

<https://carleton.ca/populistpublics/>

### **Reading Images of Empire:**

#### **A Case Study in Visual Literacy**

**Grade 10:** Canadian History Since World War I (CHC2D)

*Units:*

- B. Canada, 1914 to 1929

**Grade 11:** World History since 1900: Global and Regional Interactions (CHT3O)

*Units:*

- B. Empires and Nationalism, 1900–1919

**DESCRIPTION:** Images that represent aspects of the British Empire in a strongly positive light are increasingly popular in some online spaces. These images are often related to far-right organizations and instances of hate speech. Because the subject matter is not generally well understood, and the points of reference can seem obscure, images that use empire in this way can pass unnoticed. This lesson can be used, generally, to practice a visual literacy that will serve students well online and, specifically, to facilitate a greater awareness of how British imperial imagery can be coopted into extremist discourse. The visual examples used here were gathered by research assistants for the “Populist Publics: Memory, Populism, and Misinformation in the Canadian Social Mediascape” project at Carleton University, and are meant to give a sense of the online content with which a student might come into contact.

**TIME:** Two 60–90 minutes class periods for the students to watch the YouTube video, read the two articles, fill in the worksheet, and, if desirable, conduct a group discussion based upon their answers.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Inform about types of historical representation that promote exclusionary discourse
- Encourage critical thinking about online material
- Facilitate visual literacy

#### **MATERIALS:**

- Worksheet
- Referenced newspaper articles (included)
- YouTube video: “Imperialism: Crash Course World History #35”

Reading Images of Empire:

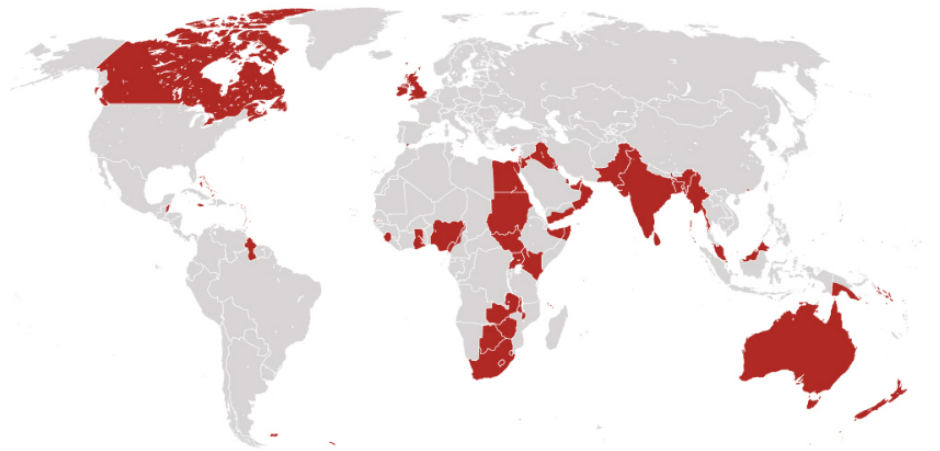
A Case Study in Visual Literacy

The British Empire

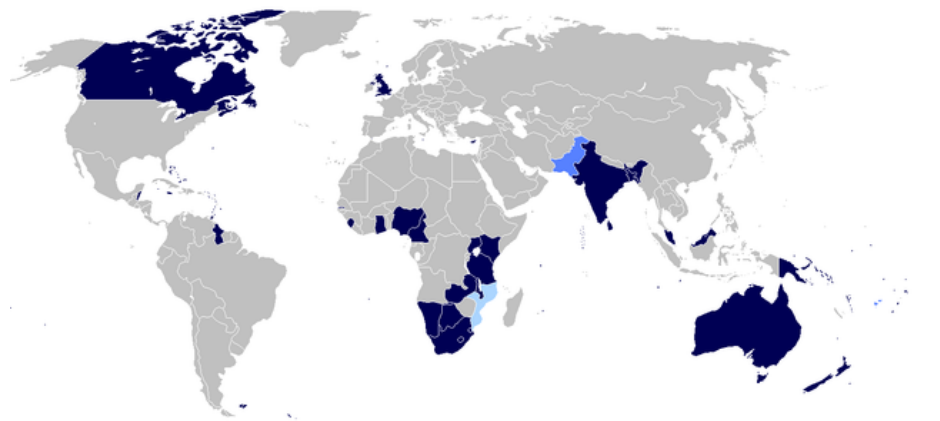
Please watch the following clip on YouTube before beginning this worksheet:  
**Imperialism: Crash Course World History #35**

