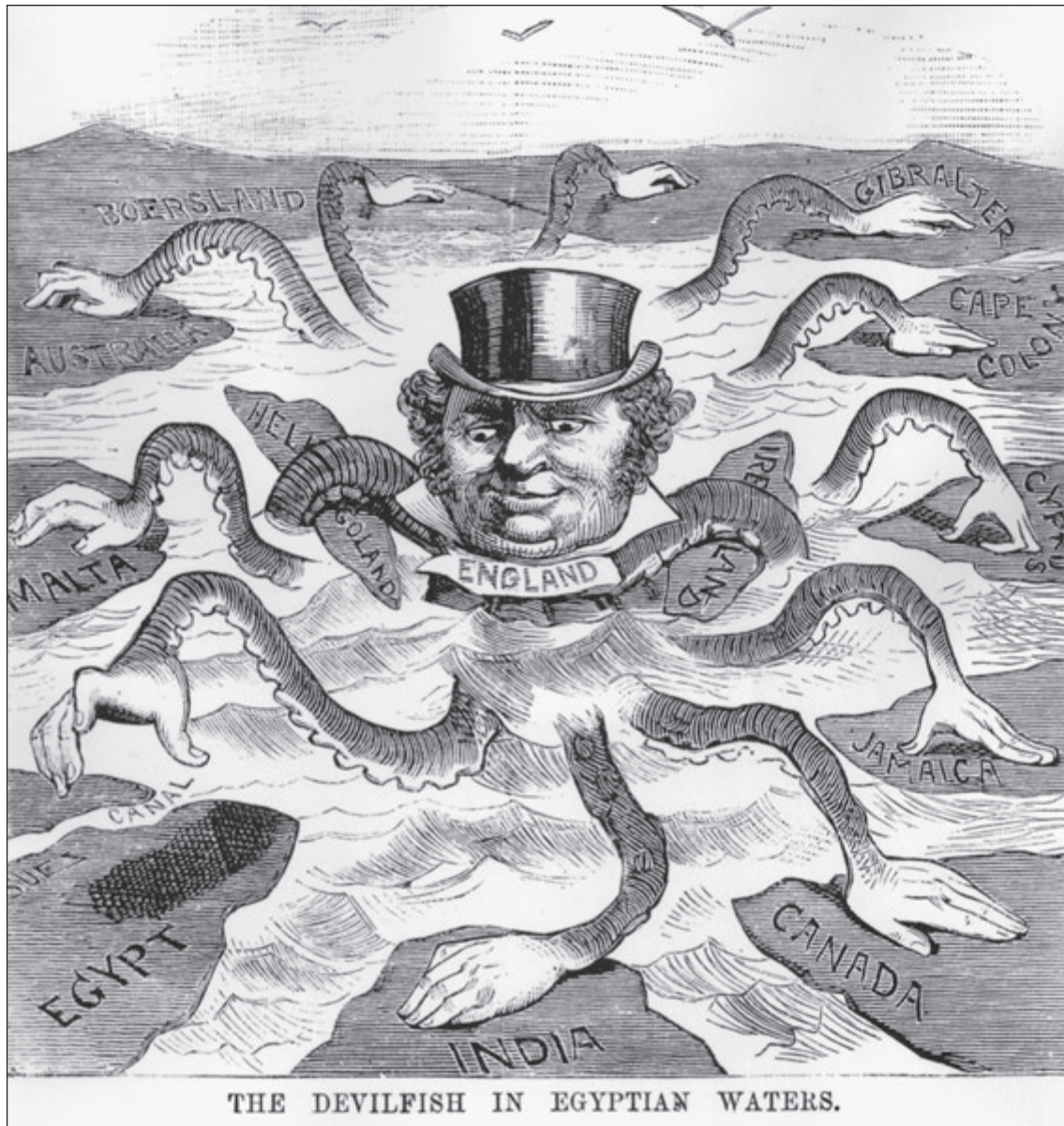


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## Britain Rules the Waves

# Illustration 2



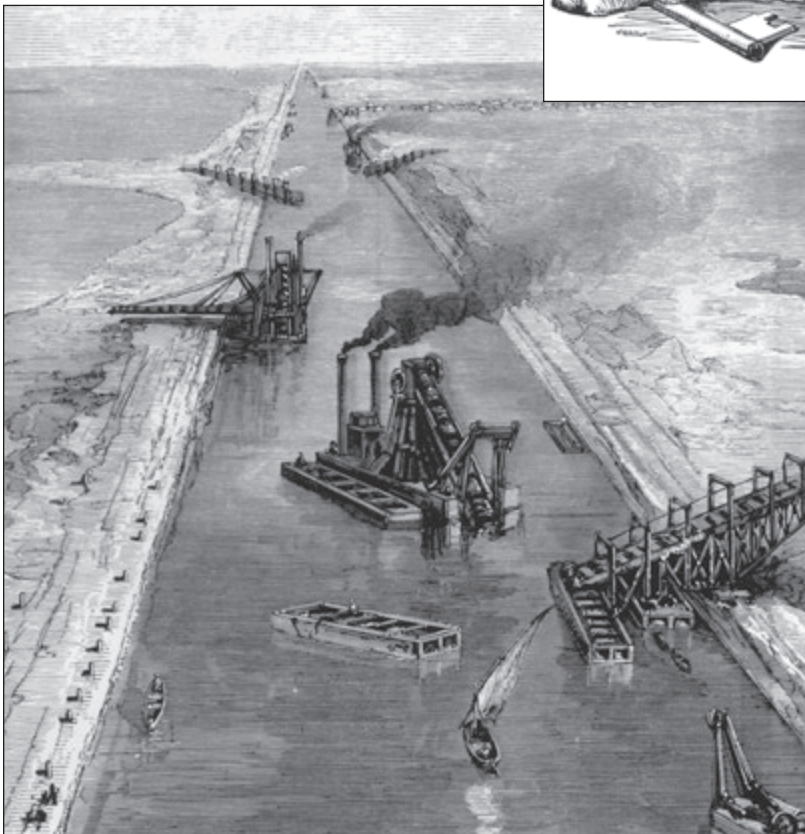
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Britain Rules the Waves

# Illustration 3



Cartoons from *Punch*



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## India: Jewel of the Empire

# Illustration 1



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## India: Jewel of the Empire

