

DBQ 8: Imperialism in India

(Adapted from *Document-Based Assessment for Global History*, Walch Education)

Historical Context:

European imperialism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted in the carving up of areas of Africa and Asia into vast colonial empires. This was the case for British colonialism in India. As imperialism spread, the colonizer and the colony viewed imperialism differently. They saw both positive and negative effects of imperialism.

- **Directions:** The following question is based on the accompanying documents in Part A. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author's point of view. Be sure to:
 1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
 2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes. Answer the questions which follow each document.
 3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question.
 4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
 5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge outside of the documents.

Question: What were the positive and negative effects of imperialism for the British, the mother country, and for India, the colony?

- **Part A:** The following documents provide information about the effects of imperialism on India. Examine the documents carefully, and answer the questions that follow.

Document 1

In this excerpt, adapted from O.P. Austin's "Does Colonization Pay?" in *The Forum*, January 2900, positive and negative results of imperialism are pointed out.

Modern progressive nations [European colonizers] . . . seek to control "garden spots" in the tropics. Under their direction, these places can yield the tropical produce that their citizens need. In return the progressive nations bring to the people of those garden spots the foodstuffs, and manufacture they need. They develop the territory by building roads, canals, railways, and telegraphs. The progressive nations can establish schools and newspapers for the people of the colonies. They can also give these people the benefit of other blessings of civilization which they have not the means of creating themselves.

According to this author, what are the benefits of imperialism to the colony? _____

What are the benefits of imperialism to the colonizer? _____

(continued)

Name _____ Date _____

DBQ 17: Imperialism in India: An Evaluation (continued)**Document 2**

In this speech, Dadabhai Naoroji, an Indian, describes the effect of imperialism on India.

To sum up the whole, the British rule has been—morally, a great blessing; politically peace and order on one hand . . . on the other, materially, impoverishment The natives call the British system . . . “the knife of sugar.” That is to say there is no oppression, it is all smooth and sweet, but it is the knife, nevertheless.

In later comments he stresses the negative aspects.

Europeans [the British] occupy almost all the higher places in every department of government. . . . Natives, no matter how fit, are deliberately kept out of the social institutions started by Europeans. . . . All they [the Europeans] do is live off of India while they are here. When they go, they carry all they have gained.

How is British imperialism both positive and negative for India? _____

Document 3

This excerpt is adapted from *The Economic History of India Under Early British Rule*, by an Indian, Romesh Dutt.

Englishmen . . . have given the people of India the greatest human blessing—peace. They have introduced Western education. This has brought an ancient and civilized nation in touch with modern thought, modern sciences, and modern life. They have built an administration that is strong and efficient. They have framed wise laws and have established courts of justice.

What benefits did India gain during British imperialism? _____

(continued)

Name _____ Date _____

DBQ 17: Imperialism in India: An Evaluation (continued)

Document 4

This excerpt is adapted from British historian, J.A.R. Marriott’s book, *The English in India*, 1932.

British brains, British enterprise, and British capital have changed the face of India. Means of communication have been developed. There are great numbers of bridges, more than 40,000 miles of railway, and 70,000 miles of paved roads. These testify to the skill and industry of British engineers. Irrigation works on a very large scale and have brought 30 million acres under cultivation. This has greatly added to the agricultural wealth of the country. Industrialization has also begun. India now has improved sanitation and a higher standard of living. It has a fine transport system and carefully thought-out schemes for relief work. Because of these things famines have now almost disappeared.

List at least five benefits of imperialism cited by this author. _____

Document 5

This excerpt, from *India: A Restatement* by British writer Sir Reginald Coupland, points out the social and economic impact of imperialism on India.

British rule brought with it from the West certain standards of humanity that Indian society had not yet reached. Early action was taken to stop infanticide [the killing of girl babies]. . . . The slave trade was ended and the owning of slaves was forbidden. . . . One result of the new order was a steady rise in the value of India’s export trade.

What are the benefits of imperialism identified by this author? _____

(continued)

Name _____ Date _____

DBQ 17: Imperialism in India: An Evaluation (continued)**Document 6**

This excerpt, from *The Discovery of India* by Jawaharlal Nehru, explains how India became a “typical” colonial economy.

This process continued throughout the nineteenth century. Other old Indian industries—shipbuilding, metalwork, glass, paper—and many crafts were broken up. Thus the economic development of India was stopped and the growth of new industry was prevented. . . . A typical colonial economy was built up. India became an agricultural colony of industrial England. It supplied raw materials and provided markets for England’s industrial goods. The destruction of industry led to unemployment on a vast scale. . . . The poverty of the country grew. The standard of living fell to terribly low levels.

What negative effects of imperialism does Nehru point out? _____

Document 7

Mohandas Gandhi offers a complaint about imperialism.

You English committed one supreme crime against my people. For a hundred years you have done everything for us. You have given us no responsibility for our own government.

What is Gandhi’s criticism of imperialism? _____

- **Part B—Essay**

What were the positive and negative effects of imperialism for the British, the mother country, and for India, the colony?

Document 1

The colony benefited from imperialism because it received food and manufactured goods. Roads, canals, railways, and schools are additional “blessings of civilization” that the colony receives. The colonizer received tropical produce from the “garden spot.”

Document 2

This Indian speaker referred to the British colonial rule as a “knife of sugar.” India enjoyed peace and order but they suffered from material poverty. In the second extract, the author pointed out that the British held all the high government positions and lived off of India.

Document 3

This Indian, Romesh Dutt, pointed out several benefits enjoyed by India—Western education and modern science. The British also built a governmental bureaucracy that was efficient and provided law and order as well as judicial system.

Document 4

This author believed that British money and brains brought many benefits—communication and transportation systems and an irrigation system that increased farmland and agricultural production. India also had an improved sanitary system and a social welfare system. As a result of British rule, Indians enjoyed a higher standard of living.

Document 5

This British author identified the “standards of humanity” that the British brought to India. These included the end of female infanticide, slavery, and slave trade.

Document 6

Nehru points out the negative effects for India of being a “colonial economy” for the British. Indian economic development was disrupted when the British broke up old Indian industries. India supplied raw materials and agricultural products for England, and India was a market for British industrial products. As a result of imperialism, unemployment and poverty rose in India.

Document 7

Gandhi complained that Indians were not allowed to develop the skills needed for self – government.

Additional Information Beyond the Documents

The documents provide students with only fragments of evidence. Answers should include relevant information from beyond the documents—information that students have learned from their classroom study. The following list suggests some of the information that students might include in their essays from outside learning.

Conditions in India before and during British imperialism
Reasons for opposition to imperialism

