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“Racial Repercussions of The British Imperial Curriculum:”
Misperceptions of the Natives in George Orwell’s *Burmese Days*

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Bridgewater State University

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how English writers falsely portray the indigenous people of the British colonies in novels. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, in particular, authors of Imperialist fiction often misrepresent natives in the British colonies as deviant, detestable, deplorable beings that lack moral compasses. By researching the fields of literature, history, education, and cultural studies, I will examine how George Orwell's novel *Burmese Days* distorts descriptions of the Burmese people. Previous studies on *Burmese Days* focus mainly on misrepresentations of the Burmese as a homogenous race; however, my research will encompass how literary distortions target multiple ethnic Burmese tribes and how the British imperial curriculum further perpetuates prejudice against the Burmese in colleges and universities throughout the British Empire. Through inaccurate teachings, college English professors and secondary school professors propagate the notion that European races are superior to the indigenous people of Burma. I will focus primarily on British imperialism, the imperial curriculum, and postcolonial studies to substantiate how Orwell's novel had and continues to have a profound influence on how readers view the Burmese. I argue that the pedagogy of all literature is scrutinized through multiple fields of study to uncover any altered or invented versions of history about non-European people and their culture. Educators who teach *Burmese Days* must present students with material from other disciplines to give readers the information they need to comprehend the Burmese and their culture better and to reduce the continual perpetuation of racism in education.

Introduction

As an immigrant from Myanmar, formerly called Burma, I read *Burmese Days* with cynicism and skepticism because, from my point of view, the novel is full of misconceptions about the Burmese people. Although George Orwell may be viewed as one of the most prominent writers of the twentieth century, his influence in the literary world is not a result of his novel *Burmese Days*. His popularity stems from his progressive views on the devastating effects of a nation under the rule of totalitarianism found in his books *Animal Farm* and *1984*. I first became interested in George Orwell and his writings on Burma as a sophomore in college when I first read his essay, "Shooting an Elephant." I noticed then that there seemed to be a disconnect between the author's point of view about Burmese characters in the story and what I perceived would have been a Burmese person's point of view. In "Shooting of an Elephant," Orwell vividly describes the feelings, motives, and actions of the British agent stationed in Burma like a human character placed in the middle of a cartoon. The British agent's character is realistic compared to a brief and stereotyped sketch of the Burmese people. In the same way, in *Burmese Days*, the author does not appear to understand the importance of various distinctions amongst the tribes, cultures, and religions that exist in Burma. He describes all the people as a homogenous group. Orwell also does not mention the significant alliances the British have with certain tribes like the Karens and the Shans that make colonization successful. Because the English mainly appoint people from the Karens and Shan tribes as government officials, bitter resentment and racism not only breeds in Burma, it also continues to grow and create problems in Burma today. Like most imperialist fiction writers, Orwell writes from the viewpoint of an outsider, a colonizer, looking on to the lives of the Burmese colonists.

Writings of fiction in the twentieth century reflect the continuance of an English colonizer's perception of the indigenous in countries that were once part of the British Empire. Most of these novels about the colonies are set in exotic foreign lands occupied by uncivilized and problematic natives. Although many scholars view George Orwell as an anti-imperialist writer, his book *Burmese Days* does not clearly maintain an anti-imperialist viewpoint. On the contrary, the narratives in the novel reflect an author with the mindset of a colonizer. His writings glamorize the powerful existence of the British governance in Burma. While Orwell uses emotional language to create depth in European characters, he uses colorful language to make the Burmese into caricatures.

Because of the popularity and prevalence of *Burmese Days* in classrooms, in addition to how it is taught, readers assume the contents of the novel to be factual. Postcolonial scholar Ania Loomba cautions against writers who blur the lines between fact and fiction (Loomba 57). Fictional accounts of the Burmese become facts to readers and the so-called 'facts' become an Englishman's version of Burmese history. My objective is to rectify and explain some misconceptions about the Burmese people in *Burmese Days*. Incorporating research about the Burmese from experts in the fields of education, history, and cultural geography will help readers uncover altered or invented versions of the indigenous in the British colonies. Teaching *Burmese Days* in conjunction with these insights will equip the learner to be more informed and educated about people from other cultures and help alleviate the spread of racism.

