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Poem by the English poet Rudyard Kipling For the book by William Easterly, see William Easterly: "White Man's Burden" redirects here. For the 1995 film, see White Man's Burden (film). The editorial cartoon "The White Man's Burden' (Apologies to Rudyard Kipling)" shows John Bull (Britain) and Uncle Sam (U.S.) delivering the world's people of colour to civilization (Victor Gollancz, Judge magazine, 1 April 1899). The people in the basket carried by Uncle Sam are labelled Cuba, Hawaii, Samoa, "Porto Rico", and the Philippines, while the people in the basket carried by John Bull are labelled Zulu, China, India, "Soudan", and Egypt. "The White Man's Burden" (1899) by Rudyard Kipling is a poem about the Philippine-American War (1899-1902) that exhorts the United States to assume colonial control of the Filipino people and their country.[1] In "The White Man's Burden", Kipling encouraged the American annexation and colonisation of the Philippine Islands, a Pacific Ocean archipelago purchased in the three-month Spanish-American War (1898).[1] As an imperialist poet, Kipling exhorts the American reader and listener to take up the enterprise of empire yet warns about the personal costs faced, endured, and paid in building an empire:[1] nonetheless, American imperialists understood the phrase "the white man's burden" to justify imperial conquest as a civilising mission that is ideologically related to the continental expansion philosophy of manifest destiny of the early 19th century.[2][3][4][5] With a central motif of the poem being the superiority of white men, it has long been criticised as a racist poem.[6] "The White Man's Burden" illustration (Detroit Journal, 1898) "The White Man's Burden" published in McClure's Magazine, February 1899 English Wikisource has original text related to this article: Senator Tillman's senate speech on 7 February 1899 "The White Man's Burden" was first published in The New York Sun on 1 February 1899 and in The Times (London) on 4 February 1899.[7] On 7 February 1899, during a senatorial debate to decide if the US should retain control of the Philippine Islands and the ten million Filipinos conquered from the Spanish Empire, Senator Benjamin Tillman read aloud the first, the fourth, and the fifth stanzas of Kipling's seven-stanza poem as arguments against ratification of the Treaty of Paris, and that the US should formally renounce claim of authority over the Philippine Islands. To that effect, Senator Tillman addressed the matter to President William McKinley:[8] 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 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.[9] He quotes, inter alia, stanzas 1, 4, and 5 of "The White Man's Burden", noting: Those [Filipino] peoples are not suited to our institutions. They are not ready for liberty as we understand it. They do not want it. Why are we bent on forcing upon them a civilization not suited to them and which only means in their view degradation and a loss of self-respect, which is worse than the loss of life itself?[9] Senator Tillman was unpersuasive, and the US Congress ratified the Treaty of Paris on 11 February 1899, formally ending the Spanish-American War. After paying a post-war indemnification of twenty million dollars to the Kingdom of Spain, on 11 April 1899, the US established geopolitical hegemony upon islands and peoples in two oceans and in two hemispheres: the Philippine Islands and Guam in the Pacific Ocean,[7][10] and Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Atlantic Ocean.[11] Rudyard Kipling in Calcutta, India (1892) "The White (? ) Man's Burden" shows the colonial exploitation of labour by various Western nations. (William Henry Walker, Life magazine, 16 March 1899) "The White Man's Burden" in The Call newspaper (San Francisco, 5 February 1899) 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— In patience to abide, To veil the threat of terror And check the show of pride; By open speech and simple, And hundred times made plain, To seek another's profit, And work another's gain. Take up the White Man's burden— The savage wars of peace— Fill full the mouth of Famine And bid the sickness cease; And when your goal is nearest The end for others sought, Watch Sloth and heathen Folly Bring all your hopes to nought. Take up the White Man's burden— No tawdry rule of kings, But toil of serf and sweeper— The tale of common things. The ports ye shall not enter, The roads ye shall not tread, Go make them with your living, And mark them with your dead! 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 ye 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. Take up the White Man's burden— Have done with childish days— The lightly proffered laurel, The easy, ungrudged praise. Comes now, to search your manhood Through all the thankless years, Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom, The judgment of your peers! 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New York: Routledge. p. 636. ISBN 978-1-57958-388-0. On one hand, this is the Western 'well-intended' aspiration to dominate 'the developing world': The formula 'the white man's burden', from Rudyard Kipling's eponymous poem, is emblematic in this respect. Chisholm, Michael (1982). Modern World Development: A Geographical Perspective. