

## The White Man's Burden

### Rudyard Kipling

#### Post-reading

#### LEARNING CHECK

#### 1. Vocabulary.

What are the following words used to describe?

	fluttered, wild, sullen, half-devil, half-child, sloth, heathen folly, silent
	serve, wait on, seek another's profit, work another's gain, fill full the mouth of famine/bid the sickness cease, seek the end for others, to better, make them with your living, mark them with your dead, to guard
	heavy harness, the savage war of peace, no tawdry rule of kings/but toil of serf and sweeper, blame, hate, weariness, thankless
	patience, check the show of pride, open, simple, plain

#### WIDER CONTEXTS

#### 1. Historical context: historical background.

Use the internet to find out about the historical background which prompted Kipling to write the poem. Does this add to your understanding of the poem? You may find the following link useful: <http://www1.assumption.edu/users/mcclymer/His130/P-H/burden/default.html>

#### 2. Literary context: other media: illustrations

- a. Work in pairs. One student gets illustration a., the other one gets illustration b. Do not let your partner see your illustration. Student A describes his/her illustration so that student B can make a drawing of it. Compare your drawing with the original. Change roles.
- b. Compare the two illustrations.
- c. Which one do you find best illustrates Kipling's poem?

# Wider **CONTEXTS** EMPIRE

The White Man's Burden from *The Journal*, Detroit, 1898.



# Wider CONTEXTS EMPIRE

The White (?) Man's Burden-from an 1899 edition of *Life Magazine*



The cartoon depicts the figures of Uncle Sam (a common national personification of the American government), John Bull (a national personification of Britain) and Kaiser Wilhelm (German Emperor) as three heavy burdens being carried on the backs of non-white people.

### 3. Reception: Senator Tillman, David Cody and Wikipedia.

Reception: Read the following comments on “The White Man’s Burden”. In groups

- a. account for the different views expressed
- b. discuss which one comes closest to your interpretation.

- A. From a speech made by Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina, an opponent of the U.S. decision to annex the Philippines. February 7, 1899:

“As though coming at the most opportune time possible, you might say just before the treaty\* [...] reached the Senate, or about the time it was sent to us, there appeared in one of our magazines a poem by Rudyard Kipling, the greatest poet of England at this time. This poem, unique, and in some places too deep for me, is a prophecy. I do not imagine that in the history of human events any poet has ever felt inspired so clearly to portray our danger and our duty. It is called “The White Man's Burden”. With the permission of Senators I will read a stanza, and I beg Senators to listen to it, for it is well worth their attention. This man has lived in the Indies. In fact, he is a citizen of the world, and has been all over it, and knows whereof he speaks. [...] with five exceptions every man in this chamber who has had to do with the colored race in this country voted against the ratification of the treaty. It was . . . because we understand and realize what it is to have two races side by side that can not mix or mingle without deterioration and injury to both and the ultimate destruction of the civilization of the higher. We of the South have borne this white man's burden of a colored race in our midst since their emancipation and before. It was a burden upon our manhood and our ideas of liberty before they were emancipated. It is still a burden.”

\*[with Spain that gave up sovereignty over the Philippines in return for \$20,000,000]

- B. From David Cody, The growth of the British Empire:

“One view proposes that white people consequently have an obligation to rule over, and encourage the cultural development of people from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds until they can take their place in the world by fully adopting Western ways. The term "the white man's burden" has been interpreted as racist, or taken as a metaphor for a condescending view of non-Western national culture and economic traditions, identified as a sense of European ascendancy which has been called “cultural imperialism”. An alternative interpretation is the philanthropic view, common in Kipling's formative years, that the rich have a moral duty and obligation to help “the poor” “better” themselves whether the poor want the help or not.”

## Gloser

**conde'scending.** nedladende

**ascendancy.** magt,  
overlegenhed,  
indflydelse

**philanthropic.** menneskekærlig

C. From Wikipedia:

“Some commentators do not believe that this poem's simplistic racist views can be serious and point to Kipling's history of satirical writing, suggesting that "The White Man's Burden" is in fact meant to parody imperialist attitudes. Chris Snodgrass, in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, describes Kipling's poetry as “imperial sensibilities with wry irony and skepticism, viewing all human endeavors as ultimately transitory”.

## Gloser

**wry:** skæv, bitter

**en'deavor:** stræben

**'transitory:** forbigående

## 4. Intertextual contexts: “The Brown Man’s Burden” (1899) by Henry Labouchère and “The Real White Man’s Burden” (1902) by Ernest Crosby.

Read “The Brown Man’s Burden” (1899) by Henry Labouchère and “The Real White Man’s Burden” (1902) by Ernest Crosby and compare form and content with the original. What is achieved by using Kipling’s poem in this way?

**Henry Du Pré Labouchère** (1831-1912) was an English politician, writer and publisher. He was a junior member of the British diplomatic service, a Member of Parliament in the 1860s and again from 1880 to 1906. He was quite wealthy and edited and funded his own magazine. “The Brown Man’s Burden” was written in 1899.

### The Brown Man’s Burden

Pile on the brown man's burden  
To gratify your greed;  
Go, clear away the "niggers"  
Who progress would impede;  
Be very stern, for truly  
'Tis useless to be mild  
With new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.

Pile on the brown man's burden;  
And, if ye rouse his hate,  
Meet his old-fashioned reasons  
With Maxims up to date.  
With shells and dum-dum bullets  
A hundred times made plain  
The brown man's loss must ever  
Imply the white man's gain.

