

Teaching Materials

Teaching Strategies

This module is part of a growing body of work that seeks to address the neglect in the study of the British Empire of the role of colonized and colonizing women in developing and sustaining the empire. Part of this neglect has been because of the lack of written sources, especially those written by indigenous women. To help compensate for this lack, a number of the sources are images. When "reading" images with students always ask them to describe what they see before moving to think about the different ways the image can add to an understanding of women and empire. There is also an emphasis in the module on the mid-19th century through the 20th century, when an increasing range of written sources were produced.

As the range of primary sources selected for this module demonstrates, women moved about the Empire for a number of personal and family reasons, which included economic necessity, a desire to seek a better life for themselves and their family, and to escape gender expectations—especially those of Victorian Britain. The voices of colonized women are silent in most literature on empire. Seacole's autobiography allows students to question this silence and to think about the ways individual agency could allow a woman to escape the expectations that usually defined the lives of women—especially colonized women. Looking at Sale and Kingsley, the module helps students to think about the way empire opened up opportunities for British women by allowing them to escape the restrictions of life in Britain. Buchi Emecheta's autobiography highlights the changing demographics in Britain today and the specific difficulties facing women in adapting to life in Britain. An excellent movie to supplement this text is *Bhaji On the Beach*. Produced in 1993, the movie depicts a group of Asian British women visiting the English beach resort town of Blackpool for a day of fun. The movie would help students discuss cross-cultural conflict, sexism, racism, and the generation gap in Britain today.

Discussion Questions:

- What do the sources suggest about the way the lives of women, both colonized and colonizers, varied across different sites of empire?
- What can we learn from these sources about the ways that the British empire shaped the lives of colonized and colonizing women? How did women shape the empire?
- What do the sources suggest about the relationship between different women in the empire?
- What kind of connections did women help to establish between Britain proper and the rest of the British empire?

Lesson Plan: Women and the British Empire: A Talking DBQ

Time Estimated

One 80-minute class period and DBQ as an independent assignment.

Because students need a background on the British Empire in order to complete this lesson, the lesson would be most appropriately placed near the end of a unit on imperialism.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. analyze primary source documents for evidence of roles women played in the British Empire.
2. devise yes/no questions in order to gain more information.
3. cooperate with a group in order to formulate an answer to a question.
4. recognize the multifaceted nature of the role women played in the development and support of the British Empire.
5. identify different views of the British Empire based on the documents provided.

Materials

- Source 4: Painting, Scotland Forever (1881) by Elizabeth Butler, to be projected on a screen.
- Duplicate enough copies of the following four sources so that each group has one copy:
 - Source 1: Painting, The Secret of England's Greatness (1863) by Thomas Jones Barker (Use painting only, not annotation.)
 - Source 7: Autobiography, Mary Seacole (Use excerpt and annotation.)
 - Source 10: Fiction, Nervous Conditions (Use excerpt only, not annotation.)
 - Source 3: Letter, Mary Moffat (Use excerpt and annotation.)
- Duplicate enough copies of the Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Images so that each student has 2 copies.
- Duplicate enough copies of the Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Texts so that each student has 3 copies.

Strategies

1. **Methodology:** This lesson borrows heavily from the Suchman Inquiry Model of teaching which allows students to discover key facts by analyzing artifacts and formulating questions. Essentially, the lesson is a talking DBQ.

In small groups, students are presented with one artifact at a time and asked to

analyze the artifact within the framework of a specific question. In the case of this lesson, the question is: What role did women play in the creation and perpetuation of the British Empire? Once they have analyzed the artifact and taken notes, they then formulate a question to ask the teacher to gain more information. The question should be asked so that the answer is either yes or no. By putting this restriction on the students, it forces them to formulate thoughtful and detailed questions. Each group is given the same artifact at the same time, a few minutes for analysis, and then a few minutes for questioning the teacher. Once one artifact is complete, the teacher then passes out the next artifact. The lesson proceeds in this way until all the artifacts have been analyzed.

At that point, students use the sum of the knowledge they have accumulated to try to answer the primary question posed them at the beginning of class. Through guided full class discussion, teachers are able to bring students to the necessary conclusions to understand the documents and the learning question. (For more information on the Suchman Inquiry Model in its original form, see, Mary Gunter and Thomas H. Estes and Jan Schwarb, *Instruction: A Models Approach*, Third Edition, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999.)