The **British Empire** originated in the late sixteenth century. At its height in the early twentieth century, it was the largest empire in history, comprising almost a quarter of the world's total population and land mass.

It was often described as “the empire upon which the sun never sets.”



Canada was one of Britain's earliest colonies and, to this day, it remains a part of the **Commonwealth** (an international association consisting of the United Kingdom together with states that were previously part of the British Empire, all of which have the British monarch as their symbolic head).



## Assignment #1

The British Empire is an increasingly common point of reference on social media. Please study the following three images taken from social media sources and, **in the space below, summarize what meaning you believe that they are meant to convey.** What is their argument? What are their underlying assumptions? What beliefs are most likely held by whoever created and posted them?

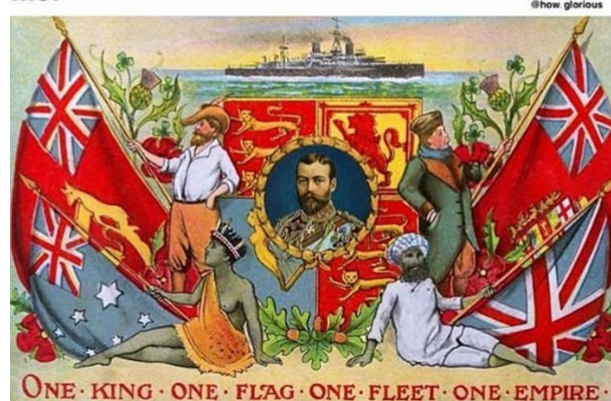
### Image #1

me: i hate liberals  
them: so what are you, a republican?  
me:



### Image #2

**Her: So what are your political beliefs?**  
**Me: I guess you could say I'm old fashioned**  
**Her: What do you mean?**  
**Me:**



### Image #3

## List of places named after Queen Victoria

*This list is incomplete; you can help by expanding it.*

*you can help by expanding it.*



## The British Monarch

In a **monarchy**, a king or queen is the Head of State. Britain is now a **constitutional monarchy**. This means that, while the monarch symbolically rules, the ability to make and pass legislation actually resides with an elected **Parliament**. Canada is also a constitutional monarchy, and it has the same monarch as Britain. Thus, the king of England would also be the king of Canada.



While, historically, most British monarchs have been kings, two of the most famous were queens. Queen **Victoria** reigned from 1837 to 1901. The Victorian Era is named after her, and the British Empire was at its height during this time.



Queen **Elizabeth II** has reigned since 1952, and she is the current monarch of Britain and the Commonwealth (including Canada).



**Assignment #2**

Please study the following three images and, in the space below, summarize what meaning you believe that they are meant to convey. What is their argument? What are their underlying assumptions? What beliefs are most likely held by whoever created and posted them?

