

Question: Analyze how British motives and attitudes towards imperialism in the later 19th and early 20th centuries reflected the political and intellectual issues of the period.

Document 1

It often strikes a man to inquire what is the chief good in life; to one the thought comes that it is a happy marriage, to another great wealth, and as each seizes on his idea, for that he more or less works for the rest of his existence. To myself thinking over the same question the wish came to render myself useful to my country. I then asked myself how could I and after reviewing the various methods I have felt that at the present day we are actually limiting our children and perhaps bringing into the world half the human beings we might owing to the lack of country for them to inhabit that if we had retained America there would at this moment be millions more of English living. I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence, look again at the extra employment a new country added to our dominions gives. I contend that every acre added to our territory means in the future birth to some more of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence.

Cecil Rhodes, British imperialist, 1877
Confessions of Faith

Document 2



“Rhodes Colossus: Standing from Cape Town to Cairo”
Punch Magazine, 1892, Rhodes is holding a telegraph line.

Document 3

. . . The Empire, to parody a celebrated expression, is commerce. It was created by commerce, it is founded on commerce, and it could not exist a day without commerce. (Cheers). . . The fact is history teaches us that no nation has ever achieved real greatness without the aid of commerce, and the greatness of no nation has survived the decay of its trade. Well, then, gentlemen, we have reason to be proud of our commerce and to be resolved to guard it from attack. (Cheers). . .

. . . We have suffered much in this country from depression of trade. We know how many of our fellow-subjects are at this moment unemployed. Is there any man in his senses who believes that the crowded population of these islands could exist for a single day if we were to cut adrift from us the great dependencies which now look to us for protection and assistance, and which are the natural markets for our trade? (Cheers.) The area of the United Kingdom is only 120,000 miles; the area of the British Empire is over 9,000,000 square miles, of which nearly 500,000 are to be found in the portion of Africa with which we have been dealing. If tomorrow it were possible, as some people apparently desire, to reduce by a stroke of the pen the British Empire to the dimensions of the United Kingdom, half at least of our population would be starved (cheers). . .

Joseph Chamberlain, British industrialist and politician, 1897
Speeches to Parliament

Document 4

But there is a base element in modern life which has stimulated Jingoism more than any other cause. Although in its essence capitalism is international, and although it will prove in the long run one of the leading factors in breaking down nationalism, for the present it is accustomed to find in exaggerated forms of nationalism its most potent ally. The music-hall patriot is encouraged to howl for Jameson or any other hero of the hour, when in reality he is howling for the financiers who are making of Jameson their tool. One year it may be the Russian Emperor, another year the German Emperor, or again the French President, against whom the financial magnate finds it convenient to make the music-hall patriot howl.

In America and England especially, we have long been taught with diligent assiduity that a nation is to be judged not by quality but by quantity, by material output, by exports and imports, by the accumulation of riches, and by the number of square miles over which the flag waves or the territory extends. This was, of course, one of the inevitable results of nationalism, and it is discernible in all nations more or less at the present time ; but, as we have said, it is a peculiarly sacred dogma of the English-speaking countries.

William Clark, in the *Progressive Review*, London, 1897
The Genesis of Jingoism

Document 5

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go send your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child

Take up the White Man's burden
In patience to abide
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit
And work another's gain

Take up the White Man's burden—
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better
The hate of those ye guard—
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah slowly) to the light:
"Why brought ye us from bondage,
"Our loved Egyptian night?"

Rudyard Kipling, British author and poet, 1899
from *Take Up the White Man's Burden*

Document 6



THE WHITE (?) MAN'S BURDEN.

“The White (?) Man’s Burden”
William H. Walker, *Life Magazine*, 1899

Document 6

The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of ambiguity ; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic ; he loves symmetry in all things ; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition ; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. ... Endeavour to elicit a plain statement of facts from an ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half-a-dozen times before he has finished his story.

Nevertheless, there is one saving clause, which serves in some respects as a bond of union between the two races. Once explain to an Egyptian what he is to do, and he will assimilate to the idea rapidly. He is a good imitator, and will make a faithful, even sometimes a too servile copy of the work of his European teacher. His civilisation may be a veneer, yet he will readily adopt the letter, the catchwords and jargon, if not the spirit of European administrative systems. His movements will, it is true, be not unfrequently those of an automaton, but a skilfully constructed automaton may do a great deal of useful work. ... So long as British supervision is maintained, the Egyptian will readily copy the practices and procedures of his English teachers. No necessity will, therefore, arise for employing any large number of English subordinates. On the other hand, inasmuch as the Egyptian has but little power of initiation, and often does not thoroughly grasp the reasons why his teachers have impelled him in certain directions, a relapse will ensue if English supervision be withdrawn.

Evelyn Baring, Earl of Cromer, British consul general in Egypt and effective ruler of the country, 1883 to 1907, *Modern Egypt*, memoir, published 1908