

The Early British Empire

Year 5

Key end points of the 'The Early British Empire' unit are:

- Great Britain had an empire from the 16th to the 20th century
- Many monarchs were involved in growing the British Empire
- Britain traded with countries all over the world
- European trading nations increasingly fought over who controlled trade
- The Mughal Empire ruled most of India and Pakistan in the 16th and 17th centuries
- When the Mughal Empire collapsed, European nations fought for control of India
- Britain was victorious during the Seven Years War and gained territory from France
- Britain gained land in North America, Africa, the Philippines and India

This unit builds on children's previous knowledge of British history from the 16th to 18th century. The children begin by revisiting monarchs previously studied, such as Elizabeth I and James I, to set the context. Children will then learn about some of the significant decisions and events that took place during the reigns of these familiar monarchs that resulted in the birth and expansion of the British Empire.

Studying the British Empire helps children gain a deeper understanding of Britain's connection with the wider world, looking at not only the influence that Britain had on the wider world, but also the influences that the wider world has had on Britain.

This unit will look at the role that the empire played in **global trade** and how some wealthy British people were able to benefit from this. The important concept of trade is studied across the curriculum, from trade in prehistoric Britain to global trade today (Y6 Globalisation). The children will look at where specific goods such as tea and chocolate came from and discuss how global trade allowed people to have access to things that they would not usually have. Children will learn about how Britain competed with, and sometimes even stole from, other nations to profit from these goods.

Britain's changing relationship with India is a focus in this unit. The children have previously studied India in Geography in Year 3 so should have some previous knowledge of the country. The children will learn about the impressive achievements of the Mughal Empire and how the dissolving of the Mughal Empire left a vacuum into which British power forcibly spread. In addition, the children will learn about how the East India Company, who were given royal approval by Queen Elizabeth I, became a powerful financial and political force, amassing huge personal wealth for people who worked for it (such as Robert Clive) often at the detriment of the people of India. The unit will also look at how the British exploited India's population to create an army and enhance Britain's own **global defence**.

In the fourth lesson, children will learn how Britain was extremely successful in the Seven Years War, gaining land in North America, Africa, the Philippines and India. Many territories were gained from the French, and how by the end of the War, Britain had replaced France

as the most powerful nation in the world. This resulted in the British Empire not only gaining land, but also gaining **global political power**. During this lesson, the children will also learn how the Seven Years War led not only to the growth in the empire, but also a rise in patriotism in Britain.

The children will learn about what motivated Britain to build an empire (**causation**), certainly not as a justification for the atrocities of colonisation and imperialism, but to help the children begin to understand the complex motives and perspectives of people in the past. This will help children understand how Britain's relationship with empire shaped British identity. They end the unit by exploring the historiography and how **historical interpretations** of what led to the growth of the British Empire have changed and developed overtime.

Understanding the realities of imperialism and colonialism is integral to understanding modern history. This unit provides a foundation to the entire Key Stage 2 history curriculum and leads on to the next unit on The Transatlantic Slave Trade where they will explore Britain's role with the triangular slave trade.

Lesson sequence:

This unit begins by retrieving prior knowledge on 'empire' and supporting children with understanding the time periods being studied by placing the Early British Empire on a timeline with monarchs previously studied during the curriculum. In lesson 1, the children will gain an overview of the British Empire. Lesson 2 looks at Global trade and how colonies were established to enable Britain to benefit from trading goods. Lesson 3 focuses on the significance of India to the British Empire, looking at the Mughal Empire and the growth of the East India Company. Lesson 4 looks at the Seven Years War and the impact of this to Britain. Finally, lesson 5 builds on knowledge from the rest of this unit to answer the question, 'what motivated Britain to build an empire?'

Key substantive concepts focused on in this unit are **empire, trade, power** and **war**.

Key disciplinary concepts focused on are **causation, sources and evidence** and **interpretation**.