

Supported by the LSE Knowledge Exchange and Impact fund ■

What was the economic impact of colonialism on the lives and livelihoods of Indians?

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Rationale

This resource is a seven-lesson enquiry designed for A-level history students (Year 12 or Year 13) studying the OCR Paper 3: The British Empire, 1857–1965. It focuses on the question: What was the economic impact of colonialism on the lives and livelihoods of Indians?

The enquiry draws students into a sustained investigation of how British rule shaped India's economy between 1857 and 1947. It introduces students to five key areas of economic life – land, labour, capital, business and infrastructure – and culminates in a study of Indian economic nationalism. The sequence highlights the tension between accommodation and resistance, while showing how colonial structures were negotiated, resisted and sometimes accommodated by Indian individuals and communities.

The lessons use a wide range of case studies, including indigo cultivation in Bengal, railways, the Tata business empire, famine, indentured women in Mauritius and the Caribbean, and the Swadeshi movement. Students analyse data, images, economic theory, primary sources and recent scholarship.

Although mapped to OCR's Unit 3 on the Impact of Empire on Britain and the Periphery, the enquiry also connects to Units 1 and 2 (governance and resistance) and is easily adaptable for AQA or Edexcel.

Why I developed this resource

Empire is a central strand of the history curriculum at my school. In Year 7, students encounter empires through studies of the Roman and Islamic Empires, developing an early awareness of power, trade and cultural exchange. Year 8 builds on this by examining the East India Company and the decline of the Mughal Empire, the role of joint-stock companies and a comparative enquiry on empire in India and Australia, before turning to the Scramble for Africa. Year 9 focuses on the legacies of empire, with units on the partition of India, postcolonial Palestine and the global impact of decolonisation. At GCSE, students study migration to Britain and the shaping effects of empire.

This resource was designed to extend and deepen those foundations at A-level for OCR's British Empire 1857–1965 course, with an explicit focus on the economic dimension of British rule in India. Our students have good contextual knowledge of Indian history from Key Stages 3 and 4, but have had fewer opportunities to grapple with the economic and structural impact of empire, a theme that underpins many interpretations of British rule.

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Through this enquiry, we wanted to move beyond the surface-level idea that empire was either 'good' or 'bad' by focusing instead on its effects on the lives and livelihoods of Indian people, and by placing Indian experiences at the centre of the narrative.

The resource combines regional case studies with conceptual strands (land, labour, capital, business and infrastructure), allowing students to develop a complex understanding of how colonialism shaped the Indian economy and how Indians responded. It also builds students' disciplinary confidence in working with primary and secondary evidence and making judgements about competing interpretations of empire.

Learning aims of this resource

This resource aims to deepen students' understanding of how the British Empire impacted Indian people economically and to challenge simplistic binaries about whether empire was 'good' or 'bad'.

The enquiry is built around two key aims. First, it introduces students to the diverse and uneven nature of economic change under colonialism. Through case studies, they explore how different regions and communities experienced the impact of colonial economic policies: the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, canal irrigation in Punjab, the building of the railways, famine management, the rise of Indian businesses like Tata, indentured migration, and the Swadeshi movement. These examples highlight the contrasting ways in which British policy and global markets affected food production, capital, industry and livelihoods.

Second, it enables students to see colonised peoples as active participants, and not just victims. Indian peasants, workers, women and entrepreneurs resisted exploitation, adapted to new conditions and sometimes took opportunities created by empire. The spectrum of accommodation and resistance runs throughout the scheme as a conceptual thread.

By the end of the enquiry, students are equipped to make a nuanced, evidence-based judgement on the overarching question: What was the economic impact of colonialism on the lives and livelihoods of Indians?

Structure of the enquiry

The enquiry question – What was the economic impact of colonialism on the lives and livelihoods of Indians? – places Indian experience and perspective at the heart of the investigation. It draws students into one of the central debates of the historiography of the British Empire: was British rule primarily exploitative, developmental or a combination of both?

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The seven lessons are structured thematically and conceptually. Lesson 1 sets the scene by introducing the framework of land, labour, capital, business and infrastructure, using Naoroji's 'drain of wealth' theory and a comparative analysis of India and Japan's economic trajectories.

