

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Reach of Imperialism, 1800–1914

Lesson 2 Empire Building in Africa

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are the causes and effects of imperialism? How do some groups resist control by others?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

uncharted not mapped; unknown

traditions the established customs of a people

Content Vocabulary

annexed To **annex** is to add in an existing political unit, such as a country.

indigenous native to a region

TAKING NOTES: *Categorizing*

ACTIVITY Use the graphic organizer to show which countries controlled different parts of Africa.

Western Power	Area of Africa
Belgium	
Britain	
France	
Germany	

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IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Africa became a major place for European colonization at the end of the nineteenth century. European countries ruled almost all of Africa by 1900. Maintaining that rule was not easy, however. African nationalism emerged during the early part of the twentieth century.

West Africa and North Africa

Guiding Question *Why were European countries interested in West Africa and North Africa?*

Before 1880, Europeans controlled little of the African continent directly. Instead, African rulers and merchants represented European interests there. Between 1880 and 1900, intense rivalries for power and wealth among Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Portugal led to colonization of Africa. During that time, almost all of Africa ended up under European rule.

West Africa

Europeans saw Africa as a good source of raw materials. They were especially interested in West Africa's peanuts, wood, animal hides, and palm oil. Earlier in the nineteenth century, Europeans had profited from trading enslaved people from this part of Africa. By the late 1800s, however, the trade in enslaved people had almost completely ended. As the slave trade declined, Europe's interest in other forms of trade increased. The growing European presence led to increasing tensions with West African governments.

For a long time, most African states kept their independence. However, in 1874 Great Britain **annexed**, or took over control of, the western coastal states. They became the British colony of Gold Coast. At about the same time, Britain established a protectorate (a political unit that depends on another government for its protection) in Nigeria. By 1900, France had added the huge area of French West Africa to its colonial empire. France then controlled the largest part of West Africa. Germany also colonized the area. It controlled Togo, Cameroon, German Southwest Africa, and German East Africa.

North Africa

Egypt had been part of the Ottoman Empire. As Ottoman rule weakened, the Egyptians sought independence. In 1805 Muhammad Ali, an officer of the Ottoman army, seized power. He established a separate Egyptian state.

During the next 30 years, Muhammad Ali introduced a series of reforms. These reforms brought Egypt into the modern world. He modernized the army and established a public school system. He also helped to create industries, such as ones that refined sugar, produced textiles and munitions, and built ships.

The economic importance of the Nile Valley in Egypt grew. With the development of steamships, Europeans wanted to build a canal east of Cairo to connect the Mediterranean and Red Seas. Suez is located in Egypt on a thin strip of land between these seas. Such a canal would allow ships to sail between Europe and Asia without traveling around Africa. In 1854 a French businessman, Ferdinand de Lesseps, signed a contract to begin building the Suez Canal. The canal was completed in 1869.

The British took an active interest in Egypt after the Suez Canal was opened. The British believed that the canal was its "lifeline to India." It was an important route that greatly reduced the distance between Britain and India by ship. As a result, Great Britain tried to gain as much control as possible over the canal area.

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In 1875 Britain bought Egypt's shares in the Suez Canal. The Egyptian army revolted against foreign influence in 1881. Britain suppressed the revolt. Egypt became a British protectorate in 1914.

The British believed that they needed to protect their interests in Egypt and the Suez Canal. To do so, they tried to take over the Sudan, which is south of Egypt. In 1881 the Muslim cleric Muhammad Ahmad, known as the Mahdi (in Arabic, "the rightly guided one"), started a revolt that brought much of the Sudan under his control.

Britain sent a military force under General Charles Gordon to restore Egyptian authority over the Sudan. However, Muhammad Ahmad's troops proved too strong. They destroyed Gordon's army at Khartoum in 1885. General Gordon himself died in the battle. British troops were not able to seize the Sudan until 1898.

The French also had colonies in North Africa. The French government established control in Algeria in 1879 after about 150,000 French people had settled in the region. Two years later, France forced neighboring Tunisia to become a protectorate. France established a protectorate over much of Morocco in 1912.

Italy also competed for colonies in North Africa. Italy tried to take over Ethiopia. However, the Italian forces were defeated in 1896 when they tried to invade the area. Italy now was the only European state defeated by an African state. This humbling loss led Italy to try again in 1911. Italy invaded and seized Turkish Tripoli, which it renamed Libya.



Reading Progress Check

Summarizing What motivated the British to compete for control of Egypt?

Central and East Africa

Guiding Question *Why did European countries compete for colonies in Central Africa and East Africa?*

Central Africa

Central African territories were soon added to the list of European colonies. Explorers aroused the interest of the Western public in the tropical jungles of Central Africa.