# Illustration 2



Cartoons from *Punch*



## India: Jewel of the Empire

# Illustration 3



THE ACCESSION OF THE QUEEN OF INDIA

Cartoons from *Punch*



UNREST 1857-1897

Cartoons from *Punch*

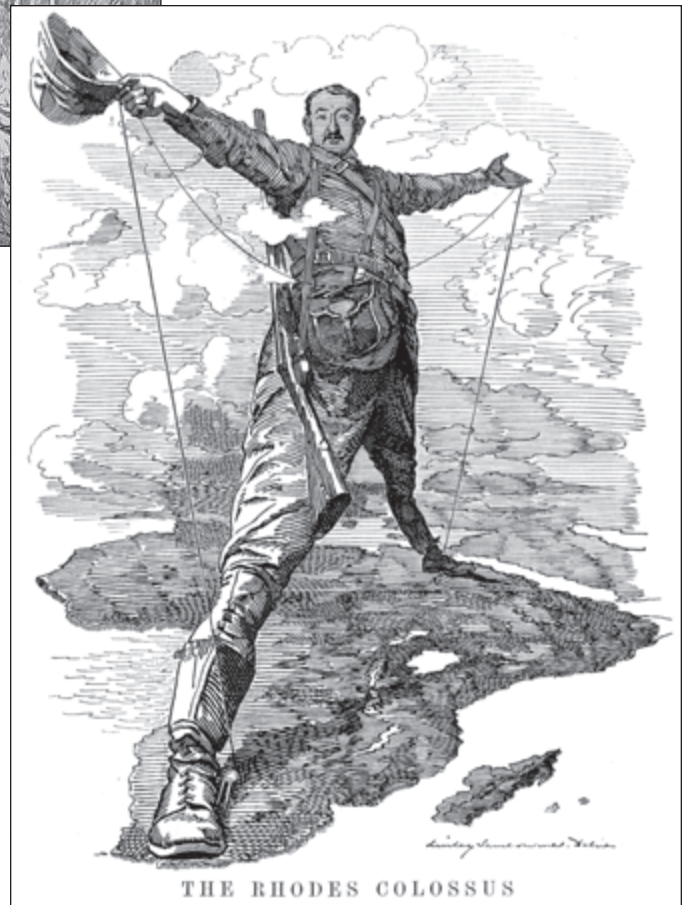


## The British in Asia and Africa

# Illustration 1



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Cartoons from *Punch*

## The British in Asia and Africa

# Illustration 2



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## The British in Asia and Africa