For this lesson on women in the British Empire, the question to be answered is: What role did women play in the creation and perpetuation of the British Empire? For this lesson, there are five artifacts selected for analysis: three paintings, one diary excerpt, one book excerpt and one personal letter excerpt. Six artifacts can usually be analyzed and discussed in one 80-minute class.

- 2. Introduction:** Explain to students that we will be analyzing documents today by playing 20 questions. In small groups, they will receive one document at a time. They will be given ten minutes to analyze and take notes on the document. Then, along with their group members, they must come up with a yes/no question for the teacher which will give them more information. They should come up with more than one question because another group might ask their question before it is their turn. They will also have the opportunity to ask more than one question if time allows. Ultimately, they are trying to answer the following big question: *What role did women play in the creation and perpetuation of the British Empire?* Put the question on the board. Once every group has asked a question, the next document will be passed out for analysis. We will proceed in this way for all four documents. When it is each group's turn to ask a question, it can relate to any of the documents analyzed so far.
- 3. Teacher-guided analysis:** Before beginning the 20 questions game, indicate to the students that they will analyze one document together as a class to give them an idea of the types of questions they should be asking when it is their turn. At this

point, project Source 4: Painting, Scotland Forever (1881) by Elizabeth Butler. Give the students a minute to study the painting.

Pass out the note sheets; give them a few minutes to take some cursory notes on the painting. Point out to the students that they should ask questions that will help them gather information about the document; specific information like point of view, bias, medium, influence of medium on message, audience and authorship. It might be helpful to write these terms on the board. Ask students to take a minute to formulate some questions about the painting, keeping in mind the larger question we are trying to answer today: *What role did women play in the creation and perpetuation of the British Empire?*

As students offer questions, compliment them on their thinking and attention to the list of types of information they are trying to gather. Ask them to try to rephrase their questions as yes/no questions if it was not in that form already. This will be a challenge to the students, and possibly somewhat frustrating, but as they begin to form more precise questions, their analysis becomes clearer.

If students are having difficulty formulating questions, offer some models. For example, one of the pieces of information they need is point of view. A question for the *Scotland Forever* painting might be:

- Was the artist British?
- Was the artist loyal to the British Empire?
- Was the artist trying to encourage support for the British military?

Questions that could be generated for the authorship might be:

- Was the artist British?
- Was the artist a soldier?
- Was the artist a man?

After you feel that students have gained an understanding of how to formulate and ask questions, go on to the first document they will analyze in their small groups. Continue to remind them of the types of information they are seeking and the question they are trying to answer. Answer any questions the students might have about the lesson procedures.

4. **Small-group Analysis:** Put students into groups. When everyone is ready, begin by passing out a copy of the first document to each group. The first document is Source 1: Painting, The Secret of England's Greatness (1863) by Thomas Jones Barker. You might also want to project a larger image of the painting for the students to study. Give them five to ten minutes to analyze and formulate a couple

of questions.

While students are working, circulate to monitor their analyses and depth of understanding. Encourage them to make comparisons with the document they have already analyzed. Refrain from answering questions at this point; encourage them to rephrase their questions so that you may answer them with a yes or a no at the end of this round of document analysis.

When the time has expired, ask for a volunteer group to begin the questions. Allow each group to ask one question. Remind students that all the questions their classmates ask will provide them with more information. Thus, they should pay attention to the questions and the answers. Once each group has asked one question, proceed to the next document. Try not to allow more than one question per group until all the groups have had a chance to ask a question. This will frustrate the students somewhat, but the result will be more focused and thoughtful questions as the lesson proceeds. If time allows, go back through each group to give them the opportunity to ask more questions.

Continue with the remaining three documents (Source 7: Autobiography, Mary Seacole, Source 10: Fiction, Nervous Conditions, and Source 3: Letter, Mary Moffat) until the analysis is complete. Try not to spend more than 15 minutes total on each document.