The British Empire and Colonization in Burma

A brief history of the British Empire and the impact on its colonies and former colonies is necessary to understand how imperialism influenced European attitudes towards non-European

people throughout the world. Imperialist beliefs about other cultures infiltrated all English-speaking nations through secondary and higher learning institutions. At the height of the British Empire, the English controlled territories that covered two-thirds of the landmass on Earth. For over a century, the British Empire was the largest empire in history and the most powerful entity (“British Empire” 1). In fact, “by 1913, the British Empire held sway over 412 million people, 23% of the world population at the time, and by 1920, it covered 35,500,000 km² (13,700,000 sq. mi.), 24% of the Earth's total land area” (“The World Fact Book”). At the turn of the twentieth century, England’s realm was coined as “the empire on which the sun never set,” because England’s territories spanned the globe from the Caribbean to Micronesia (Wilson 527). Because of the expanse and power of the British Empire, English publications in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had the most significant influence on readers of English, and the writings empowered the English while they incapacitated non-Europeans. Knowledge is power.

The territories of the British Empire were not all ruled the same way and allowed for lesser or greater participation from the natives within the colonies. The British ruled directly, indirectly, and at times, used a combination of both direct and indirect rule. In all three instances, both ethnic demographics and social relations determined the type of governance. The mode in which England governed the colonies ensured them economic profitability. Direct control over the colonies allowed for higher infrastructure and more accessibility to resources such as supplies and military support; on the other hand, indirect rule over states “forced colonial officials to collaborate with local patrimonial elites to create some semblance of control” (Lange and Balian 317). Burma was ruled directly ever since the British invaded the country in 1824, and British colonization immediately affected Burma’s landscape and economy. Significant environmental impacts to Burma’s landscape and economy resulted from the construction of

shipping ports, railways, and roads. The primary purpose of the creation of an extensive infrastructure in the country was to invade and extract natural resources within Burma and export raw material back to England. During the process of direct control, the British changed Burma's social structure by moving its economic and cultural center from Mandalay to Rangoon.

Mandalay, situated in the center of Burma, was where the Burmese monarchs ruled for over 300 years, and the city was accessible by natives and tribes from all the districts. However, Rangoon, located on the southernmost seaport of Burma, placed the people in upper Burma at an economic disadvantage. In his article on the impact of British colonial rule in Burma, economist Yada Saueressig-Schreuder writes that "insertion of colonial and economic policy" caused a decline in the function of the traditional Burmese government and social system. Ports and railroads the English built bypassed small villages, Burma's main cultural centers; thus, the Burmese became more dependent on the British and the new infrastructure profoundly changed Burma's economic and social configuration during colonialism. The destruction of Burma's social and political system led to Burmese hatred towards the British and their agents.

In George Orwell's novel, *Burmese Days*, adverse effects of imperialism are manifested through dialogues of the main character, John Flory. Also, it is evident in the novel that the British use direct rule to exert control over the Burmese. But Orwell does not condemn the institution of imperialism, and the central character lacks strength and integrity to fight the British Empire; instead, the central character is ambivalent and flawed. When *Burmese Days* is taught in educational institutions throughout English speaking nations and colonies, imperialistic ideologies are reinforced.

Imperialistic ideologies are reinforced in writings that homogenize people groups within the British colonies. It is essential for readers to understand that there are over thirteen ethnic

tribes within Burma and that each tribe differs from other tribes in culture, language, tradition, and at times origin. Although the distinction of tribes is not evident in imperialistic literature, the English were aware of tribal animosity since the English conquered Burma in the nineteenth century. The British made use of the existing antagonism between various majority and minority tribes to keep the tribes from uniting and overthrowing their new regime (Lange and Balian 328). The imperialistic agenda to “conquer and divide” benefited the English and ensured the establishment of British rule. One of the greatest factions was between the Burmans and the Karens. In the early nineteenth century, before the British invasion, American Baptist missionaries came to Burma to spread Christianity. American Baptist missionaries converted members of Karen to Christianity and taught them to read, speak, and write English (Rajha 248). Also, the American Baptist missionaries were present in Burma during the three major Anglo-Burmese wars that took place between 1824 and 1885. They converted many of the people of the Karen tribe and. The English developed a close relationship with Christian Karens because they not only shared a common language, English, but they also shared the Christian religion. The British promoted the Karens to high governmental positions that gave them authority over people of other tribes (Lange and Balian 328). The Karens assisted the British armies during the Anglo-Burmese wars and fought against the Burman Tribe.

The ethnic rivalry only increased under colonialism, and the British Empire turned an informal communal structure into an official societal hierarchy when Karens became British agents. The direct rule in Burma not only precipitated violence, but it also established a biased social system where Karens subjugated the Burmans and established animosity between the tribes. To make matters worse between the Karens and Burmans, the English allowed the Karens to hold privileged political and economic positions within the British Empire (Wright 382).

Major contentions between Burmans and the Karens exists today, and the Burmans are still fighting the Karens in what is called *The Karen Conflict: The Longest Ongoing Civil War*. All of this conflict is due to colonialism.