Subsequent lessons explore each theme in turn. Lesson 2 focuses on land, beginning with indigo cultivation and the Bengal famine; Lesson 3 explores infrastructure, especially railways; Lesson 4 examines business and industry, focusing on Indian entrepreneurship, such as the Tata family; Lesson 5 addresses capital and famine, highlighting fiscal systems and the impact of imperial priorities; Lesson 6 examines labour, especially the experience of indentured women; and Lesson 7 turns to economic nationalism, with a focus on the Swadeshi movement.

At each stage, students encounter evidence of resistance, accommodation and adaptation through Indian responses. Activities include visual analysis, data interpretation, use of primary voices and thematic debates.

The sequence builds towards a final reflective activity in Lesson 7, where students revisit the enquiry question, synthesising evidence from all five areas to form a nuanced judgement.

This approach was chosen to give students a clear conceptual framework, while also enabling them to work closely with specific case studies. By the end of the enquiry, students have a rich understanding of the economic, social and human dimensions of colonialism, the complexity of Indian responses and the legacies of these dynamics in shaping modern India.

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Summary of lessons

Lesson focus and learning objectives	Learning activities	Resources for the lesson
<p>Lesson 1: Indian economy</p> <p>How did colonialism shape the Indian economy?</p>	<p>Slide 1 – Title Introduce the overall enquiry: <i>What was the economic impact of colonialism on the Indian people, 1857–1947?</i> Explain that this lesson sets the scene for the rest of the enquiry.</p> <p>Slide 2 – Starter (image) Students study the chosen image (colonialism and industrialisation). What do you notice? How are these themes of industrialisation and colonialism linked? Who seems to benefit?</p> <p>Slide 3 – Naoroji quote Read aloud. Ask: What impression do you get of Naoroji’s view of British rule? Why might he describe it as “un-British”? Is this resistance or working within the Empire?</p> <p>Slide 4 – Task 1: reading from Naoroji Students read the extract on Slide 16 (printed out). Highlight in two colours: evidence of economic exploitation/wealth being drained and evidence of Britain failing to reinvest in India. Pair-share, then discuss: What is Naoroji’s main argument? What evidence does he use?</p> <p>Slide 5 – Context on Naoroji Explain Naoroji’s background to students (Parsee community, MP, moderate nationalist).</p> <p>Slide 6 – Continuum: accommodation vs resistance Teacher explains spectrum. Ask: Where would you place (1) a sepoy rebel in 1857, (2) an Indian prince, and (3) Naoroji?</p> <p>Slide 7 – Task 2a: graph Students analyse the graph (Slide 17). What do you notice about India, Japan and Britain? At which points are the different economies stronger or weaker?</p> <p>Slide 8 – Context on Japan</p>	<p>Lesson 1 PowerPoint</p> <p>Lesson 1 PowerPoint, Slides 16 and 17</p> <p>Lesson 1 Homework handout</p>

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	<p>Teacher explains Japan's independence and Meiji reforms.</p> <p>Slide 9 – Scaffold Prepare students for adding key events.</p> <p>Slide 10 – Task 2b: timeline Students annotate a timeline on the graph with key events (colonialism, World Wars).</p> <p>Slide 11 – Task 2c: comparative paragraph Students answer: What can we infer about India's economic development under colonial rule? Compare with either Britain or Japan.</p> <p>Slides 12–14 – Key features of the economy Teacher introduces the four features (land, infrastructure, capital/business and labour) that will structure the next lessons.</p> <p>Slide 15 – Homework Explain the homework case study (indigo cultivation in Bengal and Bihar). Students to highlight evidence of both how land, labour, capital and infrastructure were affected and accommodation/resistance. Answer two short questions: 1) Was indigo cultivation an example of resistance, accommodation or both? 2) How does this illustrate the 'drain of wealth'?</p>	
<p>Lesson 2: Land</p> <p>Was British agricultural policy in India developmental or exploitative?</p>	<p>Slide 2 – Starter: indigo case study recap Students recall homework from Lesson 1 on indigo in Bengal and Bihar.</p> <p>Slide 3 – Naoroji's criticism Show Naoroji's quote and carry out whole-class discussion.</p> <p>Slide 4 – Why land matters Explain why land is key to the economy: food, cash crops and export. Build connection to colonial priorities.</p> <p>Slide 6 – Task 1: agriculture data</p>	<p>Lesson 2 PowerPoint</p> <p>Lesson 2 PowerPoint, Slides 13 and 14</p> <p>Lesson 2 Handout Word document</p>

