

TRANSATLANTIC IDENTITIES



Cecil Rhodes

7. EMPIRE

November 1, 2023

EMPIRE

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES in their use of the word "Empire." By the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, the British Empire was a source of national pride, spanning the globe from Canada to New Zealand. Starting in the 1920s, Britain gradually ceded dominion over its colonies, and critical opinion has shifted 180° to the point where *colonialism* is a dirty word. Still, any Briton will acknowledge the Empire as an historical fact, however they see its legacy now.

In the early years of the United States, the word "Empire" was used quite freely, by Franklin, Washington, Jefferson, and others, originally in a value-neutral context. But as the country gained power, the term *American Imperialism* was heard more and more frequently, mostly in a negative sense, to refer to Manifest Destiny, successive territorial acquisitions, occasional foreign intervention, and more recently to the global reach of American companies—and always the term has been resisted by those who point out that *hegemony* and *empire* are not the same thing.

So it is a difficult subject to talk about, made even more so by the fact that the related artifacts are often more illustrations to history than objects of value in their own right. So I must apologize in advance for a greater emphasis on political history in this class than I would ideally like, and a certain contentious tone that may creep in despite my best endeavors! *rb.*

A. IMPERIAL ATTITUDES

The situations in Britain and America compared.

COMPARISON: Images of Empire

Map: The British Empire in 1886

Leutze: *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (1861, Capitol)

B. PAX BRITANNICA

A brief summary of how the British gained control of the Indian sub-continent, from the **Battle of Plassey** (1757) to the atrocities on both sides during and after the **Sepoy Rebellion**, 100 years later.

Drummond: *The Assumption of Queen Victoria* (1901)

Dance: *Baron Clive of Plassey* (1773, NPG)

Hayman: *Clive with Mir Jafar at Plassey* (1760, London NPG)

West: *Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and Robert Clive* (1818)

Barker: *Relief of Lucknow* (1859, London NPG)

Armitage: *Retribution* (1858, Leeds)

♪ **Elgar:** *The Crown of India* (masque 1912), excerpts

C. THE CASE FOR KIPLING

Born in India, educated in England, then returning to India to find his feet as a young man, **Rudyard Kipling** became the uncrowned Poet Laureate of Empire, and fell out of fashion for the same reason. Yet there is more to the man and his work than might appear.

♪ **BBC:** *Kipling's Indian Adventure* (Patrick Hennessey), 3 excerpts

♪ **Kipling:** *Gunga Din*, ending (Michael David Farrow)

♪ **Kipling:** *The Last of the Light Brigade* (Jonathan Jones)

♪ **COMPARISON:** *Readings of Kipling's Recessional (1897)*

D. AN EMPIRE IN FIVE CARTOONS

Five cartoons from the Presidency of **William McKinley**, showing the dilemma following the American victory in the **Spanish-American War**.

E. EMPIRE AVOIDED

Many writers in the early Republic used the word "Empire"; is this related to their attitude towards their predecessors, Native Americans?

West: *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* (1772, Philadelphia)

Hicks: *The Peaceable Kingdom* (1834, Washington NGA)

COMPARISON: *Cole's Course of Empire (1836)*

Vanderlyn: *The Death of Jane McCrea* (1804, Hartford)

COMPARISON: *Sculptures by Persico and Greenough*

♪ **Cooper:** *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992 film), ending

Catlin: *Stu-mick-o-sucks* (1832, Smithsonian)

Deas: *The Death Struggle* (1845, Shelburne VT)

Bierstadt: *The Last of the Buffalo* (1888, Washington NGA)

Longfellow: *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), opening

♪ **Coleridge-Taylor:** *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, excerpts

F. EMPIRE EMBRACED

How the doctrine of **Manifest Destiny** and Westward Expansion in the mid-19th century gave a radical new meaning to the word "Empire."

Bierstadt: *Emigrants Crossing the Plains* (1869, Youngstown)

Gast: *American Progress* (1885, Autry Museum, Los Angeles)

Ranney: *Advice on the Prairie* (1853, Buffalo Bill Center, WY)

Russell: *The Custer Fight* (lithograph, 1903)

♪ **Video:** *Buffalo Bill* (Smithsonian)

♪ **Berlin:** *Annie Get Your Gun*, "Show business"

Edward **Armitage** (1817–96, *English painter*), Thomas Jones **Barker** (1813–82, *English painter*), Irving **Berlin** (1888–1989, *American composer*), Albert **Bierstadt** (1830–1902, *American painter*), George **Catlin** (1796–1872, *American painter*), Thomas **Cole** (1801–48, *American painter*), Samuel **Coleridge-Taylor** (1875–1912, *English composer*), James Fenimore **Cooper** (1789–1851, *American writer*), Charles **Deas** (1818–67, *American painter*), Arthur **Drummond** (1871–1951, *English painter*), Edward **Elgar** (1857–1934, *English composer*), John **Gast** (1842–96, *American painter*), Victor **Gillam** (1858–1920, *American cartoonist*), Horatio **Greenough** (1805–52, *American sculptor*), Francis **Hayman** (1708–86, *English painter*), Edward **Hicks** (1780–1849, *American painter*), Joseph **Keppler** (1838–94, *American cartoonist*), Rudyard **Kipling** (1865–1936, *English writer*), Emanuel **Leutze** (1816–68, *American painter*), Henry Wadsworth **Longfellow** (1807–82, *American poet*), Luigi **Persico** (1791–1860, *Italian sculptor*), William Tylee Ranney (1813–57, *American painter*), Charles Marion **Russell** (1864–1926, *American painter*), Alfred Lord **Tennyson** (1809–92, *English poet*), John **Vanderlyn** (1775–1852, *American painter*), Benjamin **West** (1738–1820, *American painter*)