David Livingstone was one such explorer. He arrived in Africa in 1841 as a 27-year-old medical missionary. Livingstone spent 30 years there trekking through regions **uncharted** by Europeans. He sometimes traveled by canoe, but mostly Livingstone walked. He spent much of his time exploring the interior of the continent.

As he traveled through Africa, Livingstone made detailed notes of his discoveries. He sent his notes back to London whenever he could. The maps of Africa were often redrawn based on Livingstone's reports. Livingstone hoped to find a navigable river into Central Africa. Such a river would open the area to European commerce and Christianity.

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At one time, Livingstone was not heard from for a while. So the American newspaper the *New York Herald* hired Henry Stanley, a young journalist, to find the explorer. Stanley found him on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika. Stanley was overwhelmed with emotion to find Livingstone alive. He greeted the explorer with these now-famous words, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”

Livingstone died in 1873. Stanley remained in Africa to continue the great explorer’s work. Stanley, however, actually had a dislike of Africa and he once said that he detested the land.

In the 1870s, Stanley explored the Congo River in Central Africa. He sailed down it to the Atlantic Ocean. Soon, he encouraged the British to send settlers to the Congo River basin. When Britain refused, Stanley turned to King Leopold II of Belgium.

King Leopold II was the main force behind the colonization of Central Africa. He enthusiastically pursued an empire in Africa. He said that he wanted to civilize the population of that area, which was little known to Europeans. Profit, however, was equally important to Leopold. In 1877 he hired Henry Stanley to establish Belgian settlements in the Congo.

Other European states reacted with concern to Leopold’s claim over the vast territories of the Congo. France, in particular, rushed to claim the heart of Africa. Leopold ended up with the territories around the Congo River. France occupied the areas farther north.

East Africa

Britain and Germany had become the main rivals in East Africa by 1875. Germany came late to the group of imperialist powers. At first, the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck did not give a great deal of importance to colonies. More and more Germans called for a German empire, however. As a result, Bismarck supported colonialism in action if not in belief. He knew that his government needed to participate in colonization to please the German population and so to win elections.

Germany controlled West African colonies and tried to colonize East Africa. Most of East Africa had not yet been claimed by any other European power. The British were also interested in the area. Control of East Africa would connect the British Empire in Africa from South Africa to Egypt, in the north. Portugal and Belgium also claimed parts of East Africa. Some nations claimed the same areas.

To settle different claims in East Africa, the Berlin Conference met in 1884 and 1885. The conference officially recognized both British and German claims for territory in East Africa. Portugal received a clear claim on Mozambique. No African delegates were present at this conference.



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Explaining How did Leopold’s aggression promote Western imperialism in Africa?

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South Africa

Guiding Question *How was European dominance different in South Africa?*

European presence in Africa grew the most rapidly in the south. By 1865, the total white population of South Africa had risen to nearly 200,000 people. The Boers, or Afrikaners, were the descendants of the original Dutch settlers in South Africa. They had occupied Cape Town and surrounding areas since the seventeenth century. During the Napoleonic Wars, the British seized these lands from the Dutch. The British then encouraged settlers from their country to come to what they called Cape Colony.

The Boer Republics

In the 1830s, the Boers were unhappy with British rule, and they moved from the coastal lands in the 1830s. They headed northward on the Great Trek. One out of every five Dutch-speaking South Africans joined the trek. They eventually settled in the area between the Orange and Vaal (VAHL) Rivers and in the region north of the Vaal River. The Boers formed two independent republics there—the Orange Free State and the Transvaal (later called the South African Republic).

The Boers believed that white superiority was ordained, or ordered, by God. The only places non-Europeans had in Boer society were as laborers or servants. As the Boers settled the lands, they forced many of the **indigenous** peoples, those native to a region, to live on reservations.

The Boers had frequently battled the indigenous Zulu people. In the early nineteenth century, the Zulu were ruled by Shaka, who led them in establishing their own empire. Even after Shaka's death, the Zulu remained powerful. In the late 1800s, the Zulu were defeated when the British military joined the fight.

Cecil Rhodes

In the 1880s, British policy in South Africa was influenced by Cecil Rhodes. Rhodes had started diamond and gold companies in South Africa that made him a fortune. Rhodes was a great champion of British expansion. In fact, he once stated that God had chosen him to gain as much territory in Africa as possible for the British. One of Rhodes's goals was to create a series of British colonies "from the Cape to Cairo"—all linked by a railroad.