Pile on the brown man's burden,  
compel him to be free;  
Let all your manifestoes  
Reek with philanthropy.  
And if with heathen folly  
He dares your will dispute,  
Then, in the name of freedom,  
Don't hesitate to shoot.

### Gloser

**pile on** øge, vælte mere over på  
**'gratify** tilfredsstille  
**im'pede** hindre, besværliggøre  
**stern** hard, streng  
**ye = you**  
**rouse** vække  
**maxim** leveregel  
**shell** granat  
**dum-dum bullet** a bullet that  
breaks into many pieces when it  
hits somebody  
**imply** medføre  
**reek** stinke  
**philanthropy** velgørenhed  
**dispute** modsætte sig  
**heathen** hedensk  
**folly** tåbelighed

Pile on the brown man's burden,  
 And if his cry be sore,  
 That surely need not irk you--  
 Ye've driven slaves before.  
 Seize on his ports and pastures,  
 The fields his people tread;  
 Go make from them your living,  
 And mark them with his dead.

Pile on the brown man's burden,  
 Nor do not deem it hard  
 If you should earn the rancor  
 Of those ye yearn to guard.  
 The screaming of your Eagle  
 Will drown the victim's sob --  
 Go on through fire and slaughter.  
 There's dollars in the job.

Pile on the brown man's burden,  
 And through the world proclaim  
 That ye are Freedom's agent--  
 There's no more paying game!  
 And, should your own past history  
 Straight in your teeth be thrown,  
 Retort that independence  
 Is good for whites alone.

Pile on the brown man's burden,  
 With equity have done;  
 Weak, antiquated scruples  
 Their squeamish course have run,  
 And, though 'tis freedom's banner  
 You're waving in the van,  
 Reserve for home consumption  
 The sacred "rights of man"!

And if by chance ye falter,  
 Or lag along the course,  
 If, as the blood flows freely,  
 Ye feel some slight remorse,  
 Hie ye to Rudyard Kipling,  
 Imperialism's prop,  
 And bid him, for your comfort,  
 Turn on his jingo stop.

## Gloser

**sore** smertelig, hæs  
**irk** genere  
**ye've** you have  
**seize on** bemægtige sig  
**port** havn  
**pasture** græsgang  
**deem** dømme  
**'rancor** had, bitterhed  
**yearn** længes efter  
**Eagle** on the American one  
 dollar coin  
**sob** hulken  
**proclaim** bekendtgøre  
**throw something in one's**  
**teeth** bebrejde én noget  
**re'tort** svar  
**'equity** retfærdighed  
**'antiquated** forældet,  
 gammeldags  
**squeamish** pivet, sart  
**van** fortrop  
**consumption** indtagelse,  
 fortæring  
**falter** tøve, vakle  
**lag** komme bagud  
**remorse** anger  
**hie** ile, haste  
**prop** støtte  
**jingo** krigsgal, chauvenistisk  
**stop** her: støjende budskab

**Ernest Howard Crosby** (1856–1907) was an American author and pacifist. He was a member of the State Assembly (1887-1889) and became inspired by the Russian Count Tolstoy's ideas of universal peace. He was president of the Anti-Imperialist League of New York until 1904 and satirically mocked war and militancy. Ernest Crosby wrote his parody of Kipling's work, "The Real White Man's Burden", and published it in his 1902 collection of poems *Swords and Plowshares*.

## The Real White Man's Burden

Take up the White Man's burden;  
Send forth your sturdy sons,  
And load them down with whisky  
And Testaments and guns ...

And don't forget the factories.  
On those benighted shores  
They have no cheerful iron-mills  
Nor eke department stores.  
They never work twelve hours a day,  
And live in strange content,  
Altho they never have to pay  
A single cent of rent.

Take up the White Man's burden,  
And teach the Philippines  
What interest and taxes are  
And what a mortgage means.  
Give them electrocution chairs,  
And prisons, too, galore,  
And if they seem inclined to kick,  
Then spill their heathen gore.

They need our labor question, too,  
And politics and fraud,  
We've made a pretty mess at home;  
Let's make a mess abroad.  
And let us ever humbly pray  
The Lord of Hosts may deign  
To stir our feeble memories,  
Lest we forget -- the Maine.

## Gloser

**sturdy** robust, hårdfør  
**benighted** uvidende, uoplyst  
**mill** fabrik, værk  
**nor eke** (her) heller ikke  
**altho = although**  
**interest** rente  
**mortgage** pant, lån  
**galore** i massevis  
**heathen** hedensk  
**gore** blod  
**fraud** bedrag  
**Lord of Hosts** reference to God  
**deign** nedlade sig til  
**stir** bevæge, opfriske  
**feeble** svag



# Wider CONTEXTS EMPIRE

Take up the White Man's burden;  
To you who thus succeed  
In civilizing savage hordes  
They owe a debt, indeed;  
Concessions, pensions, salaries,  
And privilege and right,  
With outstretched hands you raise to bless  
Grab everything in sight.

Take up the White Man's burden,  
And if you write in verse,  
Flatter your Nation's vices  
And strive to make them worse.  
Then learn that if with pious words  
You ornament each phrase,  
In a world of canting hypocrites  
This kind of business pays.

## Gloser

**concession** skattelettelse  
**flatter** smigre  
**vice** last, fejl  
**'pious** from  
**'ornament** udsmykke  
**canting** fulde af floskler