The wealth of Africa
South Africa
Teachers’ notes

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THE WEALTH OF AFRICA: USING THESE RESOURCES

This educational resource consists of 16 sets of resources on African civilisations, countries and themes.

Each set of resources includes:

• Teachers’ notes
• Students’ worksheets
• A presentation

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Teachers’ notes

These are intended to provide background material for teachers, but can also be referred to by students who want more contextual information.

Students’ worksheets

These are stand-alone worksheets which can be downloaded as classroom resources or viewed on the interactive whiteboard. They are self-contained, with tasks and questions and a limited number of sources in which the language has been slightly amended to make them more accessible to the likely reading ages of the students. They are also designed to be used independently of the teacher, e.g. for homework.

If teachers do not wish to spend more than one or two lessons on South Africa, then the sheets will prove ideal for small project work, with groups of students taking one sheet, finding interesting and relevant information, and reporting back to the rest of the class. A specimen lesson plan along these lines is given below.

Presentation

This provides a simpler and more visual introduction to the topic. It contains some of the images and sources found in the other sections, and can be shown on the whiteboard or used at home to give an overview of the main topics covered.

Your feedback

Please help the British Museum improve its educational resources for schools and teachers by giving your feedback. The first 250 teachers or tutors to complete the online survey before 12.00 on 1 September 2011 will receive a printed set of illustrations of African civilisations by artist Tayo Fatunla. Visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/wealthofafrica to complete the survey and for terms and conditions.
LESSON SCHEME: SOUTH AFRICA IN AN HOUR

Aim
To decide whether Britain should be proud of its role in South Africa’s history.

Starter: Impressions of Britain’s role in South Africa
Scroll quickly through the images in the presentation, and get feedback from students on their first impressions, especially on what they consider the British role in South Africa to have been. (10 minutes)

Research
Divide the class into groups with one group per topic – Zulu War, minerals, Anglo-Boer War, apartheid. Each group has to look at the question at the top of the sheet, and decide on the answer by studying the sources. It then has to see whether the experiences for South Africa were positive, negative or neutral, and what the role of the British in each situation was. The group should note 5–10 relevant facts that it can feed back to the rest of the class as evidence of its answer. (20 minutes)

Feedback
Each group feeds back its findings, opinion and evidence to the rest of the class, who could take notes. (15 minutes)

Discussion
The central question of the success or failure of British policy can be debated, as can the issue of how much these events were the fault of the British. (15 minutes)

Homework
e.g. The Foreign Office defends its South African policy.
SOUTH AFRICA c. 1650–1990: TEACHERS’ NOTES

Introduction
South Africa is one of the most populous and most powerful of African countries. It has had a recent history different to other places on the continent, including, in colonial times, two European cultures fighting for dominance, and, later, post-colonial rule by a white minority. More recently, it has seen a period of, institutionalised racist control, out of which the suppressed African majority emerged triumphant. Its present is equally unusual – a nuclear power with considerable military might, the strongest economy in the continent, possessor of extraordinary mineral wealth, yet troubled by social tensions and one of the world’s highest murder rates. The future for the new South Africa – the Rainbow Nation – is as unpredictable as its past has been unconventional; the one likelihood is that it will be extraordinary.

Why study South Africa?
For schools following the History syllabus of the Key Stage 3 English National Curriculum, this section could be used as a case study for the British Empire. It could also fit into an SHP Modern World Study module at Key Stage 4. South Africa is a highly significant nation on the international stage, and the colonial experience has played an important part in its present makeup. These resources are therefore relevant to understanding the present through history.

Given the problems posed by powerful African nations such as the Zulu, and the independently minded settlers, the Boers, Britain perhaps had less firm control of South Africa than on any other of its colonies, and it is mainly these difficulties which form the basis of these resources. Britain may technically have won the Zulu and Boer Wars, but the lasting memory of the former is the defeat at Isandlwana, and of the latter the concentration camps in which tens of thousands died. These interesting and thought-provoking incidents are dealt with. These resources can, therefore, serve as an exploration of the problems of colonisation, and as an antidote to the triumphalism with which it was embarked upon. The study of apartheid has relevance not just to History, but also to the Citizenship curriculum.

In terms of the wealth of Africa, South Africa is an example of the exploitation of natural resources, firstly by a European power, and then by a ‘White African’ one. The history of South Africa is intimately connected to the discovery and exploitation of diamonds and gold, a factor that has determined the course of its development. The fact that South Africa has become wealthy while other African countries with abundant natural resources have not is interesting in itself. One reason for this might lie in the comparatively limited extent to which the colonial power, Britain, exploited this wealth.

Geography
South Africa occupies the foot of the continent, in a position which even now has a significant strategic value. Its southerly latitude and long coastline give it an unusually benign climate by African standards, which allows for diverse agriculture, including growing vines for wine making.