When gold and diamonds were discovered in the Transvaal, British settlers went there in large numbers looking to make their fortunes. The Boer residents resented the settlers and sometimes did not treat them well.

Rhodes secretly backed a raid that was meant to cause British settlers to revolt against the Transvaal government. The raid failed, and the British government then forced Rhodes to resign as head of the Cape Colony. This action was taken too late, however, to prevent a war between the British and the Boers.

The Boer War

The Boer War between the British and Boers lasted from 1899 to 1902. The Boers fought fiercely using guerrilla tactics. The angry British responded by burning crops. They also forced about 120,000 Boer women and children into detention camps. There some 20,000 people died from lack of food. Eventually, the vastly larger British army won the war. A peace treaty was signed in 1902.

In 1910 the British created an independent Union of South Africa. The Union combined the old Cape Colony and the Boer republics. The new state would be a self-governing nation within the British Empire. To appease the Boers, the British agreed that only whites, with a few Africans who owned land, would vote.

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Reading Progress Check

Identifying Central Issues What role did Cecil Rhodes play in promoting British imperialism in the south of Africa?

Effects of Imperialism

Guiding Question *How did European governance lead to African nationalism?*

By 1914 Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Portugal had divided up Africa. Only Liberia, which had been created as a homeland for the formerly enslaved persons of the United States, and Ethiopia remained free states. The Europeans' superior military force defeated any African peoples who dared to resist colonial rule.

Colonial Rule in Africa

As in Southeast Asia, most European governments ruled their Africa colonies with the least effort and expense possible. Indirect rule meant relying on existing political elites and institutions. The British especially took this approach. In some areas, the British simply asked a local ruler to accept British authority and to fly the British flag over official buildings.

The concept of indirect rule was introduced by the British in the Islamic state of Sokoto in northern Nigeria in 1903. This system had one good feature: it did not disrupt local customs and institutions. However, it had many unfortunate consequences in the end.

The system of indirect rule was basically a fraud. The existing native authorities had no real power. British administrators made all major decisions. The native authorities served chiefly to enforce those decisions.

The policy of indirect rule created another problem. It kept the old African elite in power. Ambitious and talented young Africans from outside the old elite had few opportunities for success in this system. As a result, British indirect rule added to class and tribal tensions within the colonies. These tensions erupted after independence came in the twentieth century.

Most other European nations used direct rule to govern their African possessions. This was true for the French colonies. At the top was a French official, usually known as a governor-general. He was appointed by the government in Paris. He governed with the help of a bureaucracy in the capital city of the colony.

The French ideal was to assimilate (bring into) African subjects into French culture. They did not wish to preserve indigenous **traditions**. They wanted to introduce French ways of doing things. Africans were eligible to run for office. They could even serve in the French National Assembly in Paris. A few were also appointed to high-powered positions in the colonial administration.

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Rise of African Nationalism

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a new class of leaders emerged in Africa. These leaders were often educated in colonial schools or in Western nations. They were the first generation of Africans to know a great deal about the West.

Some members of this new class admired Western culture and sometimes rejected the traditions of their own countries. They were eager to introduce Western ideas and institutions into their own societies. Even so, many of these new leaders resented the foreigners and their arrogant contempt for African peoples. These intellectuals understood that Western political theory was not practiced in colonial policy. Westerners had exalted democracy, equality, and political freedom. However, they did not apply these values in the colonies. They did not introduce democratic practices.

Native peoples could have only low-paying jobs in the colonial bureaucracy. To many Africans, colonialism meant that they lost their farmlands or that they had to work on plantations or in factories run by foreigners. Some African leaders even lost the rights to exploit their country's natural resources.

Middle-class Africans did not suffer as much as poor African peasants. However, they also had complaints. Middle-class Africans usually were only considered for menial jobs in the government or business. Their salaries were lower than those of Europeans in similar jobs.

Europeans tried to show they were superior to Africans in other ways, too. European officials who began to raise families in Africa established segregated clubs, schools, and churches. Only Europeans could join or use these places. Europeans were condescending to Africans. For example, Europeans had a habit of calling Africans by their first names.

Many members of the new educated class had mixed emotions about their colonial rulers and the civilization they represented. Some educated Africans found aspects of Western culture to be more attractive than their own. They were determined to assert their own nationality and culture. On the other hand, these intellectuals found many aspects of Western culture desirable. Out of this mixture of reactions came the first stirrings of modern nationalism in Africa.

Resentment resulted in action during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Across Africa, native peoples organized political parties and movements that called for the end of foreign rule. They wanted to be independent and self-governing.



Reading Progress Check

Drawing Conclusions In what ways were Western nations hypocritical in their treatment of their colonies?
