

The Age of Imperialism

Lesson 4

British Imperialism in India

Key Terms and People

sepoy Indian soldier under British command

“jewel in the crown” term referring to India as the most valuable of all British colonies

Sepoy Mutiny uprising of Indian soldiers against the British

Raj British rule over India from 1757 to 1947

Before You Read

In the last lesson, you saw how Europeans grabbed Muslim lands.

In this lesson, you will read about British control of India.

As You Read

Use a diagram to take notes on causes and effects of British imperialism in India.

BRITISH EXPAND CONTROL OVER INDIA

How did British rule affect India?

The Mughal Empire of India fell into decline in the early 1700s. By the mid-1700s, the British East India Company was the most important power in India. The company held huge amounts of land. The company even had its own army. This army was led by British officers. It was staffed by **sepoys**, or Indian soldiers.

India was the main supplier of raw materials for Britain. The British called India the **“jewel in the crown”** because it was Britain’s most valuable colony.

India enjoyed some benefits from British rule. India’s rail system was the

third largest in the world. The railroad helped make India’s economy more modern. The British made other improvements, too. They built telephone and telegraph lines, dams, bridges, and canals. They also improved sanitation and public health and built schools.

But British rule also caused problems. A great deal of wealth flowed from India to Britain. Indian industry died out because of British trade laws. Many farmers and villages could no longer feed themselves because they were forced to grow cash crops. India suffered famines in the late 1800s. In addition, most British officials had racist attitudes that threatened Indian culture.

Lesson 4, *continued*

1. What problems did British rule bring?

THE SEPOY MUTINY

Why did Indians rebel?

By the mid-1800s, many Indians resented British rule. Many believed that the British wanted to convert them to Christianity. They also felt that the British treated them badly.

In 1857, some Indian soldiers heard rumors about British weapons. The rumors offended the Indians' religious feelings. The British handled the situation badly. The Indian soldiers rebelled. This rebellion has been called

the **Sepoy Mutiny**. Fierce fighting took place between the sepoys and the British. It took the East India Company and British troops a year to put it down.

The Sepoy Mutiny failed because the Indians were divided. Muslims and Hindus did not trust each other. The Muslims wanted the Muslim Mughal Empire restored. Many Hindus preferred British rule to Muslim rule.

After the revolt, the British government took direct control of British India. The term **Raj** refers to British rule over India from 1857 to 1947.

2. What was the Sepoy Mutiny?

Lesson 4, *continued*

As you read about imperialism in India, briefly note the cause or effect (depending on which is missing) of each situation.

Causes	Effects
1.	→ The East India Company gained control of india.
2. The British established a railroad network in india.	→
3.	→ Villagers were no longer self-sufficient; food production declined and famine set in.
4. The Sepoy Mutiny occurred and the uprising spread over much of northern India.	→
5.	→ Indians formed the Indian National Congress and then the Muslim League, which eventually called for self-government.
6. The British partitioned Bengal into Hindu and Muslim sections.	→