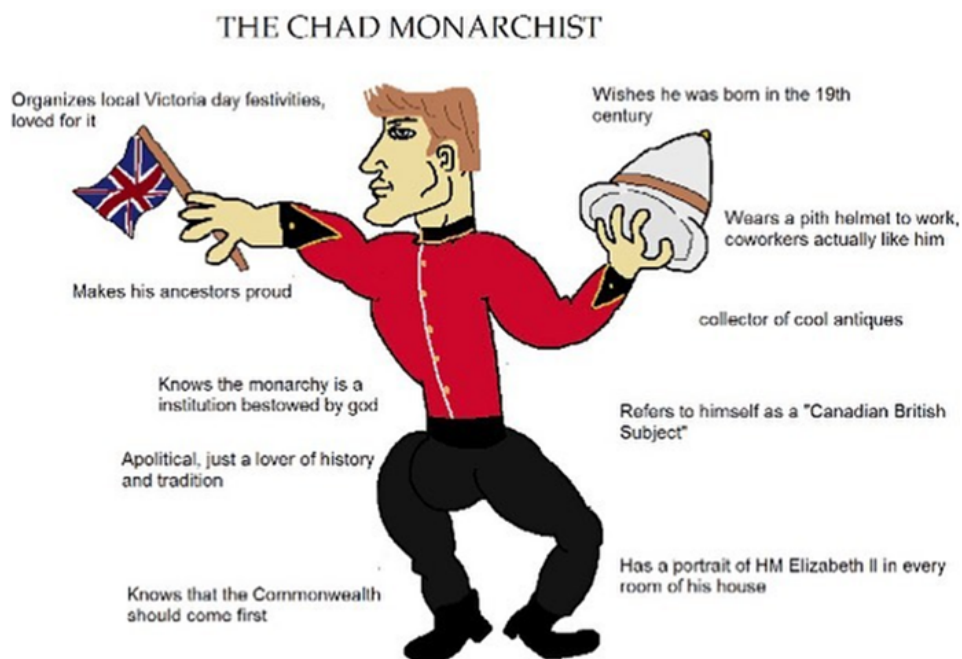
**Image #4**



**Image #5**



**Image #6**

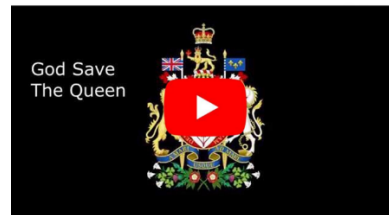


### Assignment #3

Please study the following three images and, in the space below, summarize what meaning you believe that they are meant to convey. What is their argument? What are their underlying assumptions? What beliefs are most likely held by whoever created and posted them?

#### Image #7

doctor: u only have one hour left to live  
me:



One Hour of Patriotic Canadian Music

#### Image #8

\*Describe your political leanings\*

Me:



#### Image #9

"Our history now descends from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust"- Cassius Dio



## The End of Empire

Although the British Empire was at its largest immediately after **World War I**, Britain found its position as a great world power threatened by countries such as the United States.

In World War II, Britain's colonies in Asia were occupied by the rival empire of Japan. Even though the Japanese were ultimately defeated, Britain's prestige had been damaged and **nationalist movements** (people who wanted to have control of their own country) were emboldened to resist and rebel.

In 1947, **India**, Britain's most valuable and populous possession, achieved independence. Over the subsequent twenty years, almost all of Britain's former colonies did the same.



**Assignment #4**

Please study the following three images and, in the space below, summarize what meaning you believe that they are meant to convey. What is their argument? What are their underlying assumptions? What beliefs are most likely held by whoever created and posted them?

**Image #10**

"Britain should apologise for the Empire!"



**Image #11**

OMG ARE YOU SERIOUSLY SAYING THAT THE WORLD WOULD BE BETTER IF THE BRITISH EMPIRE STILL EXSISTED?!!!!???



**Yes.**

**Image #12**

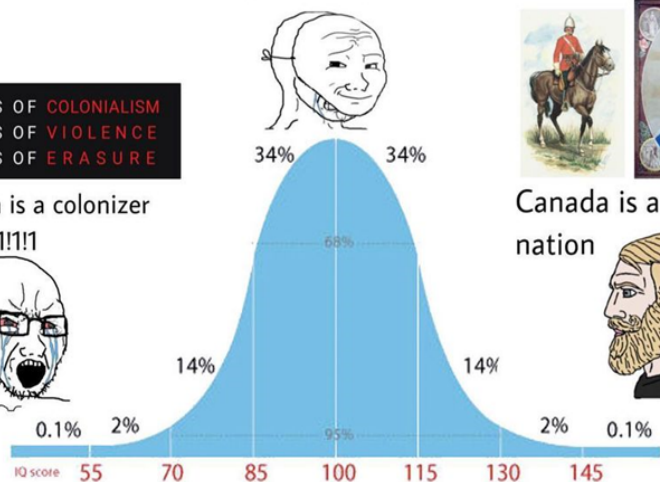
We can reconcile with our past and still be proud of the present!

