**Year 11/12 Bridging Work History Modern World**

**An introduction to the British Empire**

In 1857 Great Britain possessed a vast empire with lots of territory. This empire spread across the world. Many people in Britain saw this empire as important and made Britain a powerful country. The British Empire covered a quarter of the earth’s land ranging from small islands to vast land masses.

Although the British Crown and Parliament had ultimate authority over the empire, the actual business of governing varied. A representative system with a royal governor and assembly had been established in West Indian colonies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the South African Cape. These ‘colonies of settlement’ were so named because they were occupied by white settlers who had usually gone there in search of land. From around the middle of the 19th century these countries (with the exception of the West Indies) moved to ’responsible government’. This meant that they had their own government ministers and were answerable to their individual elected parliaments. This system was similar to the system used in Britain. At around the turn of the 20th century these self -governing colonies became known as Dominions.

Much of the remainder of the Empire was made up of Crown colonies. There were also territories influenced by British rule but not directly ruled by them. In these countries British traders had often established bases. These areas are sometimes referred too as informal empire. There was also another type of rule after World War I called British mandates. There was also rule in India, governed by the East India Trading Company.

**As you study this part of the course, you will consider important issues such as:**

* How and why did the British Empire grow?
* How did the Empire influence life and culture in Britain?
* How did the indigenous peoples respond to British rule?
* The importance of different individuals.

**Here is a glossary of some of the key words that would be useful to learn before the course starts**

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| Anglicans | Members of the Protestant Church of England |
| Boers | Dutch population which settled in South Africa in the late 1600s |
| Commonwealth | An association consisting of the UK together with states that were previously part of the British Empire |
| Crown Colony | A colony ruled directly by an appointee of the British Crown and accountable to the Colonial office |
| Dominions | Completely self- governing colonies |
| East India Company | A commercial company which established considerable political power in India in the 18th and early 19th century. |
| Entente | A friendly agreement |
| Free Trade | International trade that takes place without tariffs being imposed. |
| The gold standard | A system by which the value of currency was defined in terms of gold, for which the currency could be exchanged. |
| Indigenous | Native or born in the area |
| Informal Empire | Areas influenced if not ruled by the British via deals with local rulers |
| Jewel in the crown | The greatest asset |
| Mandate | A territory allocated by the League of Nations to a particular country to be governed by that country on the League’s behalf |
| Mercantilism | A system of regulations governing trade |
| National Service | Required to undertake military service |
| Sepoys | Indian troops who fought for the British |
| Suffrage | The right to vote in elections |
| Viceroy | A ruler exercising direct authority on behalf of the sovereign |