20th Century Literature about British Imperialism

As part of the British imperial curriculum in the twentieth century, English professors in colleges and universities often assigned literature of imperialism as reading material for their students. The literature of imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries demonstrate how England's policies "extended the country's power and influence through colonization, use of military force, and other means" ("Imperialism"). English writers like Rudyard Kipling, who is considered the father of imperialistic literature, write narratives that paint pictures of realistic people, places, and events; however, the written contents often reflect the lives of ordinary English people in exotic locales and Kipling often extolls imperialism and expands on how colonization benefits colonized peoples. Below is an excerpt from Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden." The poet states how it is the 'burden' of Western civilizations to tame the "wild" people in the colonies:

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. (Kipling)

The poet claims that the “White man” has a responsibility to send the “best ye breed,” or the best Englishmen, to help take care of the “captives,” or natives in the conquered territories. The poet diminishes the humanity of people in those lands and states that these detainees are “half-devil and half-child.” Kipling’s poem addresses America’s colonization in its newly obtained territories of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. The poem justifies imperialism in general as a noble cause and confirms the merits of European colonization of the past 500 years.

Another imperialistic work by Kipling is in his novel, *The Jungle Book*, written in 1894. In the narrative, the main character, Mowgli, is a wild Indian boy who is raised by wolves. Like his poem “The White Man’s Burden,” Kipling’s novel characterizes Mowgli, a representative of the Indian natives, as “half-devil and half-child” beings who live as animals in the untamed jungles of India. In the story, Mowgli’s mentor, Baloo the bear, hits Mowgli gently when Mowgli forgets the “Rules of the Jungle.” Baloo feels that it is “better [Mowgli] should be bruised from head to foot by me who love him than that [Mowgli] should come to harm through ignorance” (Kipling 17). In the same way, Kipling implies that the English discipline natives of the British colonies out of love so that they do not “come to harm” through their stupidity. Though Kipling intends to create characters and settings that provoke nostalgic images of the exotic life in British India, in *The Jungle Book*, his characters and settings are not accurate representations from an Indian’s point of view. His writings diminish the voices of the indigenous while they herald the role of the British.

Another example of how English authors promote literature of imperialism and belittle the indigenous is E.M. Forster's novel, *A Passage to India*. In his novel, Forster uses the setting and India’s landscape to create questionable perceptions about India. The terrain is beautiful yet mysterious. The city of Chandrapore, where the story takes place, is first described as “abased,

so monotonous” (Forster 7). As the author continues to describe the town he states, “[t]he general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life” (Forster 7). The town is not only a denigration; it is compared to a type of sludge that carries inferior life forms. Forster uses bleak, descriptive words such as “dark,” “rotting,” and “excrement” and builds readers’ contempt for a place that “was never large or beautiful” (Forster 7). The portrayal of the town seems to be a political point of view rather than an accurate depiction. The language in *A Passage to India* appears to reflect imperialistic opinions of the British and their degrading interpretations of India’s landscape.

Writers of imperialism like Rudyard Kipling and E.M. Forster glamorize English characters in the colonies, while they portray the natives as uncultivated or pathetic caricatures. Moreover, their writings solidify the colonized territories as dangerous, mysterious places that need to be tamed. It is not coincidental that the popularity of the literature of imperialism grew simultaneously with the expansion of the British Empire.

Contrary to the opinions of many critics, I find that many of Orwell’s earlier works are not anti-imperialistic and do not oppose colonization; in fact, in Orwell’s’ earlier essays and short stories, the protagonist plays the role of the British oppressor. In Orwell’s essay “A Hanging” (1936), a story about the hanging of a native Hindu, the main character is a British police officer. The author describes in detail the feelings and thoughts of the protagonist while he depicts the Burmese prisoner with beastly qualities when the prisoner sits in “condemned cells, a row of sheds fronted with double bars, like small animal cages.” The prison guard, the oppressor, does not acknowledge the prisoner’s humanity until just moments before the prisoner dies. When the prison guard finally sees the prisoner as a human being, he states, “It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the

prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive” (“A Hanging,” Orwell). It is only at the end of the narrative that the prison guard recognizes the wrongness of hanging a man and shows remorse. Orwell uses the death of a native to get readers to accept the humanity of non-Englishmen when the prison guard finally develops sympathy for the Burmese man. Because Orwell inserts a paragraph about how one Englishman finally has sympathy for a native, critics like John Rodden view Orwell as an anti-imperialistic writer (Menand 1). However, in the same story, a minor English character, the Superintendent, diminishes the value of the natives. After the prisoner finally dies, the Superintendent “glance[s] at his wrist-watch. ‘Eight minutes past eight. Well, that's all for this morning, thank God’” (Orwell). The Superintendent is a doctor who supposedly saves lives, yet after he kills a man, his only concern is his schedule rather than remorse for his involvement in the death of a man. Furthermore, the prisoner’s only verbalization are the sounds “Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!” as he hangs on the gallows with a piece of cloth stuffed in his mouth (Orwell). The author invalidates any value of the natives in Burma since the Hindu man dies without a voice and only one Englishman’s pity is depicted. I argue that the Orwell is an imperialistic writer because he does not go far enough to show the prisoner’s humanity through the voices of all his characters.