150 YEARS OF COLONIALISM  
150 YEARS OF VIOLENCE  
150 YEARS OF ERASURE

Canada is a colonizer nation!1111



Canada is a Colonizer nation



**Assignment #5**

**Image #13**

**To gender (verb):**

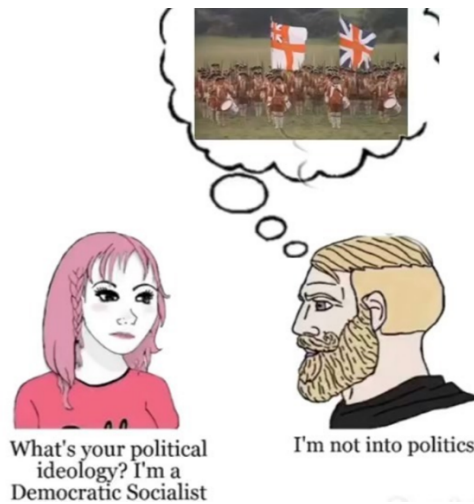
*to reflect or involve gender differences or stereotypical gender roles*

**How are the following three images 'gendered'?**



**Image #14**

**What connection is being made here between gender and empire?**



**In your opinion, were any of the previous images (#1-12) gendered? In what way?**

**Image #15**

Class trip to South Africa

Girls

Ew it's too hot and there's no WiFi

Boys





4. Why do you think that images of empire and monarchy are currently so popular in some online spaces? Why do you think that some Canadians might have strong positive feelings towards the British Empire? In what way might it seem relevant to them?

5. If you had to guess, what identity characteristics would you attribute to the people who posted the above images? Do you think that they are more or less affluent (have money)? Are they mostly male or mostly female? Are they mostly white, mostly people of colour, or an ethnically diverse mixture? What was it about the images that led you to make the guesses that you did?

# Damaged Queen Victoria statue is beyond repair, Manitoba government says

Steve Lambert

The Canadian Press

June 22, 2022



A statue of Queen Victoria that was toppled and beheaded by protesters last year outside the Manitoba legislature is beyond repair and will not be restored.

"It's gone through a lengthy assessment process and is not repairable," Justice Minister Kelvin Goertzen said in an interview.

Trying to replicate it is also out of the question, Goertzen said, because it would cost at least \$500,000.

"I know it will be disappointing to many people -- it won't be recast -- but that's the decision."

The statue, a prominent monument on the front lawn of the legislature, was tied with ropes and hauled to the ground on Canada Day last year during a demonstration over the deaths of Indigenous children at residential schools. It was covered with red paint. The head of the large statue was removed and found the next day in the nearby Assiniboine River.

While the statue was toppled in an area covered by many security cameras, no one was charged with causing the damage.

A smaller statue of the Queen, on a side lawn next to the lieutenant-governor's house, was also toppled but suffered less damage. That one of Queen Elizabeth II is being repaired and will be put back in place, Goertzen said.

Discussions with Indigenous groups are ongoing about what might replace the Queen Victoria statue, he added.

There is no word yet on what is to become of the broken Queen Victoria statue. In online discussion forums, some people have suggested the statue be installed in a museum as-is to commemorate last year's protest.

The decision to not restore or replicate the statue comes amid a public debate over how to mark Canada Day this year, at a time when the country is still coming to grips with the legacy of residential schools. Winnipeg is home to the highest concentration of Indigenous people among major cities in Canada.

