

Historiography is the study of how views of the past have changed over time

1. Colour-code the table below according to the views of the Empire:

1. Positive

2. Negative

3. Mixed

<p>The Balance Sheet of Empire AJP Taylor, socialist historian (1973)</p> <p>‘Perhaps the subject peoples would have found a way of life more suited to their needs if they had been left to themselves. They were given no choice.’</p> <p>NB Socialism is a political viewpoint that prioritises equal treatment of all people above all else</p>	<p>Speech to the London Imperial Institute Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary (1895)</p> <p>‘I believe in the British Empire and I believe in the British race. I say that not as an empty boast but as proved by the success which we have had in administering vast colonies.’</p>	<p>Discovering Africa’s Past Basil Davidson, socialist historian (1978)</p> <p>‘The blessings of European civilisation that were given to Africans during the colonial period were few and far between: and they were paid for at a high price.’</p>
<p>Empire: How Britain Built the Modern World Niall Ferguson, historian whose Scottish ancestors emigrated to Canada to escape poverty (2004)</p> <p>‘The British Empire was not without blemish. But, for better or worse the world we know today is in large part the product of Britain’s Age of Empire.’</p>	<p>Problems of the Far East Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India (1894)</p> <p>‘The British Empire is the greatest tool for good the world has ever seen.’</p> <p>Viceroy = the top British government official in India</p>	<p>Article in the Guardian newspaper David Olusoga, historian who focuses on slavery (2016)</p> <p>‘The empire did bring economic developments and peace to some parts of the world, though many of those developments were fleeting and arranged primarily to suit British interests.’</p>

2. Plot the six views on a graph to show how views of the Empire have changed over time. Label the earliest two interpretations as ‘**traditionalist**’; the next two as ‘**revisionist**’ and the last two as ‘**post-revisionist**’.

3. Match the decades in the first column of the table below to the descriptions given in the second. Draw lines to show you answers.

1890s	This was the decade in which the last of Britain's colonies became independent. By this decade empire-building no longer looked like a good thing because Adolf Hitler had recently used claims of racial superiority as a justification for establishing a German empire in Europe.
1970s	This is a decade in which the British Empire has been partly rehabilitated. This was encouraged by the collapse of the European economy after 2008. The consequence of which was a belief that Britain should prioritise her relationships with Commonwealth states (ex-colonies) over those with Europe.
2010s	This was the decade in which Britain's empire was at its height. A quarter of the globe was in British hands and millions of British citizens consumed its resources. Also millions of British people relied on the Empire to buy the goods they made.

4. In groups discuss why Curzon, Chamberlain, Taylor, Davidson, Olusoga or Ferguson held their interpretations. Consider both their background (first table) and when they wrote (second table).
5. Which group of interpretations do you agree with: traditionalists (positive), revisionists (negative) or post-revisionists school (mixed)?

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