

Media Critical Analysis

Analysis: How is the topic of the **British Empire** presented in this magazine article by the historian, **Denis Judd**?

Context: From September 2013, Hellesdon High School in Norwich, England ran a series of new Introductory Skills workshops to incoming History AS-Level students. The goal of these workshops was to hone their critical literacy skills and build upon their evaluative and analytical skills, setting expectations for AS-Level work. Two articles were used in these workshops, and the students worked in groups on specific tasks linked to their article.

As the workshops were designed for students beginning an AS History (16-17 year olds) and were used as a vehicle for developing their critical literacy skills, the tasks were designed to enable students to transfer these skills to a range of texts during their course. In terms of Empire, the goal was to analyze the consequences of imperialism via an evaluation of the criteria used to weigh up Britain's Imperial legacy. It is clear from Judd's accompanying summaries on the positives and negatives of Britain's colonial rule around the globe that Britain's Imperial legacy is complex, multi-faceted and different according to one's perspective and evidence. The reader is invited to come to a judgment but this is deliberately problematised. It is hoped that in considering a range of questions linked to the article, the students will use graphic analysis of images as well as the textual evidence to supply their own verdict, on the article itself as well as on the results of Britain's colonial past.

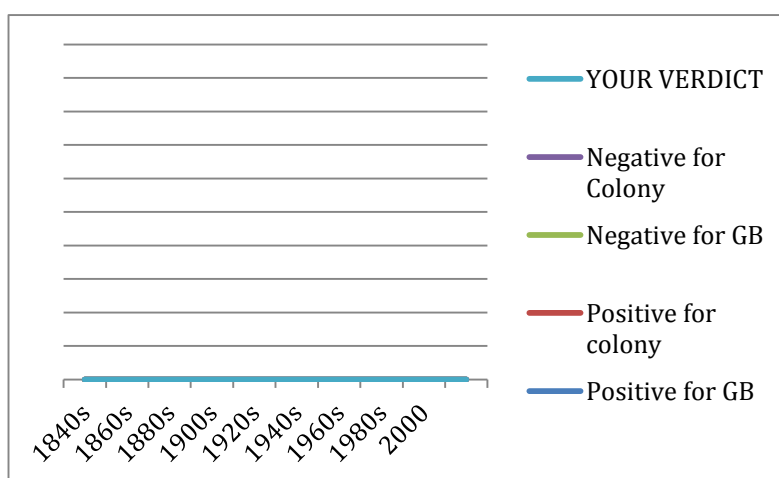
National perspective: Analysis of the topic "Empire " by using an English popular history magazine.

The questions are based on an article by Denis Judd, The Impact of Imperialism, BBC History Magazine, Vol.9, no.1 (Jan 2008).

Tasks (The tasks contain some questions which focus on your understanding of the article, and some which focus on aspects of critical and media literacy):

1. What does the word "Trial" suggest on the Magazine cover? Why is this word used, do you think?
2. Examine the two images on the magazine cover. Can a 'crime' be identified? Who or what is the victim? Who or what is the perpetrator?
3. Research the author of the main article (Denis Judd). How do his academic credentials influence your view of his authority? Should we expect him to be unbiased? If so, why?
4. How does Judd summarize the consequences of Imperial rule? Choose 4 words from the text and explain how these words define British imperialism as a negative, destabilizing influence.
5. For many years, historians and writers have undertaken 'moral audits' of British Imperialism, seeking to weigh up the consequences of the British Empire. Why does this continue to be a hotly contested and morally complex debate?
6. Get into groups of 6. Using the countries that Judd examines, each student is to analyze the 'effects' of British imperial rule on one country. Use the following guidelines to help you:
 - Timeframes. When did your country cede from Great Britain?
 - Ideals. Can you identify 'British' moral principles or beliefs?

- Consequences. What are the direct consequences of colonial policies on your country?
 - Consequences. Are there any unexpected consequences of imperial rule?
 - Conflict. Were there any violent or non-violent clashes? How were they resolved?
 - Moral audit. On what grounds has Judd passed sentence? (Political, Religious, Economic, Legal, Philosophical, etc.) Is his criteria suitable?
 - Come back together as a group. Discuss the verdicts: The verdicts. Do you agree with Judd's verdict? Does he use consistent criteria? What could be overlooked?
7. Examine the images and captions used to illustrate the case studies. What questions do they raise? Do they influence our view of the encounter between Great Britain and its colony? Do they effectively support the verdicts or are they neutral or negative?
8. Using the year of colonial cessation for each colony and using Judd's verdicts, draw a graph illustrating the positive and negative consequences of British imperialism for all parties.



9. Using your own criteria, draw another graph based on your own criteria for judging the consequences of British Imperial rule.
10. SUMMARY. The end of Empire. Look back at the Magazine cover. Do you now think that these images are appropriate? Do they accurately convey Britain's balance sheet of colonialism? In pairs, redesign the BBC History Magazine cover, what would you include and why? [images, text, font, colour choice, captions] Ensure that you refer to the Judd article in both considering the new design and in explaining your choices.
11. Denis Judd is a published historian who has written a book about the British Empire (*Empire: the British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the present*, London, Phoenix, 2011). However, other published historians have also written books and magazine articles about the British Empire which express different views about the empire, including Richard Gott and Niall Ferguson. Using a combination of Wikipedia and Google, try to find out what their views are about the British Empire.
12. How come professional historians can have such different views about the British Empire?
13. The television journalist Jeremy Paxman has also written a book about the British Empire. He is not a professional historian. Does this mean that his views about the British Empire are not as authoritative as those of professional historians?
14. What factors give authority to historians' (and other commentators') views about the British Empire? How do we decide whose views to believe?
15. Does 'authority' just depend on the quality and reputation of the historian, or the format in which their views are published Which forms of published

history have most authority - books, magazine articles, television programmes, newspaper articles, web pages?

16. Using the internet; try and find out what J.H. Hexter meant by the phrase 'the second record'. In what way does developing an understanding of 'the second record' help us to evaluate the authority of a historian's work?