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 12. ISBN 978-0-389-20320-9. This Eurocentric view of the world assumed that, but for the 'improvements' wrought by Europeans in Latin America, in Africa and in Asia, the manifest poverty of their peoples would be even worse. Rieder, John (2008). Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction. The Wesleyan early classics of science fiction series. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press. p. 30. ISBN 978-0-8195-6874-8. 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"An extraordinary sensation has been created by Mr. Rudyard Kipling's new poem, The White Man's Burden, just published in a New York magazine. It is regarded as the strongest argument yet published in favor of expansion." Dixon, Thomas (1902). The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden—1865-1900. New York: Doubleday, Page, & Co. - via Google Books. Also available at Wikisource. Novel by Thomas Dixon Jr. praising the Ku Klux Klan. ^ Pmentel, Benjamin (26 October 2003). "The 'Philippines' 'Liberator' Was Really a Colonizer: Bush's Revisionist History". San Francisco Chronicle. p. D3. Archived from the original on 29 June 2011. - characterising the poem as a "call to imperial conquest". ^ Brantlinger, Patric (2007). "Kipling's 'The White Man's Burden' and Its Afterlives". English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920. 50 (2): 172-191. doi:10.1353/elt.2007.0017. ISSN 1559-2715. ^ a b Hamer, Mary (2019). "The White Man's Burden" (1899): Notes by Mary Hamer. 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You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation. No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. 1Take up the White Man's burden - 2Send forth the best ye breed - 3Go bind your sons to exileTo serve your captives' need;5To wait in heavy harnessOn fluttered folk and wild - 7Your new-caught sullen peoples,Half devil and half child.9Take up the White Man's burden - 10In patience to abide11To veil the threat of terror12And check the show of pride;13By open speech and simple,14An hundred times made plain,15To seek another's profit,16And work another's gain.17Take up the White Man's burden - 18The savage wars of peace - 19Fill full the mouth of famine20And bid the sickness cease; 21And when your goal is nearest22The end for others sought,23Watch Sloth and heathen Folly Bring all your hopes to nought.25Take up the White Man's burden - 26No tawdry rule of kings, 27But toil of serf and sweeper - 28The tale of common things. 29The ports ye shall not enter, 30The roads ye shall not tread, 31Go make them with your living, 32And mark them with your dead! 33Take up the White Man's burden - 34And reap his old reward, 35The blame of those ye better, 36The hate of those ye guard - 37The cry of hosts ye humour (Ah, slowly!) toward the light—"Why brought ye us from bondage, 38Our loved Egyptian night?" 39Why brought ye us from bondage, 40Our loved Egyptian night?" 41Take up the White Man's burden - 42Ye dare not stoop to less - 43Nor call too loud on Freedom 44To cloak your weariness; 45By all ye cry or whisper, 46By all ye leave or do, 47The silent sullen peoples 48shall weigh your Gods and you 49Take up the White Man's burden - 50Harden done with childish days, 51The lightly proffered laurel, 52The easy, ungrudged praise. 53Come now, to search your manhood Through all the thankless years, Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom, 54The judgment of your peers! 55The American writer Mark Twain replied to the imperialism Kipling espoused in "The White Man's Burden" with the satirical essay "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901), about the anti-imperialist Boxer Rebellion (1899) in China. The imperialist interpretation of "The White Man's Burden" proposes that the white race is morally obliged to civilise the non-white peoples of planet Earth, and to encourage their progress (economic, social, and cultural) through colonialism:[13] The implication, of course, was that the Empire existed not for the benefit — economic or strategic or otherwise — of Britain, itself, but in order that primitive peoples, incapable of self-government, could, with British guidance, eventually become civilized (and Christianized).[14] Kipling positively represents imperialism as the moral burden of the white race, who are divinely destined to "civilize" the brutish, non-white Other who inhabits the barbarous parts of the world; to wit, the seventh and eighth lines of the first stanza represent the Filipinos as "new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child." [15] Despite the chauvinistic nationalism that supported Western imperialism in the 19th century, public moral opposition to Kipling's racistist misrepresentation of the colonial exploitation of labour in "The White Man's Burden" produced the satirical essay "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901), by Mark Twain, which catalogues the Western military atrocities of revenge committed against the Chinese people for their anti-colonial Boxer Rebellion against abusive Western businessmen and Christian missionaries.