

1200 UNIT 6:

Empire and Other Consequences Consequences of Industrialization

1880 to 1950 CE



Unit 6 Overview

All of the new ideas and advances of the long nineteenth century had their limits or their dark sides. We see that especially in the rise of empires, many of which were ruled by new and seemingly democratic nation-states. These industrial powers competed for new colonies overseas and created wide networks that exploited these colonies for profit. The result was a growing inequality in global income and experiences.



0:01

*Colby Burnett and Kim Lochner in conversation.
Kim shows Colby a photograph of an orange tree.*

Hi Kim!

Hey Colby!

I just wanted to show you how well my orange tree is doing! That's great! Hey! I'd like to pay you five dollars to pick all those oranges and send them to me, and then I'll sell you orange juice for ten dollars.

Oh, but that makes no... Oh, well you just explained all of imperialism and colonialism. Do we even have to do the unit now?

Blast! My imperial ambitions have been met with local resistance. I mean... Unit 6: Imperialism. Yes, that was my intention all along.

Hi, I'm Kim Lochner.

And I'm Colby Burnett.

We're here to introduce Unit 6: Empire and Other Consequences of Industrialization 1850 to 1950 CE.

0:48

Montage of artworks that depict revolutions, protests, large cities, and other representations of revolutions and their effects on humanity and society.

The transformations we've seen so far in the long 19th century were positive in a whole lot of ways. Political revolutions helped develop ideas on individual rights, the sovereignty of the people, and citizenship. The Industrial Revolution allowed humans to produce many more consumer goods. Capitalism established an efficient free market. Reform movements and socialism introduced strategies to fight for the rights of workers and their families. But, we have also seen that all of these great ideas have their limits. Rights, privileges, and wealth came to some people, but not others. Large portions of the world's population lived on the margins of these positive transformations. Whether it was because of gender, social class, occupation, ethnicity, or even just where they happened to live, some people did not benefit from these new ideas and changes.

1:46

Now, one of the major factors that kept some people from the benefits of reformism, industrialization, or democracy, is something we talked a lot about already.

Empire!

Kim, we talked about this.

Well, it is the reason we both speak English, even though we were born thousands of miles from England in different directions.

Kim, your cue is "new social hierarchies."

"New social hierarchies"... got it.

2:14

Painted depictions of different groups of people under empire. There is also a painting of a great fleet of ships and a map of trade routes and empires.

Employing the communities frame can help us understand how empires produced inequalities between and within society from 1850 to 1950. By definition, empire describes an unequal relationship between the people who rule and the people who are ruled. Empires weren't new in 1850, they'd been around for millennia. In this course, you've already encountered the examples of the great land-based empires of Eurasia, West Africa, and Mesoamerica. And you've heard plenty about the beginnings of European overseas empires. But in this period, the nature of empire changed as industrialization and new ideas about race and nationalism took hold.

2:58

The camera shifts from Colby Burnett to Kim Lochner.

These transformations allowed industrial empires to extend their control over new communities and reorganize those colonized communities into new social hierarchies. ...Into new social hierarchies.

I'm here, sorry! I was playing Animal Crossing. So, industrialization provided new technologies that allowed empires to reach farther than ever before. Meanwhile, racism and nationalism provided colonizers with justifications and motivations to spread their conquests.

Interactive map shows increasing colonization by large empires such as Britain.

Britain's gradual conquest of India, with its immense wealth and large population began this trend. Then, by the 1880s, Britain was competing with many other imperial states that were all vying to acquire vast empires in South and Southeast Asia, Africa, and Oceania. These new industrial empires were more invasive, more extensive, and more exploitative than the ones that had come before. By the beginning of the 20th century, a third of the world's landmass and population were part of the industrialized empires ruled by Britain and France, as well as by newcomers like Germany, Japan, and the United States. And even though many of these states were at the forefront of democracy for their time, the empires they ruled were very unequal.

4:26

Animated map shows Britain and its connection to India, which it colonized.

We can understand inequality by looking at two important concepts of this era. The first is imperialism. Imperialism is the set of ideas and beliefs that a society holds that justifies taking over people and ruling them. The second concept is colonialism. Colonialism describes the actual practices that empires carry out in their colonies which strip people in those colonies from getting the rights of citizens and rules them through an often violent and oppressive system.

Each empire connected the imperial country to its colonies and the colonies to each other. They used industrial transportation and communication networks to rule over much larger areas than was previously imaginable.