Organizers of the city's big annual Canada Day celebrations at the Forks -- the downtown junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers -- have renamed the event this year "A New Day," cancelled fireworks and promised events that will be reflective as well as celebratory.

That has led to accusations that organizers have cancelled Canada Day, which they deny. Jenny Motkaluk, a candidate for the city's mayoral election in October who finished second in the last race in 2018, blasted

the decision and said she would go elsewhere because she loves the country unconditionally.

Other mayoral candidates are supporting the renamed event and have said acknowledging the country's history, including its flaws, is important.

Wab Kinew, Manitoba's Opposition NDP leader, said there are ways to mark the holiday while acknowledging the wrongs.

"I think it could mean things like marking Canada Day, attending a Canada Day celebration, but wearing an orange shirt in honour of the (residential school) survivors," Kinew said.

"I am a patriot, but I'm a patriot who is also the son of a residential school survivor, and my dad shared a bunk with a child who never came home from that residential school."

# *Scholars at Oxford University Refuse to Teach Under Statue of Colonialist*



By [Elian Peltier](#)

June 10, 2021

The New York Times

A long-running controversy at Oxford University over a statue of Cecil Rhodes, the British imperialist seen by many as an architect of apartheid in South Africa, gained new momentum this week after more than 150 academics said they would refuse to teach students of the college where the monument sits.

The scholars sent a letter to the college saying they would refuse requests from Oriel College, one of the 39 self-governing entities that make up the university, to give tutorials to its undergraduate students and to attend or speak at events the college sponsored, among other measures.

“Faced with Oriel’s stubborn attachment to a statue that glorifies colonialism and the wealth it produced for the College, we feel we have no choice,” they wrote in the letter seen by The New York Times.

The boycott is the latest high-profile protest in a complex reckoning taking place in Britain and several other European countries over their colonial and slave-trading

pasts. In museums, public spaces and schools, a long-running discourse arguing that colonizing forces brought “civilization” to African countries is changing, with many critics arguing too little is being done to confront the past.

On Wednesday, some students of Magdalen College at Oxford University removed a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, the reigning monarch, arguing that the British monarchy represented colonial history.

The British government has mostly resisted such calls, and a cabinet minister vowed earlier this year to “save Britain’s statues from the woke militants.”

“What has stood for generations should be considered thoughtfully, not removed on a whim or at the behest of a baying mob,” Robert Jenrick, the minister, said in *The Telegraph*.

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests, thousands of demonstrators gathered in Oxford last June to demand that the statue of Rhodes be taken down. Protesters across Britain also targeted monuments dedicated to Winston Churchill, and in Bristol, demonstrators toppled a statue of slave trader Edward Colson, whose profits played a large role in building the city. The statue, which was dumped into the city harbor, is now exhibited in a museum.

Cities like Bristol in England or Bordeaux and Nantes, on France’s Atlantic coast, have been forced to acknowledge that they flourished through the enslavement and forced labor of many. Belgium has sent its “deepest regrets” to the Democratic Republic of Congo for the millions of deaths and devastating damages it caused during decades of colonization, and local authorities in the city of Antwerp removed a statue of King Leopold II, who was behind the colonization.



Born in Britain, Rhodes studied at Oriel College in the late 19th century before becoming the prime minister of the Cape Colony, in South Africa, in 1890. Through his diamond company, De Beers, Rhodes annexed large swathes of land, and the settlers and soldiers he led killed thousands of civilians. Biographers and critics of Rhodes have highlighted his racist views, saying that his discriminatory policies against native residents paved the way for apartheid.

Rhodes died in 1902, and in his will donated today's equivalent of nearly 12 million pounds — about \$17 million — to Oriel College.

Dozens of foreign students also study at Oxford University every year through the Rhodes Scholarship, which was established through Mr. Rhodes' will. Previous recipients include Bill Clinton and a former Australian prime minister, Tony Abbott.