[16] Kipling politically proffered the poem to New York governor Theodore Roosevelt (in office 1899-1900) to help him persuade anti-imperialist Americans to accept the territorial annexation of the Philippine Islands to the United States.[17][18][19][20] In September 1898, Kipling's literary reputation in the U.S. allowed his promotion of American empire to Governor Roosevelt: Now, go in and put all the weight of your influence into hanging on, permanently, to the whole Philippines. America has gone and stuck a pick-axe into the foundations of a rotten house, and she is morally bound to build the house over, again, from the foundations, or have it fall about her ears.[21] As Victorian imperial poetry, "The White Man's Burden" thematically corresponded to Kipling's belief that the British Empire was the Englishman's "Divine Burden to reign God's Empire on Earth"[18][22] and celebrates British colonialism as a mission of civilisation that eventually would benefit the colonised natives.[23][24] Roosevelt sent the poem to U.S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge for his opinion and they agreed that it made "good sense from the expansion standpoint" for the American empire.[20] To the white man's burden, the civilising mission of colonialism includes teaching colonized people about soap, water, and personal hygiene. (1890s advert) In the early 20th century, in addition to To the Person Sitting in Darkness (1901), Mark Twain's factual satire of the civilising mission that is proposed, justified, and defended in "The White Man's Burden", contemporary opposition to Kipling's jingoism provoked poetic parodies that expressed anti-imperialist moral outrage, by critically addressing the particulars of white supremacist racism in colonial empires.[25] Said responses include "The Brown Man's Burden" (February 1899), by British politician Henry Labouchère,[26] "The Black Man's Burden: A Response to Kipling" (April 1899), by clergyman H. T. Johnson,[27]



The roads they shall not tread." (9) Creates a sense of urgency and reinforces the concept of the "burden." Assonance/Repetition of vowel sounds within nearby words "Take up the White Man's burden— (1) Creates a sense of unity and flow. Euphemism/Use of a mild or indirect word or phrase for something harsh or unpleasant "Savage wars of (6) Softens the brutality of colonial violence. Hyperbole/Exaggeration for emphasis "A hundred times paid" (5) Suggests the futility of trying to explain colonialism to the colonized. Imperative Mood/Verb form used to give a command or instruction "Take up the White Man's burden— (1, 3, 4, 7) "Go send your sons to exile" (2) Creates a perspective. Metaphor/Comparison between two things that are not alike but share a similar feature "Our loved Egyptian night" (8) Compares the colonized people's traditional way of life to the darkness before dawn, implying it is primitive. Metonymy/Substituting a word or phrase closely associated with something for the thing itself "The White Man's Burden" (Title & Poem)/Refers to the act of colonialism as a burden, but one that is seen as noble. Parallelism/Similar grammatical structure in successive phrases or clauses "To wait in heavy harness/ On fluttered folk and wild" (3) "By open speech and simple/ An hundred times made plain" (5) Creates a sense of rhythm and emphasizes key ideas. Personification/Giving human qualities to something non-human "Watch Sloth and heathen Folly Bring all your hopes to naught." (7) Makes abstract concepts like laziness and ignorance seem like active agents working against the colonizers. Rhetorical Question/Question asked for effect, not expecting an answer "Why brought ye us from bondage, / Our loved Egyptian night?" (8) Expresses the colonized people's resentment towards the colonizers. Simile/Explicit comparison between two things using "like" or "as" "No tawdry rule of kings, But toil of serf and sweeper" (9) Compares colonialism to the work of menial laborers. Symbolism/Use of an object or image to represent an abstract idea "The ports ye shall not enter, The roads ye shall not tread," (9) "The lightly proffered laurel, The easy, ungrudged praise," (10) The "ports" and "roads" symbolize the limitations placed on the colonizers, while the "laurel" and "praise" symbolize the rewards they won't receive. Understatement/Deliberate understatement of the truth "Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom" (11) Minimizes the cost (lives lost) in achieving colonial success. Racial Superiority and the "Civilizing Mission": The poem is steeped in the idea that Western nations are superior to non-Western cultures and have a moral obligation to "civilize" them. Lines like "Take up the White Man's burden— / Send forth the best ye breed—" (1-2) challenges and sacrifices involved. Lines like "To wait in heavy harness/ On fluttered folk and wild" (3) and "The ports ye shall not enter, / The roads ye shall not tread, / Go make them with your living, / And mark them with your