

DBQ—Examining Primary Sources

The bard of a modern Imperialism has sung of the White Man's burden.

The notes strike the granite surface of racial pride and fling back echoes which reverberate through the corridors of history, exultant, stirring the blood with memories of heroic adventure, deeds of desperate daring, ploughing of unknown seas, vistas of mysterious continents, perils affronted and overcome, obstacles triumphantly surmounted.

But mingled with these anthems to national elation another sound is borne to us—insistence.

What of that other burden, not our own self-imposed one which national and racial vanity may well over-stress; but the burden we have laid on others in the process of assuming ours, the burden which others are bearing now because of us? Where are they whose shoulders have bent beneath its weight in the dim valleys of the centuries? Vanished into nothingness, pressed and stamped into that earth on which we set our conquering seal. How is it with those who but yesterday lived free lives beneath the sun and stars, and to-day totter to oblivion? How shall it be to-morrow with those who must slide even more swiftly to their doom, if our consciences be not smitten, our perception be not responsive to the long-drawn sigh which comes to us from the shadows of the bygone?

These contemplations are not a fit theme for lyrical outpourings. These questions are unbidden guests at the banquet of national self-laudation. They excite no public plaudits, arouse no patriotic enthusiasms, pander to no racial conceits. They typify the skeleton at the imperial feast.

--E.D. Morel, *The Black Man's Burden* (1920)

1. E.D. Morel was a British journalist who sought to expose what he felt were the injustices of imperialism. When *The Black Man's Burden* was published in 1920, the British Empire included approximately 40% of the world's land mass, and controlled the lives of countless human beings around the world. How do you think that the British public reacted to Morel's statements? Explain.
2. Morel gives reasons why the British (and other European imperialist powers) were so eager to support imperialism. What are these reasons?
3. Morel gives reasons why imperialists should not be proud of their empires. What are these reasons?
4. Morel dedicated his career to exposing and attempting to correct what he saw as abusive and unfair. Put yourself in Morel's position. Would you find imperialism unfair? Would you be willing to dedicate your career and life to exposing a system you found unjust? Explain.