Animation shows colonized people loading cotton into a train car, while being watched by a British officer.

These networks tied together an exploitative system of production and distribution. The colonies produced raw materials which were sent to the imperial state and manufactured into consumer goods. The colonies then brought back those consumer goods at a higher price. This meant that the money flowed from the colonies to the imperial state, making some people poor in order to make other people rich.

5:43

Chart shows daily income in 1800: most people made under \$1 per day across all regions.

All of this was made possible by the inequality of the empire as a community, divided between imperial citizens and colonial subjects. We can see the results of this inequality and exploitation in these two simple charts of global income: the amount of money made by people in different regions.

The first chart looks at the world in 1800, before the rise of the new imperialism. It shows that most people everywhere were quite poor, making what would amount to less than a dollar a day now. The majority of people lived in Asia, so we see a large number of Asians in that big hump of people living in quite poor circumstances. But, most Africans, Europeans, and people in the Americas were similarly not wealthy. Only a small number of individuals were comparatively wealthy and they came from different parts of the world. There's a second chart which Colby was supposed to email to me...

6:44

Chart shows daily income in 1975: many people still are making around \$1 per day, but those people are mostly in Asia and the Pacific. Most people in Europe and the Americas are making closer to \$50 per day.

I got it. Okay, this is the same chart but for 1975, after the large empires of the world had finally collapsed. Here we see two humps rather than one. There's still a hump of people living in poverty. Most of them lived in Asia or Africa, two regions that were heavily colonized in the intermediate years. By contrast, people in Europe and North America mainly fit in the second, wealthier hump to the right. Was it empire and colonialism that created this double hump of poor in one region and wealthy in another? If so, how?

“How were industrial empires created and contested, and how did those processes shape our world today?”

7:27

Animated map shows Hanoi. Paintings and photographs show the destruction and reconstruction of Hanoi into separate districts.

If we want answers, we have to look to the histories of the colonies themselves. For people living in the colonies, empires destroyed old, local systems and replaced them with new, foreign ones. These new systems disregarded the needs of local people in favor of the desires of colonizers. The result was dramatic change.

Take the city of Hanoi, the capital of the independent state of Vietnam at the beginning of this era. In 1883, the French annexed Vietnam, so Hanoi became a French-ruled city. In an effort to modernize the city and make it easier to rule, the French destroyed many old neighborhoods and replaced them with straight roads and orderly districts. Because imperialism was hierarchical, the French segregated the city with the white districts in the center and indigenous-Vietnamese neighborhoods in the less desirable areas. From there, the Vietnamese commuted into the white districts for low-paying jobs. They had almost no say in the process. Not everything was destroyed, some large buildings were preserved, but only as tourist sites reflecting history and local culture. The city had been fundamentally transformed. Outside of town, the French seized small farms and turned them into vast rubber plantations to feed French industry instead of the Vietnamese people.

8:52

A photo of two Vietnamese workers; a drawing of several Vietnamese people surrounding the governor's office in protest.

But of course, the Vietnamese fought back. Sometimes, the resistance was almost invisible - it took the form of work slow downs or hiding from French labor gangs or just not following the law. Sometimes it was loud and dramatic. In 1908 for example, Vietnamese farmers surrounded the office of the governor and protested against French rule. They marched, made speeches, and even threatened the colonial state. Their protest was eventually put down, violently. Nevertheless, it was part of a long history of resistance that would ultimately bring down French rule.

9:30

Maps show the locations of Nigeria, Cuba, and India.

Elsewhere as well, colonial subjects responded to empire by finding ways to resist. Market women boycotted British goods in Nigeria, Cuban peasants armed themselves and conducted a guerilla war against Spanish rule. In India, resistance ran the gamut from work slowdowns all the way up to a widespread armed rebellion against British rule in India in 1857.

So, the history of empire in this era is the history of imperial ideas, the experiences of colonial rule, and the methods of resistance. All of these in the end contributed to the making of our modern world.

Wow! And here I thought industrialization was just about factories and making stuff faster... but it changed countries and people and, well, everything.

Hey Kim, I downloaded Animal Crossing too, so we can trade now.

Oh, cool, well come check out my virtual garden. I've got a great citrus grove going on.

Be right there. And, by the way, could I interest you in some digital orange juice?

Hey! No, no stay away! (music playing)