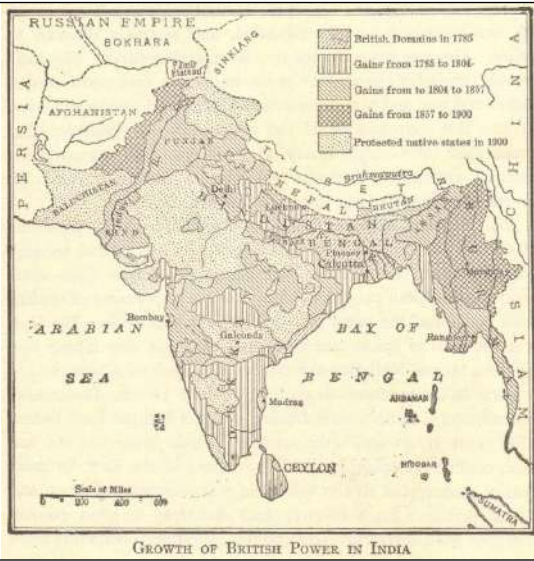


Directions: C's and Q's





## British East India Company

The Company set up trading posts in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta in the early 1600s. As the Mughal Empire crumbled, the company was able to take advantage of the power vacuum to expand their influence. They had their own army made up of sepoys (Indian soldiers) and gradually expanded their influence.

Why do you think the British East India Company was interested in India?

What kind of challenges do you think the British East India Company faced with an army made up of Indian natives, not British?

## Sepoy Rebellion

In 1857 much of northern India erupted in a rebellion against the British and the East India Company. It took more than a year to suppress and the British government had to send troops to help put it down.

Task: What is the proper name for this event—Sepoy Mutiny, Sepoy Rebellion, or beginning of Indian Independence?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**Document A. Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *English History for Schools* (London: H. Holt and Company, 1881).**

*Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829-1902) was an English historian and a professor of history at King's College London. This extract is taken from a textbook he originally wrote for English students, which was subsequently edited for an American audience.*

The religion of the Hindus, who form a great part of the natives in India, teaches many things which seem very strange to Englishmen. Among other things they are taught that they will be defiled [ruined or spoiled] if they eat any part of a cow. By this defilement they will meet with much contempt [disrespect] from their fellows, and will suffer much after death in another world. The bulk of the army in India was composed of Hindus.

It happened that an improved rifle had lately been invented for the use of the soldiers, and that the cartridges used in this rifle needed to be greased so they could be rammed down easily into the barrel. The men believed that the grease was made of the fat of cows, though this was not really the case. There was, therefore, much suspicion and angry feeling among the native soldiers, and when ignorant men are suspicious and angry they are likely to break out into deeds of unreasoning fury.

According to this source, why did the Sepoy Mutiny begin?

What does this account imply about whether the Sepoy Mutiny was justified? Is the author convincing? Why or why not?

Group Discussion

**Document B. Sita Ram, *From Sepoy to Subedar: Being the Life Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a Native Officer in the Bengal Army, Written and Related by Himself* (1861?).**

*Sita Ram was a sepoy who remained loyal to the British during the Sepoy Rebellion. This text is an excerpt from his memoirs, likely written in the 1860s.*

It chanced that about this time the English Government sent parties of men from each regiment to different garrisons for instruction in the use of the new rifle. These men performed the new drill for some time until a report got about, by some means or other, that the cartridges used for these new rifles were greased with the fat of cows and pigs. The men from our regiment wrote to others in the regiment telling them of this, and there was soon excitement in every regiment.

Some men pointed out that in forty years of service nothing had ever been done by the English Government to insult their religion, but... Interested parties were quick to point out that the great aim of the English was to turn us all into Christians and they had therefore introduced the cartridge in order to bring this about, since both Muslims and Hindus would be defiled by using it. . . .

[The Proclamation of the King of Delhi] stated that the English Government intended to make all Brahmins [Hindus of the highest social class] into Christians, which had in fact been proved correct, and in proof of it one hundred ministers were about to be stationed in Oudh. Caste was going to be broken by forcing everyone to eat beef or pork. . . .

I had never known the English to interfere with our religion or our caste in all the years since I had been a soldier, but I was nevertheless filled with doubt. . . . I had also remarked the increase in Missionaries during recent years, who stood up in the streets of our cities and told the people that their cherished religion was all false, and who exhorted them to become Christians.

According to this source, why did the Sepoy Mutiny begin?

What does this account imply about whether the Sepoy Mutiny was justified? Is the author convincing? Why or why not?

Group Discussion:

**Document C. Sayyid Ahmed Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (Medical Hall Press, 1873)**

*Sayyid Ahmed Khan was a Muslim scholar who worked as a legal expert for the British East India Company. Although he remained loyal to the British during the 1857 mutiny, he later published a pamphlet called The Causes of the Indian Revolt, first published in 1858, that primarily blamed British policies for the uprising. He particularly focused on the British decision to exclude Indians from the Legislative Council, a government organization in charge of India, as a major cause of discontent.*

The evils which resulted to India from the non-admission of natives into the Legislative Council of India were various. . . . The people had no means of protesting against what they might feel to be a foolish measure. . . . Whatever law was passed was misconstrued [misunderstood] by men who had no share in the framing of it. At length the Hindustanis [residents of an area in Northern India] fell into the habit of thinking that all the laws were passed with a view to degrade and ruin them. . . . Although the intentions of Government were excellent, there was no man who could convince the people of it; no one was at hand to correct the errors which [the government] had adopted. And why? Because there was not one of their own number among the members of the Legislative Council. Had there been, these evils that had happened to us, would have been averted [avoided].

There is not the smallest doubt that all men whether ignorant or well-informed, whether high or low, felt a firm conviction that the English Government was bent on interfering with their religion and with their old established customs. They believed that Government intended to force the Christian Religion and foreign customs upon Hindu and Muslim alike.

According to this source, why did the Sepoy Mutiny begin?

What does this account imply about whether the Sepoy Mutiny was justified? Is the author convincing? Why or why not?

Group Discussion: