

Source: Rudyard Kipling, The White Man's Burden, 1899

This famous poem, written by Britain's imperial poet, was a response to the American takeover of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War.

Read the poem to yourself THREE TIMES before beginning to answer the questions.

Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden--
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard--
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:--
"Why brought he us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden--
Ye dare not stoop to less--
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloak your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your gods and you

Vocabulary

Burden: a heavy responsibility

Breed: children

Harness: boring daily work

Fluttered: unsteady

Folk: people

Sullen: bad-tempered; gloomy

Cloak: hide

1. According to Kipling, what is the "White Man's Burden?"
2. Based on this poem, how did imperialists (people who supported annexation) think of the people in the countries they were taking over (i.e., Cuba, Philippines, etc.)?
3. Kipling supported U.S. annexation of the Philippines. What might someone say who opposed annexation say about Kipling's argument in the "White Man's Burden?"

Source: Mark Twain From the New York Herald, October 15, 1900:

“I left these shores, at Vancouver, a red-hot imperialist. I wanted the American eagle to go screaming into the Pacific. It seemed tiresome and tame for it to content itself with the Rockies. Why not spread its wings over the Philippines, I asked myself? And I thought it would be a real good thing to do.

I said to myself, here are a people who have suffered for three centuries. We can make them as free as ourselves, give them a government and country of their own, put a miniature of the American constitution afloat in the Pacific, start a brand new republic to take its place among the free nations of the world. It seemed to me a great task to which had addressed ourselves.

But I have thought some more, since then, and I have read carefully the treaty of Paris, and I have seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone there to conquer, not to redeem...

It should, it seems to me, be our pleasure and duty to make those people free, and let them deal with their own domestic questions in their own way. And so I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land.”

Source: Mark Twain in a February 1901 article titled To the Person Sitting in Darkness he criticized the U.S.:

“There must be two Americas: one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive's new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on; then kills him to get his land...

True, we have crushed a deceived and confiding people; we have turned against the weak and the friendless who trusted us; we have stamped out a just and intelligent and well-ordered republic; we have stabbed an ally in the back and slapped the face of a guest; we have bought a Shadow from an enemy that hadn't it to sell; we have robbed a trusting friend of his land and his liberty;...

And as for a flag for the Philippine Province, it is easily managed. We can have a special one--our States do it: we can have just our usual flag, with the white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and cross-bones.”

Directions: Answer the question “Was Mark Twain and imperialist or anti-imperialist?” Use evidence from the text to support your answer.