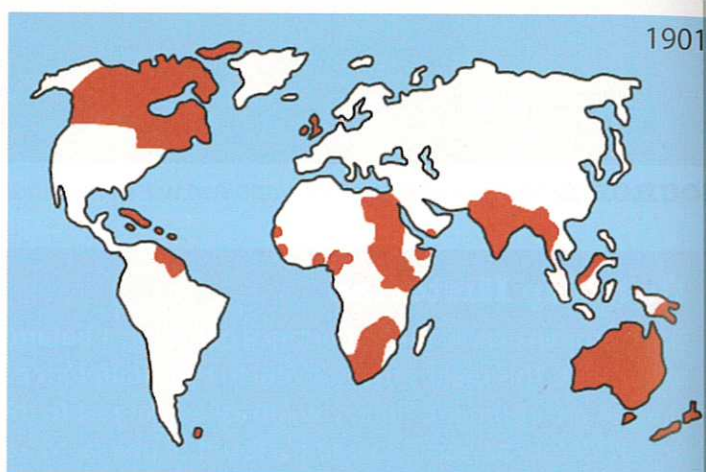
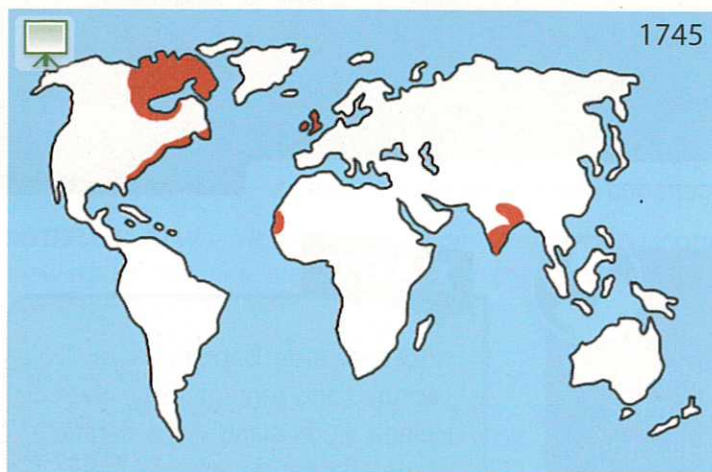


7.1 How did Britain get an empire?

An **empire** is a collection of areas of land or even countries that are ruled over and controlled by one leading or 'mother' country. The places controlled by the mother country are usually called **colonies**. Around 100 years ago, Britain ruled the largest empire the world had ever known. It was even bigger than the famous Roman Empire. Britain ruled over 450 million people living in 56 areas (or colonies) around the world. **Source A** shows you how the British Empire grew.

Mission Objectives

- Define the words 'empire' and 'colonies'.
- Explain how and why Britain gained an empire.



SOURCE A: The growth of the British Empire from 1745 to 1901. By 1901, Britain's empire contained one quarter of the world's population and covered one quarter of the Earth's total land area.

Getting an empire

To properly understand the British Empire, it is really important that you learn about two things. Firstly, it is vital that you understand *why* the British wanted such a large empire. Secondly, it is essential that you know *how* Britain got its empire.

So why did Britain want an empire?

There are four reasons why Britain wanted an empire, listed below. Can you match each reason with a source – B, C, D or E?

Britain wanted an empire...

- 1 To get valuable raw materials and riches
- 2 So Britain could sell goods to the colonies and make money
- 3 To become a more powerful country
- 4 Because Britain thought it was the right thing to do.

'The people of the colonies had to buy goods from Britain. So Britain sold more goods.'

▲ **SOURCE B:** From a modern history book.

'The British considered it both a duty and an opportunity to bring Christianity to the "godless" people of newly discovered lands.'

▲ **SOURCE C:** Written by Ross Adams, 1992.

'... countries go "empire-hunting" because they want more resources like grain, cattle, gold, silver, tin or iron. They take over other countries in order to steal all the things they want.'

▲ **SOURCE D:** Written by a modern historian.

'The British government used the army and navy to take over land to prevent countries like France and Germany getting it first ... Some places, like Gibraltar, were taken as naval bases.'

SOURCE E: Written by JoÚ Child, 1992.

So how did Britain get its empire?

You've investigated why Britain wanted an empire, so now it's time to find out how Britain got one.

War

If Britain won a war against another country, Britain could often take over any land the other country owned around the world. For example, when Britain won a long war against France, land previously conquered by France became part of the British Empire. That is how Canada and islands in the West Indies such as Tobago and St Lucia became part of the British Empire.

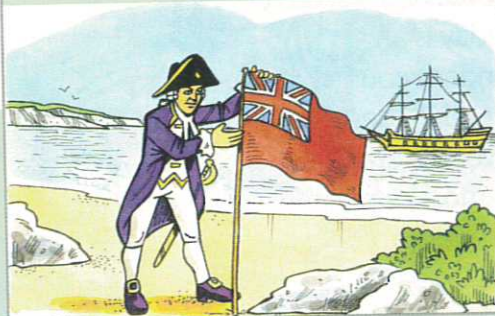


Settlers

Sometimes British people would go to another part of the world and start to live there. That is how large parts of the east coast of America became part of the British Empire.

Discovery

Occasionally, explorers would find land and just claim it for Britain. That happened in 1770 when Captain James Cook sailed to Australia. The tribes that already lived there were ignored and Australia became part of the British Empire.



Trade

When British companies went to trade in some places, they slowly took over large areas. The government sometimes sent soldiers to help the companies. That happened in India and parts of Africa.



1901

