

## Year 8- British Empire

### Title: What was the British Empire?

#### TASKS:

Read the information attached below (as well as the map) and then answer the following questions.

1. What is an Empire?
2. What is a colony?
3. Give three examples of countries that were colonies of the British Empire by 1918.
4. How big was the British Empire by the end of the nineteenth century?
5. Why did the British Empire grow in the nineteenth century?

#### Extra Challenge:

Use the information cards attached to decide which of these things were good things about empire and which were bad.

# The British Empire

**Colony** – A country ruled by another country.

**Empire** – A group of colonies run by one country.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the British Empire had become the largest the world had ever seen. One in three people lived under British rule and the Empire spanned a quarter of the globe. As you can see from the two maps below, much of this growth took place during the nineteenth century.

There are a number of reasons why the British Empire grew so quickly at this time. Firstly, the Industrial Revolution and the growth of factories meant that British businesses were looking for new countries and markets to trade with and supply essential raw materials. This need for a larger Empire was also helped by the fact that Britain had a powerful Navy. Whilst her Navy protected the Empire, it was also necessary to control harbours and coaling stations around the world where these ships could stop and refuel.

One particular area where Britain's Empire grew was Africa. Historians disagree about exactly why it was that Britain expanded her Empire in Africa so much after 1880. Some argue that it was necessary to protect her trade routes and overseas business. Certainly, Britain regarded India as the '*Jewel in the Crown*' and was therefore keen to protect the route to India via the Suez Canal. Other historians suggest Britain was spreading Christianity, fighting slavery or simply that the British had a natural sense of exploration and adventure. It has also been argued however that Britain was just trying to keep ahead of other European countries like Germany and France who were building Empires of their own. Whatever the reason, by the end of the century, Britain's Empire was at the heart of her economic power and importance.

The British Empire in 1815 (Top) and 1918 (bottom).

