

- In 1915, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa where he had been a practicing lawyer, and devoted himself to fight against the prejudice and oppression faced by the Indian people under British rule. Ask students to research Gandhi's tactic of satyagraha, or passive resistance and to debate its usefulness and relevance in the modern world. Excerpts from Gandhi's 1942 speech to the Indian Congress regarding the use of nonviolence to attain independence may be found at this Web site: [www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1942/420807a.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1942/420807a.html)
- Prior to the British arrival, India had both successful agricultural and manufacturing economies, with prosperous textile, iron and shipbuilding industries. However, by the early 19th century, Great Britain had enforced policies that turned India from an economic competitor into an agricultural colony that only served to benefit Great Britain. Ask students to research the factors that led to the de-industrialization of India and to describe the social and economic effects on people in both India and Great Britain. As a follow-up, students may conduct mock discussions between Indian textile workers, artisans and businessmen and British government officials addressing 19th-century trade issues. Students may also compare and contrast 19th-century British and Indian trade issues with current World Trade Organization negotiations between the developed and developing worlds.
- On November 17, 1869, the Suez Canal opened, establishing a vital trade link between Europe and the Far East. Ask students to research the history of the development of this important connection between the Mediterranean and Red Seas, develop maps of the region and assess the canal's modern importance to Egypt and world trade. Is the waterway as important to world trade today as it was in the 19th and 20th centuries?
- Under British rule in India, a major social occasion for the British Viceroy and India's Maharajas was ring hunting, a practice that resulted in the killing of many tigers, leopards and rhinos. Ask students to research endangered species in India and discuss ways and develop plans to prevent their extinction. The World Wildlife Fund provides a wealth of information on key environmental issues in India at this Web site: [www.wwfindia.org/inform/endangered.jsp](http://www.wwfindia.org/inform/endangered.jsp)

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [www.mssc.edu/projectsouthasia/history/primarydocs/political\\_history/ABKeithDoc028.htm](http://www.mssc.edu/projectsouthasia/history/primarydocs/political_history/ABKeithDoc028.htm)  
Missouri Southern State University offers the full text of the 1858 Government of India Act that brought India under the official control of the British government.
- [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/kashmir.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/kashmir.html)  
The University of Texas at Austin's Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection contains a number of maps related to India, Pakistan and the disputed Kashmir region.
- [www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1947nehru1.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1947nehru1.html)  
Fordham University provides teachers and students with Jawaharlal Nehru's 1947 speech on the granting of independence to India.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Attenborough, Richard. Ed. *The Words of Gandhi*. Newmarket Press, New York, NY; 2000.
- Butalia, Urvashi. *Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC; 2000.
- Hussein, Abdullah. *Weary Generations*. Harper Collins Publishers India, New Delhi; 1999. A book of historical fiction about the struggle of the people of India against the British Raj.

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#### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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#### TITLES

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- THE DECLINE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE
- THE FALL OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE
- THE LEGACY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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# THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN COLOR

## THE DECLINE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Grades 9 & up

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting programs in the video series, *The British Empire in Color*.

**Before Viewing:** Give students an introduction to the topic by relaying aspects of the program summary to them. Select pre-viewing discussion questions and vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

**After Viewing:** Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up activities to inspire continued discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.

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## Program Summary

The British East India Company was founded in 1600, establishing an English foothold in the lucrative trade of the Far East and spearheading the movement to colonize India and “civilize” the nation and its people. By the middle of the 18th century, India had become the jewel of Great Britain’s vast global empire that for a time ruled over a third of the people on earth.

The colonies and dominions linked with the British Empire benefited from modernized industries and transportation systems and mobilized with Great Britain to fight Germany and Japan in World War II. However, the massive destruction associated with the war signaled the beginning of a new world order of American and Soviet power, while British policies of prejudice and oppression resulted in a strong nationalist movement in India.

As Gandhi strove to unite India and called for its complete independence, Nehru accused the British of not only depriving Indians of their freedom, but also of basing their imperial system on the exploitation of the Indian people, most of whom lived in abject poverty.

By August 1947, India had achieved its independence, but at a huge cost. British and Indian leaders agreed to partition the country into India and Pakistan, sparking horrific violence between Hindus and Muslims with ten million displaced and one million dead. Britain had lost its greatest imperial possession. In the next ten years, the fire of India’s independence would spread around the globe, from the Far East to Africa.

## Time Line

**1918** — World War I ends.

**1926** — The General Strike in defense of miners’ wages and hours is held in England.

**1937** — King George VI is crowned British emperor.

**1939** — Germany invades Poland; World War II begins as Great Britain declares war on Germany.

**1942** — Great Britain promises India its independence.

**1942** — Singapore is conquered and occupied by Japan.

**1942** — The Australian mainland is attacked by Japan.

**1945** — Japan surrenders after atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**1947** — Attempts to create a unified India fail, and India is partitioned.

**1947** — The British Empire in India officially comes to an end.

**1947-48** — Millions are displaced and many die as refugees move from India to Pakistan after the partition of India.

## Vocabulary

**imperialism** — The activities of one nation to control the affairs of another, often accompanied by colonialism, or direct conquest and occupation.

**World War I** — The first major war of the 20th century that involved the Allied Powers, led by Great Britain, France and Russia, who fought the Central Powers, which included Germany and Austria-Hungary.

**The General Strike** — A major labor stoppage organized by the Trades Union Congress in England in 1926.

**Imperial Service Troops** — Forces raised by some of the Indian Rulers of the Princely States for use by the British Empire. Also known as Indian States Forces.

**nationalism** — The strong belief of a political group fighting for their nation’s independence.

**Hinduism** — A family of religious traditions practiced by about 900 million people around the world.

**Princely States** — The name used by the British to refer to the many semi-independent, centuries-old states that existed in India prior to its independence in 1947.

**caste system** — A division of social class in India based on ancient Hindu teachings.

**Viceroy** — The appointed governor of a colony or province who receives authority from, and rules on behalf of, the home country.

**Maharaja** — A Hindu prince or king in India.

**propaganda** — Information that is spread to influence the social or political beliefs of others.

**dominion** — A territory controlled by another ruling state.

**World War II** — The second major war of the 20th century that involved the Allied Powers of England, France, the Soviet Union and the United States who fought against the Axis Powers of Germany, Japan and Italy.

**Maori** — One of the aboriginal peoples of New Zealand.

**Labour government** — A ruling political party led by Clement Atlee that came to power in England after World War II.

**Indian National Congress** — The oldest surviving political party in India that led India’s fight for independence from Great Britain.

**Muslim League** — A now-defunct political party originally formed to protect the rights of Muslims in India, which evolved into the main representative group for Muslims after Pakistan was formed in 1947.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- What does “empire” mean? Ask students to discuss why one country would seek to control the affairs of another. To help students respond, ask them to reflect on their knowledge of the American Revolution.
- Who was Gandhi? What significance does he have in world history?
- Ask students to offer definitions for the term “independence.” Why do people value independence for themselves and their countries? What benefits, responsibilities and challenges does independence offer?

## Follow-up Discussion

- On Empire Day in Great Britain, the British celebrated their control over other countries in the world, while many people in British-occupied nations resented the British presence and sought independence. Using examples from the show, ask students to discuss the British Empire from the perspective of both the rulers and the ruled.
- Ask students to reflect on the extent that society in British India compared to British society at home.
- At the height of its power, less than one hundred thousand British ruled 315 million Indians. How did Great Britain accomplish this? What role did India’s Maharajas play in allowing Great Britain to maintain its imperial control over India?
- Compare and contrast the views of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress and Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League regarding the future of India after British rule.

## Follow-up Activities

- Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama discovered the ocean route to India in 1498, opening trade between Europe and the East. To capitalize on the rich source of spices, cloth and other wealth, the British chartered the East India Company in 1600, which eventually established trading stations throughout India. Ask students to research the East India Company and Indian rulers’ reactions to its presence in their country, including the Battle of Plessey, the defeats of both Tipu Sultan and the Marathas and the mutiny of 1857. How effective was Indian resistance to the advance of the East India Company after 1756?
- In the 19th century, soldiers in outlying British outposts in India had several major battles with rebels from Burma; by 1886, all of Burma was occupied by the British. In his essay, “Shooting an Elephant,” George Orwell describes his experiences as an Indian Imperial police officer in Burma in the early 20th century. Ask students to read “Shooting an Elephant” and to discuss Orwell’s opinions on the British Empire, his inner conflict and his ultimate reason for shooting the elephant. Orwell’s essay may be found at this Web site: [orwell.ru/library/articles/elephant/english/e\\_eleph.htm](http://orwell.ru/library/articles/elephant/english/e_eleph.htm)