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	<p>In pairs, examine the data on output (Slide 13). Questions: Do trends in food vs non-food crops support Naoroji's argument? Does the data suggest policies aimed to develop Indian farming or to extract wealth?</p> <p>Slide 8 – Continuum activity Introduce accommodation vs resistance spectrum. Students discuss: Where would you place a farmer of non-food crops? A farmer of food crops? A sepoy?</p> <p>Slides 9–10 – Contrasting experiences Compare quotes from Bengal tenant during the Pabna disturbances (1870s) vs Darling on Punjab irrigation (1925). Discussion: Which shows accommodation? Which shows resistance?</p> <p>Slide 11 –Task 2: reading and table activity Students read the handout on Bengal and Punjab. Highlight evidence of resistance/exploitation and evidence of accommodation/prosperity. Use the evidence to fill in the table (Slide 14).</p> <p>Slide 12 – Final continuum Students place Bengal farmer and Punjab farmer on the accommodation–resistance continuum. Recap key factors that shaped these differences.</p>	
<p>Lesson 3: Infrastructure</p> <p>Were the railways built for India's development or Britain's profit?</p>	<p>Slide 2 – Starter: image analysis – Bolan Pass railway construction Display the image of Bolan Pass construction (early 1880s). Ask: What do you notice about the people – their roles, posture and clothing? Prompt discussion on power dynamics. Ask: Does this image suggest that Indian labourers were accommodating British rule or resisting it in subtle ways? Use this to explore initial impressions of who the railways were really for.</p> <p>Slide 3 – Naoroji's criticism Read the quote from Dadabhai Naoroji. Ask: Why might Naoroji have said this, based on the Bolan Pass image? Lead discussion around the idea that while railways had potential benefits, India didn't enjoy them in the same way as other countries. Link back to the image – who builds and who benefits?</p> <p>Slide 4 – Activity 1: railway map 1871 In pairs/small groups, examine the 1871 railway map (Slide 9 for printing). Prompt questions:</p>	<p>Lesson 3 PowerPoint.</p> <p>Lesson 3 PowerPoint, Slides 9 and 10</p>

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	<p>Which places are connected? Which places aren't? Who might have benefited most from this network in 1871? Discuss how the network may reflect British priorities – trade, extraction and military.</p> <p>Slide 5 – Contrasting motivations Show the quotes from Frere, Dalhousie and Huddleston. Whole-class discussion: What motivations are expressed for building railways? Do these quotes suggest Indian development or British profit and control? Who is included and excluded?</p> <p>Slide 6 – Activity 2: railway map 1919 Students now compare the 1919 railway map (Slide 10 for printing) to the 1871 map. Guiding questions: What new regions are connected? Does the growth in the railway network reflect Indian needs or continued British priorities? Is this evidence of economic development or extraction?</p> <p>Slide 7 – Source analysis: Shashi Tharoor article extract Students read the extract from Shashi Tharoor's 2017 article. In pairs or as a class, discuss: What criticisms does Tharoor make? What does he say about Indian workers, passengers and engineers? How does this challenge the myth that railways were a 'gift' to India? Link to broader enquiry: Who really gained from the railway system?</p> <p>Slide 8 – Continuum: agency and the railways Introduce the accommodation–resistance spectrum. Place the following historical figures/groups on the line:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dadabhai Naoroji ● a farmer in Bengal ● a farmer in Punjab (review from previous lesson) <p>Then add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an Indian railway construction worker on the Bolan Pass ● an Indian passenger on the railway <p>Ask students to justify their placements with evidence from today's lesson.</p>	
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	<p>Plenary – Revisit key question</p> <p>Return to enquiry: Were the railways built for India's development or Britain's profit? Open discussion or silent reflection. Encourage students to reference evidence from maps, quotes, Tharoor and the image. Optional: Write a one-sentence response on a sticky note for the board or students' books.</p>	
<p>Lesson 4: Business</p> <p>Was Indian business under colonialism a story of accommodation or resistance?</p>	<p>Slides 2–3 – Starter: modern-day Tata Group</p> <p>Introduce students to the Tata Group as it exists today: a global business worth over £300 billion. Ask: What might students already know about Tata (e.g. cars, tea)? Prompt reflection: How might such a business have started under colonial rule?</p> <p>Slide 4 – Image discussion: Tata family portrait</p> <p>Display the image of Jamsetji Tata and his family. Ask students: What does this photo suggest about the family's wealth and status? Prompt discussion: How might they have benefited from British colonial structures? Is their success a sign of accommodation (working with empire) or resistance (challenging it)?</p> <p>Slide 5 – Background context: Tata and the Parsees, Tata's philosophy</p> <p>Explain briefly that Tata belonged to the Parsee community – a small, wealthy, Western-connected group (like Naoroji). Summarise Tata's aims: building Indian industry, investing in science and education, and challenging British industrial dominance. Draw out the idea of multiple motives: national pride, profit and modernisation. Read aloud Jamsetji Tata's quote: 'What advances a nation... is to lift up the best and most gifted...' Ask: What does this tell us about Tata's vision for development? Discuss: Is this idea one of resistance to colonial views? Or is it elitist? Or both?</p> <p>Slide 6 – Naoroji's criticism of colonial industry</p> <p>Introduce Naoroji's quote: 'The drain [of wealth] is a continuous bleeding...' Ask students: Why might Naoroji be more critical of colonial industry than Tata? Prompt thinking about different experiences or strategies – Naoroji as critic, Tata as industrialist.</p> <p>Slide 7 – Task 1: reading and annotation</p> <p>Students read the handout on Tata's business activity under colonialism. Highlight two types of</p>	<p>Lesson 4 PowerPoint</p> <p>Lesson 4 PowerPoint, Slide 11</p> <p>Lesson 4 Handout Word document</p>

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	<p>evidence: barriers created by British colonial policy and opportunities or advantages that Tata used. Ask: What does the story of Tata tell us about working under empire?</p> <p>Slide 8 – Whole-class or pair discussion Discuss the highlighted evidence. Questions to guide: What barriers did Tata face that show the limits of colonial rule? What opportunities did he exploit or create within the system? Do these examples show more resistance, accommodation or a mix?</p> <p>Slide 9 – Task 2: categorising evidence In pairs, students complete the table (Slide 11) on accommodation, resistance and adaptation, using the reading and class discussion. Encourage specific examples (e.g. building Empress Mills, sending engineers abroad, working with British investors). Then write a short judgement: which of the three (resistance, accommodation, adaptation) best describes Tata's story? Extension questions (optional): Did Tata's success mainly help ordinary Indians or wealthy elites? Did British authorities also benefit from the growth of Indian businesses like Tata's?</p> <p>Slide 10 – Final continuum and plenary Display the resistance–accommodation continuum. Ask students: Where would you place Tata? Justify your answer using today's evidence. Conclude by revisiting the enquiry: Was Indian business under colonialism a story of resistance, accommodation or something else?</p>	
<p>Lesson 5: Capital and famine</p> <p>How did British capital connect with the experience of famine in India?</p>	<p>Slide 3 – Starter: <i>Illustrated London News</i> image Begin with the 1877 illustration of famine in Bangalore. Ask students: What do you see happening in this image? If Naoroji is right about capital being drained away, how might that explain what is happening here?</p> <p>Slide 4 – Concept of capital Use the definition on the slide: capital is wealth used to create more wealth. Discuss with students: Who provides capital? Who controls it? Who benefits from it?</p> <p>Slides 5–6 – Task 1: capital flow activity Students work in pairs to examine tables showing where money came from and where money went under British rule (Slides 11 and 12). For each table, they discuss: How well does the</p>	<p>Lesson 5 PowerPoint</p> <p>Lesson 5 PowerPoint, Slides 11 and 12</p> <p>Lesson 5 Handout Word document</p>

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	<p>capital flow serve someone like Ramesh (a small rice grower)? What does the spending pattern suggest about the priorities of British rule?</p> <p>Slide 7 – Where would you place Ramesh? Discuss: Given these capital flows, where on the accommodation–resistance continuum would you place Ramesh?</p> <p>Slides 8–9 – Task 2: reading and highlighting Students read the Lesson 5 handout on the Great Indian Famine (1876–78). They highlight how British capital policies (tax, trade, spending, famine relief) worsened the famine, what these policies meant for people like Ramesh and alternative priorities that could have been chosen.</p> <p>Slide 10 – Plenary: British capital – whole-class discussion Students consider the final grid on the slide and answer: Which statement about British capital do you agree with the most, and why? Use the evidence that students highlighted to discuss: What choices did the British government make about capital? Who benefited from those choices? How might these decisions have changed if capital had been directed differently? Conclude with: Did the way in which capital was raised and spent lead to accommodation, resistance or both among Indians?</p>	
<p>Lesson 6: Labour</p> <p>What was the impact of the British Empire on indentured Indian women?</p>	<p>Starter – Continuum recap Students begin by revisiting the accommodation vs resistance continuum from previous lessons. Ask them to recall where they placed figures such as Naoroji, a Bengal farmer, a Punjab farmer and an Indian railway worker. Introduce today’s focus: indentured labour and the experiences of Indian women transported across the Empire.</p> <p>Slide 2 – Naoroji quote and discussion Display a short extract from Naoroji on how labour was exported for the benefit of the Empire. Discuss: What does Naoroji suggest about the impact of this on India? How might working overseas have served British interests but not those of Indian communities?</p> <p>Slide 4 – Image of indentured women Show the photograph of indentured women in Surinam. Ask: How do you think that these</p>	<p>Lesson 6 PowerPoint</p> <p>Lesson 6 Handout Word document</p>

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	<p>women ended up here? Do they look free or constrained? What questions does this raise about choice, survival and coercion?</p> <p>Slide 5 – Task 1: reading and highlighting Students read the lesson handout, which contains detailed accounts of indentured women's lives (Bibee Zuhoorun, Sujaria and others). Students highlight three key areas: reasons why women became indentured labourers, experiences under the system (work, violence and community) and evidence of resistance or accommodation.</p> <p>Slide 6 – Pair/group discussion Students discuss their highlighted evidence in pairs or small groups. Questions: What patterns emerge in the women's reasons for migration? How far did indentured women manage to create communities or exercise agency? Were they victims, survivors or both?</p> <p>Slide 7 – Continuum activity Return to the resistance–accommodation continuum. Students place figures such as Sujaria and Bibee Zuhoorun on the continuum, using evidence from the reading. Compare these positions with those of the figures discussed at the start of the lesson.</p> <p>Slide 8 – Whole-class discussion Discuss as a class: How far do the stories of indentured women confirm Naoroji's idea of exploitation? Are there ways in which these women challenged their circumstances? Do their lives represent mainly resistance, accommodation or a mix?</p> <p>Slide 9 – Plenary Revisit the photo from Surinam shown earlier. Ask: What do you see differently now? What stories and perspectives do you now notice? How might this change your understanding of the impact of empire on labour?</p>	
Lesson 7: Economic nationalism	<p>Slide 2 Starter: continuum recap Students recall the continuum of accommodation–resistance used throughout the enquiry. Ask them to place figures from previous lessons (Naoroji, Tata family, Indian railway worker, Punjab farmer, Bengal farmer, Sujaria from indentured labour) to review prior learning.</p>	<p>Lesson 7 PowerPoint</p> <p>Lesson 7 PowerPoint, Slide 10</p>

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<p>How far did Indian economic nationalism resist or accommodate British rule?</p>	<p>Slide 3 – Naoroji quote on economic nationalism Read aloud the quote from <i>Poverty and Un-British Rule in India</i>. Discussion questions: According to Naoroji, what is his solution to India's poverty? How does this help us to understand the idea of economic nationalism?</p> <p>Slide 4 – Task 1: evidence gathering, table completion and class discussion Students use their learning from the previous five lessons (land, capital, infrastructure, business, labour) to complete a table (Slide 10) with two columns: evidence supporting Naoroji's view that British rule impoverished India and evidence that challenges it. Students discuss in pairs, fill in their tables and prepare to share responses. Guide students through a whole-class discussion: Why did Naoroji believe that economic nationalism was necessary? How far does evidence from the previous lessons support or challenge his claim that British rule impoverished India? How far were calls for economic nationalism a form of resistance or accommodation?</p> <p>Slide 5 – Gandhi and the <i>charkha</i> image Show the image of Gandhi spinning the <i>charkha</i> in jail. Ask: What is Gandhi doing and why might this image have become such a powerful political symbol? How does this image contrast with earlier approaches to British economic control (land, labour, railways)? Is this best seen as resistance or accommodation – or both? Why?</p> <p>Slide 6: Task 2: reading and highlighting activity Students read the handout on the Swadeshi movement. As they read, they highlight and annotate: key strategies of protest (economic, cultural, educational), evidence of resistance and accommodation, groups involved and those excluded. Students then discuss: Where would you place the Swadeshi movement on the continuum?</p> <p>Slides 7–8: Plenary: bringing the enquiry together The final plenary asks students to reflect on the full enquiry question: <i>What was the economic impact of British colonialism on the lives and livelihoods of Indian people?</i> Students choose one person (Naoroji, Jamsetji Tata or Mahatma Gandhi) and write a three- to five-sentence response from their perspective, justifying their judgement using evidence.</p>	<p>Lesson 7 Handout Word document</p>
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Conclusions and reflections