dead!" (9) depict the hardships faced by colonizers. The poem suggests that colonialism requires patience, hard work, and the potential for violence. Resentment of the Colonized: Despite the poem's self-righteous tone, Kipling recognizes the potential resentment of the colonized people. Lines like "The blame of those ye better / The hate of those ye guard" (8) and "Why brought ye us from bondage, / Our loved Egyptian night?" (8) acknowledge the anger and sense of loss felt by those under colonial rule. The poem suggests that the "burden" is not just about the challenges faced by the colonizers, but also the negative consequences for the colonized. A. Doubts about the Colonial Project: While promoting colonialism, the poem hints at potential doubts about its ultimate success. Lines like "Watch Sloth and heathen Folly / Bring all your hopes to naught" (7) and "Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom, / The judgment of your peers!" (11) suggest a fear of failure and the high cost (both human and financial) of colonial endeavors. The poem doesn't offer a triumphant vision of colonialism, but rather a sense of uncertainty about its long-term benefits. Literary Impact/Explanation/Example from Poem/Postcolonial analysis/Examines the cultural, economic, and political legacies of colonialism. The poem presents the act of colonialism as a "burden" undertaken by the superior "White Man" to "civilize" the "sullen peoples" (1). This reflects the colonial mindset that justifies domination and overlooks the negative impact on colonized cultures. Orientalism/Analyzes how Western literature portrays the East as inferior and exotic. Lines like "Your new-caught, sullen peoples, / Half devil and half child" (3) depict the colonized as both savage and childish. This reinforces the stereotype of the East as primitive and in need of Western intervention. Marxism/VIEWS/Examines the poem through a Marxist lens, focusing on power dynamics and class struggle. The poem depicts the colonizer as the ruling class exploiting the colonized. Lines like "Send forth the best ye breed—" (2) and "Go bind your sons to exile" (2) highlight the exploitation of the colonized. New Historicism/Examines literature within its historical context. The poem was written in 1899, celebrating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, a time of peak British imperialism. The poem's language of "burden" and "civilizing mission" reflects the prevailing attitudes of the time that justified colonial expansion. Topic/Question/Thesis Statement/Colonial Militarism/How does the poem portray the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized? Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" promotes a colonial mentality by presenting the colonizers as superior and the colonized as needing to be "civilized," while masking the exploitation inherent in colonialism. Duality of Colonialism/Does the poem celebrate or critique colonialism? "The White Man's Burden" offers a complex view of colonialism, both celebrating it as a noble duty and acknowledging the challenges and potential resentment it creates. Racial Stereotypes/How does the poem represent race and ethnicity? The poem relies on racial stereotypes, depicting the colonized as "sullen peoples" and "half devil and half child," reinforcing a hierarchy that justifies colonial domination. Legacy of Colonialism/What message does the poem convey about the long-term effects of colonialism? "The White Man's Burden" downplays the long-term consequences of colonialism, focusing on the colonizers' "burden" while neglecting the negative impacts on the colonized societies. Who is the poem addressed to? "The White Man's Burden" is addressed to Western nations, urging them to send their "best" people (sons) to colonial foreign lands. Lines like "Take up the White Man's burden—" (1) and "Send forth the best ye breed—" (2) make this clear. How does the poem describe the colonized? The poem describes the colonized as "sullen peoples," "half devil and half child," suggesting they are uncivilized, lazy, and in need of guidance. Lines like "Your new-caught, sullen peoples, / Half devil and half child" (3) and "Silent, sullen peoples" (10) reinforce this portrayal. What is the speaker's attitude toward the colonized? The speaker has a paternalistic and condescending attitude toward the colonized, viewing them as inferior and in need of being "taught" and "guided." Lines like "Go bind your sons to exile" (2) and "To cloack your weariness" (10) show a sense of superiority and a desire to control the colonized. What is the speaker's attitude toward the colonizers? The speaker has a more sympathetic and encouraging attitude toward the colonizers, praising their sacrifice and duty. Lines like "Praise them, ye Gods, who have done well" (11) and "The lightly proffered laurel, The easy, ungrudged praise" (10) show appreciation for their efforts. What is the overall message of the poem? The overall message is that colonialism is a noble and necessary endeavor for Western nations, despite the hardships and sacrifices involved. It encourages them to take on the "burden" of civilizing the world.