The interior is marked by the high plateau known as the Velt consisting mainly of grassland. In the north-west there is semi-desert, in the north-east tropical vegetation and climate, and in the south-west around Cape Town it is Mediterranean in feel.
Early history
The earliest inhabitants of South Africa were the San, who were nomadic hunter-gatherers. Evidence for their longevity – they still live in the area today – comes from rock paintings which have been dated to over 60,000 years ago. They were followed by the Khoikhoi – herders of sheep and goats, and then, gradually, by various groups – Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi, Sotho and Tswana among others – who had migrated from the north with their iron tools and more settled way of life as farmers. From about AD 200 these peoples set up a number of states and kingdoms, each with its own particular customs and traditions.

Dutch settlement
European settlement in South Africa began in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company landed a boatload of immigrants at the Cape of Good Hope with instructions to grow food for ships passing to India. Although the local Khoisan Africans were suspicious, and tensions developed, the success of the early experiment encouraged more Dutch to arrive over the next century and the Cape Colony was established. Settlers – Boers (‘farmers’ in Dutch) – began to push inland in search of fresh areas to farm.

Britain takes over
In 1806, Britain took over Cape Colony as part of the war against Napoleon, who was allied to the Dutch. In the 1830s, the Boers decided to trek north-east to escape from British rule. This decision was spurred on by the outlawing of enslavement, which the Boers practised, and also by the British defeat of the Xhosa nation which had previously prevented such movement. They moved into Natal and came up against the expanding African kingdom of the Zulus. However, the British now annexed Natal, forcing the Boers to move further into the interior and establish their own republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal.

The Zulu War 1879
The Zulus are an African nation who rose to prominence in southern Africa at the beginning of the 19th century, especially under the leadership of Shaka (1818–1828), who by 1825 had conquered a sizeable empire. There is some debate over the exact causes of this rise. At the time, southern Africa was in turmoil as a result of the move northwards by British and Dutch settlers in the Cape, and the increasingly predatory behaviour of slave traders who were raiding further inland from Delagoa Bay in Mozambique. The period also coincided with a series of droughts which disrupted agriculture. These factors caused considerable movement among the societies living in the area, and the Zulus appear to have taken advantage of the situation to incorporate many of them, either peacefully or by war. Zulu leaders such as Dingiswayo and Shaka undoubtedly added to the turmoil – the *Mfecane* (crushing) – and both deliberately geared the Zulus to become a militaristic and expansionist force, but whether they initiated the process is less certain.

From the 1830s, the Zulus came into conflict with the Boers who were migrating towards them. The Boers had little respect for the African peoples they encountered, and they clashed repeatedly with the Zulus over cattle and grazing lands. Becoming exasperated at the actions of the Boers, the Zulus murdered their leader, Piet Retief, and 70 other followers. This led the Boers to seek their revenge at the battle of Blood River where superior Boer armaments proved decisive.

The next problem emerged with Britain, in particular with the policies of Sir Theophilus Shetpestone, the British administrator of Transvaal, and Sir Henry Bartle Frere, British High Commissioner of Cape Colony. Both were concerned that British plans for federation for South Africa, along the lines of the Canadian Federation in 1867, were being delayed by hostile nations like the Zulus.
The Zulus had been complaining about Boer incursions onto their lands from Transvaal. A British boundary commission actually found in favour of the Zulus. However, Bartle Frere decided to use this as the excuse to reduce the Zulu military threat. He said that the disputed land would only be returned if the Zulu army was disbanded. This was too harsh a term for the proudly militaristic Zulu and they ignored the ultimatum.

The British invasion in 1879 from Natal was poorly planned. The commander, Lord Chelmsford, split his force and the Zulus attacked the main column at Isandlwana with devastating results. A Zulu Impi (battle force) crossed the Limpopo River and attacked a British outpost at Rorke’s Drift, but was unable to overcome its defence. Much was made of this comparatively unimportant action, doubtless to cover up the shame of the disaster earlier in the day at Isandlwana, and Victoria Crosses were awarded to the defenders.

The British responded by sending an even larger regular army at great expense, which finally defeated the Zulus at their capital, Ulundi. The powerful Zulu war machine had been curbed, but only at a significant cost to the British.

Diamonds and gold

Diamonds were discovered at Kimberley in 1867. Technically the area was outside the Cape Colony, in the territory of the Griquas, but Britain wasted little time in incorporating Griqualand into the Colony. At first, individual prospectors flocked to the area to set up small-scale diggings, but soon large companies like De Beers and capitalists like Cecil Rhodes took over and established efficient commercial exploitation of the fields.

The discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand in 1884 was less straightforward since this lay in the territory of the Boer republic of Transvaal to which Britain had just granted autonomy. A gold rush caused a huge influx of prospectors, many of them British, known as uitlanders by the Boers. Cecil Rhodes, by now prime minister of Cape Colony, was not one to take this lying down, and he instigated an unofficial invasion by Captain Jameson in 1895 which was supposed to trigger an uprising of uitlanders. However, the uprising never happened, and Jameson was captured. The incident became a humiliation for the British government, whose involvement was widely suspected.

The Anglo-Boer War (The South African War) 1899–1902

Britain had annexed Transvaal in 1877, but this had caused a Boer uprising and defeat for the British at Majuba Hill in 1881. The issue of gold heightened Britain’s interest in removing the autonomy of the Boer Republics, and in the 1890s it began a campaign against President Kruger of Transvaal, focusing on his alleged unfair treatment of the uitlanders, especially his refusal to grant them voting rights. Since this would have allowed the incomers, most of whom were British, to dominate Transvaal politics, Kruger, not surprisingly, refused. Britain sent troops to the borders of Transvaal and succeeded in provoking Kruger and his Boer ally, the Orange Free State, into war.

The opening phases saw Boer successes, with sieges of the British garrisons of Mafeking, Ladysmith and Kimberley, and battlefield victories, such as Spion Kop. The British government then sent reinforcements to relieve the sieges, and captured Pretoria, Transvaal’s capital, in 1900. However, the Boers did not give up and the next 18 months saw resistance by small, well-organised groups, known as commandos, attacking railways and engaging in disruptive guerrilla warfare.

The British burnt the farms that were thought to be supporting the commandos and sent the families into concentration camps. Although these were intended to be places of safety, mismanagement and the disruption of supplies by the commandos led to disease and hunger, and tens of thousands of deaths. Britain’s international reputation suffered. The Boers were finally worn down by these tactics, and by the building of blockhouses linked by wire to cordon off large areas and prevent free movement. The Peace of Vereeniging was signed in 1902.
Although the British technically won the war, within ten years the Boers had not only effective control of the republics which they had been fighting for, but significant influence across the whole country. The Union of South Africa, established in 1910, created a self-governing federation of the four areas, with a political system which was dominated by Boers right up to 1990.

Apartheid

The Union of South Africa left the question of black rights undecided, and in the event only Cape Colony allowed a limited franchise to non-whites, although still barring them from Parliament. In 1912, the African National Congress (ANC) was formed to fight for the rights of non-whites. Up until 1948 the moderate Boers, led by Botha and Smuts, were prepared to mend fences with the English-speaking settlers, but they brought in a series of measures to restrict the movement, land ownership, and the normal enjoyment of daily life of black South Africans. Trade Unions protested, and a series of strikes, especially among mineworkers, caused disruption to the economy.

In 1948, the National Party (NP), consisting of hard-line Boers, came to power, and began the system of apartheid. Although many of the laws were repetitions of ones that already existed, this time they were part of a systematic policy of treating black people as second-class citizens. Although the NP tried to present it as ‘separate development’, with blacks being allowed their own semi-independent homelands (Bantustans), no-one was fooled. The homelands were desperately poor pieces of land that no whites wanted, and they were simply an excuse for moving black people out of areas designated as white-only areas.

To make their intentions clearer, the government instituted a policy of ‘petty apartheid’, copied from the southern states of the USA, of putting up signs segregating park benches, seats on buses, toilets, beaches, and harassing black and coloured people on the streets by constantly demanding to see their ‘pass books’, the ID that they had to carry.

The end of apartheid

The international community showed its disgust for apartheid right from the start with protests from the United Nations; individual countries joined in the condemnation with sporting boycotts and trade sanctions. At first, South Africa was protected by its geographically strategic and pro-Western position during the Cold War, but the end of Communism in 1989 exposed apartheid as an outdated and unacceptable ideology. While the trade sanctions appear even to have benefitted South Africa’s economy, the fact that apartheid effectively ended the year after the fall of the Berlin Wall suggests that international condemnation was a decisive factor.

However, internal resistance by black people within the country was equally significant. Simple acts of defiance, like refusing to carry the hated pass books, wore down the patience of the authorities, while overt acts of disobedience, and virtual civil war in some urban areas, especially following the Soweto uprising of 1976, created a situation of sustained rebellion that the government could not deal with indefinitely.

Both symbolic and practical was the dignified resistance of Nelson Mandela, imprisoned for terrorism in 1964, but holding out the possibility of peaceful change, and emerging as the leader of the opposition to apartheid both in South Africa and abroad. In 1990, after his release, the government turned to him to lead the country out of the mess. He was elected president, with the ANC as the governing party, in the first genuinely free election in 1994.
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