

Unit Activities

Before You Begin—15 minutes

From what you have learned so far in world history, mark a fifteenth-century world map with the labels you think the European colonizers would have used to describe the world as they saw it: civilized and uncivilized; free and enslaved; colonizer and colonized. Discuss what happened in the fifteenth century that made Europeans feel empowered to mark their maps with the above labels.

The video is about nineteenth-century imperialism. What do you predict will be the labels on the maps used for the nineteenth century?

Watch the Video for “Unit 20: Imperial Designs”—30 minutes

Activity 1: Tools of Empire—45 minutes

Use the following sources to compare the methods (tools of empire) the British used to gain economic advantages in the Portuguese colony of Brazil and Qing China. Compare the British methods with those used by the Americans to gain economic advantages with Tokugawa Japan.

British Imperialism in Colonial Brazil

The Methuen Treaty of 1703 between Britain and Portugal guaranteed English merchants the same liberties, privileges, and exemptions as enjoyed by the Portuguese in both metropolitan and colonial commerce. The treaty also limited the tariffs that could be levied on British goods. The chief minister for the Portuguese, King Joseph II, and the Marquis de Pombal, however, tried to create a Portuguese textile industry based on a guaranteed Brazilian market. The Methuen Treaty guaranteed favorable treatment for English woolen textiles, the largest British export at the start of the eighteenth century, but did not mention English cottons, a loophole which Pombal exploited to promote a Portuguese cotton textile industry. He also managed to get Portuguese wine a monopoly in the British market. The Brazilian colony attracted immigration during the eighteenth-century gold rush in the interior and during the development of coffee plantations in the south. Altogether, nearly one thousand tons of gold and three million carats of diamonds were taken from the region between 1700 and 1800. Although the gold was controlled by Portugal and shipped to Lisbon, it did not remain there. Under the Methuen Treaty of 1703, England supplied textile products to Portugal. These were paid for with gold from the Brazilian mines that ended up in London banks and helped to finance the Industrial Revolution.

British Imperialism in Qing China

Early nineteenth-century British merchants profited from buying Chinese tea and selling it in England, but the Chinese merchants only accepted silver as payment. The British merchants sought to find some product that the Chinese would buy from them without the use of British silver. After tobacco from the Americas was imported in China, a few Chinese began to smoke opium-laced tobacco; historically, opium was used in small amounts as medicine in China. In the 1820s and 1830s, British merchants dramatically increased the import of opium (made in areas of India controlled by the British East India Company) into China. Officials in the imperial Chinese government debated the opium issue, until the Qing emperor finally decided to try to stop the opium trade. He commanded that all opium be seized and foreign importers be put to death. In 1840, the British government reacted strongly to the seizure of British merchants' property (opium) and the imprisonment of British subjects. British naval vessels bombarded the port of Canton, and they sailed up several major rivers with naval gunboats, threatening other cities including Beijing. After two more years of war, the Treaty of Nanjing was signed in 1842. The Chinese government agreed to pay 21 million dollars; abolish the Chinese merchant monopoly over trade in the southern ports; open four more new ports to British and other countries' merchants; reduce and fix import and export taxes; and surrender Hong Kong. After another war in 1856-1860, the Chinese government was forced to sign another treaty. This Treaty of Tianjin provided for 10 new ports of trade; foreign merchants' right to travel in

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all parts of China; permanent diplomatic residence in Beijing; freedom of movement for Christian missionaries; lower tariffs on trade; and an indemnity of forty million dollars to the British, French, American, and Russian governments. The Chinese were further humiliated by having to relinquish legal jurisdiction over sections of these port cities and over foreigners residing in China. Chinese were even excluded from facilities and areas controlled by foreigners.

American Imperialism in Tokugawa Japan

The Harris Treaty of 1858 opened the ports of Japan under the threat of United States military intervention (American naval steam ships with loaded cannons). American merchants gained full access to all parts of the Tokugawa Shogunate's realm, and all American citizens had extraterritoriality. The treaty also forced the Japanese government to cease its 300-year persecution of Christians in Japan. A regulation, unfavorable to Japan, was attached to the treaty determining the tariffs to be paid on U.S. imports. A low rate of five percent on the value of goods imported by the U.S. was set for machinery and shipping materials of all kinds, as well as raw materials such as lead, tin, and zinc.

Activity 2: Imperialism and Capitalism—45 minutes

Use the following source to determine how exploitation of overseas territories required certain trade networks and depended on investments of technology and capital. Investigate the case of South Africa to see the relationship between the changing material world and interconnections wrought from imperialist encounters.

In 1828, the king of the Zulus, Shaka, was assassinated and replaced by his half-brother Dingane (also spelled Dingaan). Dingane continued the Zulu opposition to the Boer settlements expanding in his region. "Sir,—This is an answer to your letter of 24th October ... as regards the request you have made to me as to the territory, I am almost inclined to cede it to you; but in the first place, I desire to say that a great number of cattle have been stolen from my country by a people having clothes, horses, and guns. The Zulus assure me that these people were Boers My request is that you recover the cattle and restore them to me Signed, Chief Dingane Umgungundlovu." (John A. Williams, *From the South African Past: Narratives, Documents, and Debates*, [Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997]: 88.)

The Boers assembled their forces in the Battle of Blood River in 1838. They defeated the Zulu—a turning point in the history of southern Africa. In 1837, the Boers made a great trek inland to protest the British ban on slavery. They moved east to areas dominated by the Zulus (now the Orange Free State and Natal); several wars happened between the Zulus and Boers. At first the Zulu were victorious, but then by using reloading guns, the Boers won and began to feel like a white tribe. By 1867, diamond mines were owned by British merchants but worked by black and Indian miners. In 1886, gold was discovered in areas dominated by Boers. (The descendants of the farmer colonists who speak a dialect called Afrikaans—a combination of Dutch and African languages—are known as the Afrikaners.)

Discussion Questions

- When did Dingane write this letter?
- How did the Boer victory at Blood River change the relationship between the Zulu and the British?
- How did the British policies toward the Boers change with the Boer victory?