5. **Discussion:** At this point, the students have analyzed five documents, one with you, and four as a class asking questions. Make sure they understand this key information about each document. Give the students a few minutes to discuss an answer to the big question: *What role did women play in the creation and perpetuation of the British Empire?*

When they are ready, invite students to give their answer to the question. Encourage students to take notes on the discussion; this will help them with the upcoming writing assignment. Lead the students through a discussion of the various roles women played and impact of those roles on the British Empire. It is at this point that you may fill in information you think they may have neglected to uncover in their questioning. Clarify any misconceptions that might have arisen.

6. **DBQ Assignment:** When it is clear that the students have grasped the lesson's material, proceed with the DBQ assignment. They will notice that not all of the documents are the same as those analyzed in class. Review the writing assignment with the students and assign a due date.

Differentiation

Possible enrichment activities for this lesson include:

- Internet research: Allow students to search for other women who impacted the British Empire during the Age of Imperialism. What role did they play? Did they support the empire?
- Create your own DBQ: Have students use the Internet and classroom resources to find documents to create their own DBQ. Students can be required to find five related documents and write a question tying them together.
- A presentation on bias: Students can be assigned to find documents representing a specific point of view (African, Indian, British). Those students can then present the impact of British imperialism from those points of view.

Document Based Question (Suggested writing time: 40 minutes)

Directions: The following question is based on the documents included in this module. This question is designed to test your ability to work with and understand historical documents. Write an essay that:

- Has a relevant thesis and supports that thesis with evidence from the documents.
- Uses all or all but one of the documents.
- Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible. Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
- Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the authors' points of view.

You may refer to relevant historical information not mentioned in the documents.

Question: Using your knowledge of social studies and the Age of Imperialism in Great Britain, answer the following question using the documents provided in the module: What role did women play in the creation and perpetuation of the British Empire?

Be sure to analyze point of view in at least three documents.

What additional sources, types of documents, or information would you need to have a more complete view of this topic?

Bibliography

Bailey, Susan. *Women and the British Empire: An Annotated Guide to Sources*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1983.

Although slightly out of date, this text is still a reliable source for students to look for sources for research papers. The book lists primary and secondary sources on British women as wives of administrators, missionaries, and settlers. It has some information on colonized women.

Burton, Antoinette. *Burdens of History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

In this excellent text, the author argues that British middle-class feminists appropriated imperial ideology to underpin their own claims for equality.

Burton, Antoinette, ed., *Politics and Empire in Victorian Britain*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

An outstanding reader that offers an excellent range of primary sources on the British Empire, including many of women.

Chaudhuri, Nupur and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

A series of excellent essays that shed light on the relationship of women to imperialism. The majority of the essays deal with the British Empire.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. Washington: The Seal Press, 1988.

Set in the British colony of Rhodesia in 1968, this novel focuses on two young African women and the tensions that their attendance at Western-orientated schools creates for their own identity and for their place in their family.

Emecheta, Buchi. *Head Above Water*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1986.

An autobiography written by the best selling author from Nigeria, which chronicles her struggle to “keep her head above water” after she moves to live in England in the early 1960s.

Frost, Lucy. *No Place For a Nervous Lady: Voices From the Australian Bush*. Queensland: University of Queensland, 1984.

An excellent primary source consisting of excerpts from the diaries and letters of women living in Australia during the early years of British settlement.

Midgley, Clare, ed., *Gender and Imperialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

An edited collection of nine essays, which provides an excellent introductory source to think about the ways the British Empire shaped the lives of colonized and colonizing men and women in a range of sites of empire.

Morgan, Sally. *My Place*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987.

This book provides valuable information on the circumstances of female missionaries in China. Not only does it describe the conditions of these women's lives in China, but it also delves into their motivations for undertaking missionary work.

Procida, Mary. *Married to the Empire*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

An excellent text representative of the new work on British women in the Empire. Procida argues that from the end of the 19th century, British women living in India were central to establishing and sustaining the British Raj.

Seacole, Mary. *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

First published in 1857, this autobiography by Mary Seacole recounts her experiences in Jamaica, Panama, and during the Crimean War.

Strobel, Margaret. *European Women and the Second British Empire*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Written by an historian, this book provides an overview of the role of British women in the Empire from roughly 1880.