Man's Burden/Lost its Scare-Quality for Kipling and the New American Empire. Kipling and beyond: Patriotism, globalisation and postcolonialism. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010. 37-57. [Poets.org/rudyardkipling.com]Context and Theorization/Take up the White Man's Burden/Lost its Scare-Quality for Kipling and the New American Empire. Kipling and beyond: Patriotism, globalisation and postcolonialism. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010. 37-57. [Poets.org/rudyardkipling.com]

to serve your captives' need" implies a paternalistic view of colonized peoples as dependent on the guidance and assistance of their colonizers. "To wait in heavy harness On fluttered folk and wild— Your new-caught, sullen peoples, Half devil and half child." Here, Kipling characterizes colonized peoples as "new-caught, sullen," and portrays them as primitive and in need of guidance. The phrase "half devil and half child" reflects the colonialist belief in the inherent savagery of non-European peoples, while simultaneously suggesting a paternalistic duty to civilize and uplift them. This representation justifies the imposition of colonial rule and the subjugation of indigenous cultures. "Take up the White Man's Burden In patience to abide To veil the threat of terror And check the show of pride: This stanza underscores the perceived responsibility of white colonizers to exercise patience and restraint in their governance of colonized territories. Kipling suggests that imperialism should be characterized by benevolence and a sense of duty, making any coercive or exploitative motives behind a facade of civility. The reference to "the threat of terror" and "the show of pride" implies the need for subtlety and diplomacy in maintaining control over colonized peoples. "By open speech and simple An hundred times made plain To seek another's profit And work another's gain" Kipling emphasizes the economic motivations behind imperialism, framing it as a means to bring peace, alleviate hunger, and eradicate disease in colonized lands. The phrase "savage wars of war" suggests the use of military force to impose order and stability, while the imagery of filling "the mouth of famine" and bidding "the sickness cease" reinforces the idea of colonial benevolence and the supposed civilizing mission of the white man. "Take up the White Man's burden— And reap his old reward: The blame of those ye better The hate of those ye guard—" Kipling acknowledges the potential backlash and criticism faced by colonial rulers, including resentment from the colonized peoples themselves. The phrase "The blame of those ye better The hate of those ye guard—" suggests that despite the supposed benefits of colonial rule, it may ultimately be met with gratitude and resistance. This highlights the inherent contradictions and moral complexities of imperialism. "Take up the White Man's burden: Have done with childish days- The lightly proffered laurel, The easy, ungrudged praise," In this closing stanza, Kipling admonishes the white man to embrace the responsibilities of imperialism with maturity and seriousness, rejecting the notion of imperialism as a romantic or altruistic endeavor. The phrase "The lightly proffered laurel, The easy, ungrudged praise" suggests that the accolades and rewards of imperialism come at a cost, requiring sacrifice, effort, and accountability. This reflects a more sober and realistic assessment of the challenges and consequences of colonial rule. The poem is situated within the United States and the Philippine Islands. The speaker says to take up the White Man's burden, which is to send the best men abroad and your sons into exile to serve your captives. These "new-caught" people are angry, bold, devilish and childish. He tells you to go make them with your living, and mark them with your dead! He wants you to fill the mouths of famine and bid the sickness cease. He wants you to undertake the burden of civilizing and ruling over colonized peoples. The notion of sending sons "to exile" suggests sacrifice and duty, framing imperialism as a noble mission. 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