This enquiry is powerful because it anchors a complex and wide-ranging topic in clear conceptual and human terms. Using Dadabhai Naoroji as a recurring thread throughout the seven lessons gave students a consistent point of reference for understanding both the economic structures of colonialism and Indian responses to them. His ideas, especially the ‘drain of wealth’ and his role as both critic and insider, provided a lens through which students could interpret each new case study.

The conceptual framework of accommodation and resistance proved to be a second powerful thread. It gave students a clear, memorable way in which to position the different actors that they encountered – from railway workers to the Tata family – and to see Indian responses as diverse rather than uniform.

Finally, the scheme deliberately humanises the story of India’s economy by using named individuals, images, diaries, oral histories and case studies. These human stories – from peasants in Bengal to women in indenture and entrepreneurs in Bombay – helped students to see the economy not as abstract data but as a lived experience. This combination of conceptual clarity and human depth made the enquiry engaging and memorable.

Adapting the enquiry to your school’s context

The structure and approach of this enquiry were shaped by principles drawn from Robin and Abdul’s article ‘Anatomy of an enquiry’ (*Teaching History* 177). One key principle was precision in the focus of the enquiry. Rather than attempting to cover the entirety of the British Empire in India, the enquiry distilled its focus to the economic impact on Indian lives, expressed through five strands: land, labour, capital, business and infrastructure. This clarity of focus ensured that every lesson built towards an answer to the central question.

Another principle was the use of an enquiry ethic. In this case, the ethic centred on foregrounding Indian experiences and agency. Lessons were designed so that Indian voices, decisions and strategies shaped the narrative, rather than presenting Indians as passive victims of an economic system. This was achieved through case studies that highlighted both resistance and accommodation to imperial systems.

These principles are easily transferable. For example, in a study of transatlantic slavery, the enquiry ethic might emphasise the resilience and resistance of enslaved people. In a study of the Cold War, the focus could be on how smaller nations navigated superpower rivalry. In each case, clarity of purpose and a conceptual thread (like accommodation/resistance) help students to make sense of complexity.

The use of rich case studies and personal stories ensures that historical structures are seen through the lives of real people. This balance between humanisation, conceptual clarity and narrative focus can be adapted to a wide range of historical enquiries.

Support on planning and resourcing

The planning and resourcing of this enquiry were successful because of a commitment to building subject knowledge before planning lessons. Economic history was a less familiar area for me, so I began by engaging deeply with academic literature. Tools like Google Scholar and JSTOR Open Access were invaluable for finding recent scholarship. Many articles had free PDF versions available directly through the search results, making research accessible without institutional subscriptions.

Once I had a secure grasp of the historiography – particularly the debates around ‘drain theory’, Indian entrepreneurship and the economic effects of railways – I began to build the lessons around key concepts and compelling case studies. This academic grounding allowed me to confidently incorporate challenging and up-to-date perspectives into the classroom.

Primary sources also became a core part of the resource. The British Library’s online collections, the National Archives and museum blogs (e.g. the London Museum and Untold Lives) provided excellent images, letters, reports and personal accounts. Where digital materials were not freely available, contacting these institutions directly was very effective; on several occasions, archivists provided scanned extracts.

For teachers planning similar enquiries, I would recommend:

1. Begin with scholarship – even just a few well-chosen journal articles can transform lesson design.
2. Use primary sources as the backbone – these humanise lessons and make them memorable.
3. Think conceptually early on – a thread such as accommodation vs resistance can give coherence to a complex topic.

Recommended resources

[*The Economic History of Colonialism* by Leigh Gardner and Tirthankar Roy](#) (2020) is an immensely helpful book in gaining an overview of the discipline on economic history and applying it to colonialism.

[*Inglorious Empire: what the British did to India* by Shashi Tharoor](#) (2018) is a more detailed book on colonialism in India specifically. There are helpful sections on railways and fiscal policies in colonial India.

[Empire](#) is an excellent series of podcasts on empire. The first season focuses on the British Empire in India.

[Families in British India Society](#) (FIBIS) is an extremely helpful resource and directory, with maps on railways and individual stories about British families in India.