

# The British Empire



Britain began to conquer new territories since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The British Empire developed for many reasons, such as trade, military security ...

At the beginning of Queen Victoria 's long reign (1837/1901) the British empire extended to all five continents. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain acquired new colonies in Africa, Middle East at the end of the First World War. This expansion caused many wars, not only with the indigenous populations but also with the European countries.

British colonies were:  
AUSTRALIA, CANADA, UNITED STATES,  
SOUTH EAST ASIA, EAST AFRICA,  
SOUTH AFRICA,  
WEST AFRICA, INDIA, WEST INDIES  
(Jamaica), IRELAND,  
NEW ZEALAND.



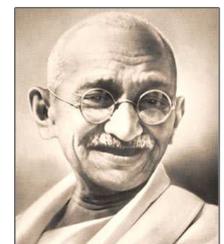
Some of these countries, like Australia, New Zealand and Canada, were inhabited by English settlers; other countries, like South Africa or West Indies were trading posts.

India was the richest and the most important colony, in fact it was called "The jewel in the crown".

The USA were the first colony that declared its independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain with the Declaration of Independence on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1776.

Canada, Australia and New Zealand became self-governing, before the First World War.

The other countries obtained the independence after years of conflict. India, indeed, became independent in 1947 thanks to Gandhi, who organized a movement for independence.



(text adapted from New Cuturelab Lang edition)

Worksheet 3

READING ACTIVITIES

**1. Read the answers and write the corresponding question.**

- a. It started in 1837 and finished in 1901
- b. To all five continents.
- c. Because it was the most important colony.
- d. Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- e. Gandhi.
- f. In 1947.

Adapted from: <http://busyteacher.org/3943-the-british-empire.html>