# Illustration 3



### ANOTHER “SICK MAN”

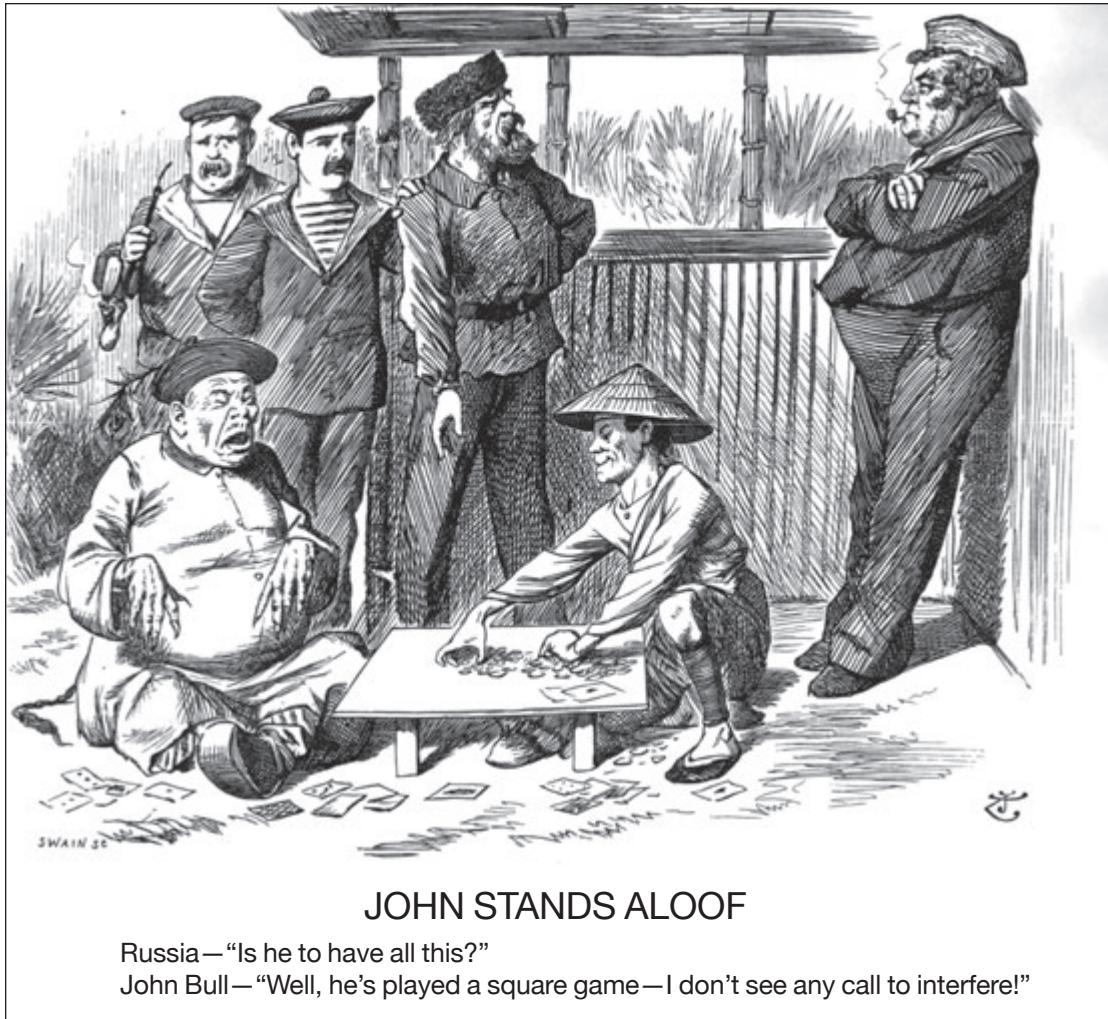
The Sultan (cheerily)—“Going to pieces, old man! Nonsense!  
All you want is a dose of ‘Concert of Europe’! Why, look at me!!”

Cartoons from *Punch*



## The Scramble for Empire

# Illustration 1



Cartoons from *Punch*

## The Scramble for Empire

# Illustration 2



Cartoons from *Punch*

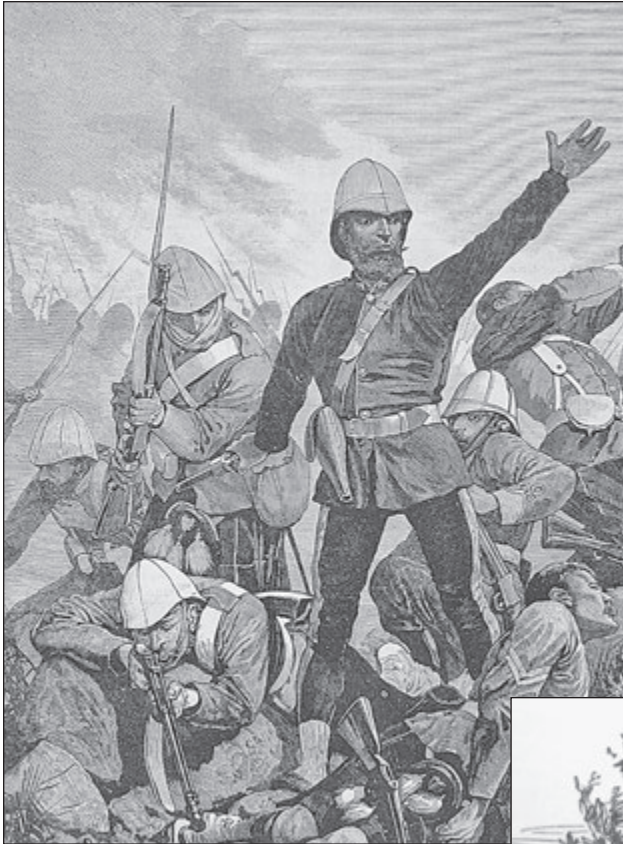


Cartoons from *Punch*



## The Scramble for Empire

# Illustration 3



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