

## THE BRUTAL BRITISH EMPIRE: OVERVIEW

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<http://naukabezgranic.pl/podcasty/great-britain/>

The British Empire included all the territories that were ruled by Britain. Under Queen Victoria's rule, she doubled its size to make it the largest empire in history – it controlled 23% of the world's surface and 458 million people at its peak. It was described as being the "Empire on which the sun never sets".

Trade with the Empire made Britain rich. The most famous part of the British Empire was the East India Trading Company, which started out as a small business before becoming a very large trading company in Asia that many people depended on. It mainly traded in: cotton, silk, indigo dye and tea. Tea was its most successful import into Britain where it became a popular drink among the common people during the Victorian period. Queen Victoria was crowned the Empress of India in 1876 when the company disbanded (closed down).

The strength of the British Empire was underpinned by the steamship and the telegraph – new technologies invented during Queen Victoria's reign. On 7th November 1869, the new Suez Canal opened a direct link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean to make the voyage between India and Britain much quicker. The SS Great Britain was a large steamship designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel which broke the record for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic Ocean, doing it in just 14 days. In 1870, Portcurno, in the far west of Cornwall, became the hub for international cable communications. Its first link stretched from the UK to India.

During the 1880s, Britain took control of large parts of Africa, including: Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Egypt. This became known as the 'scramble for Africa' as Britain competed with other Empire builders, especially France and Belgium, to colonize countries.

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Some families emigrated from Britain to new homes in countries of the Empire, in particular: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada.

Children were taught about the British Empire in school and could easily find the countries of the Empire on a map as they were always coloured in pink or red.

Despite being considered in 1897, it wasn't until the year following Queen Victoria's death that the first annual Empire Day was held for people to celebrate being proud to be part of such a large, powerful grouping of nations.

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