Similarly, in Orwell’s essay, “Shooting an Elephant” (1936), the author allegedly expresses his hatred towards colonialism through the character of an English police officer stationed in Moulmein, Burma. However, the essay reveals more about the protagonist’s conflict with the mob of Burmese than it does about the mistreatment of the Burmese under colonialism. When the narrator talks about the Burmese, he utters, “In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance,

got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans” (“Shooting an Elephant” Orwell). Some critics compare the protagonist to the conflicted person of George Orwell because the author notes he was forced to kill a rogue elephant while stationed in Moulmein in 1927 (Hays 5). Like Orwell, against his better judgment, the character in the essay is forced by the villagers to shoot a violent elephant that has killed a man and has destroyed property. When the Burmese mob pushes the British police officer to the elephant, he declares, “Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd--seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality, I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind” (Orwell). The act of shooting the elephant could be taken as a metaphor of how imperialism, in the guise of a Burmese mob, forces its subjects to do things against their will. However, the essay details more about the English police officer’s humiliation than it explains how the Burmese are powerless to act under imperialism. The Englishman emphasizes that the Burmese should be viewing him as a higher more powerful being than them; thus, the Burmese should be following his orders, not ridiculing him (Orwell). In his essays, Orwell proves he is not significantly different from other British. Orwell’s inner struggles about his attitude towards the Burmese are found not only in the story “Shooting an Elephant,” but also in *Burmese Days*.

Though some critics like Rodden feel that Orwell criticizes British imperialism and uses satire to demonstrate inefficiencies in colonialism in *Burmese Days*, I find he also uses satire to suppress the voices of the indigenous and mocks them (Rodden 519). Satire, is a literary device writers use to prove a point, is defined as, “The use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary

politics and other topical issues” (“Satire”). In his novel, Orwell exaggerates how unscrupulous the Burmese are through the antagonist U Po Kyin. U Po Kyin’s greed for money and need for power overpowers any authentic representations of the Burmese and Indians. The caricatures of the antagonist and other characters in *Burmese Days* are the author’s misconceptions which mislead readers and will be discussed later in this paper.

Robin Jared Lewis’ journal article compares E.M. Forster’s *Passage to India* to *Burmese Days*. Both novels are published at the beginning of the twentieth century and are written by Englishmen about British imperialism. The protagonists in both stories are Englishmen living in remote colonies of the British Empire, and they describe in detail the relationships the Englishmen have with the natives in the lands. Lewis emphasizes how Orwell’s experience in Burma as a young adult and a policing agent for the British Empire dramatically influences the author’s negative representations of the Burmese people. His inaccurate representations build the foundation of his Burmese characters in his novel. Readers regard Orwell’s interpretation of the Burmese as realistic, especially those who have never traveled outside of Europe. Gal Gerson, an associate professor of Political Studies at the University of Haifa in Israel, espouses that Orwell described things as he saw it and included normative behavior in political, social, and religious realms (Gerson 12). The Online Oxford English Dictionary defines realism as “the quality or fact of representing a person or thing in a way that is accurate and true to life. Literary realism, in contrast to idealism, attempts to represent familiar things as they are” (“Realism”). Many readers in the early twentieth century assumed that Orwell was expert on the Burmese and their culture because he was born in British India, spent five years in Burma, and had relatives still living in Burma. Orwell has been called a realist writer, but his realism is a misinterpretation of reality and *Burmese Days* must be read through the critical lens of postcolonial theory.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory plays an essential part in interpreting literature because it is through the disciplines and practices of this theory that readers can identify misconceptions of the Burmese in *Burmese Days*. Edward Said conceived postcolonial theory, in his book *Orientalism* (1978), in which he stated that Europeans view non-Europeans as “the others,” and give them labels such as “Orientals,” and set themselves apart from and above non-Europeans. Over the centuries, European, writers, poets, and artists, in collusion with ruling parties, created and reinforced images of the “other” for political gain. Postcolonial theorists are interested in researching what happens to a people group during and most importantly after a period of colonialism. The term “colonialism” in this context does not refer to colonialism in North America that began in the fifteenth century; rather, the term “colonialism” refers to the colonies of European empires in the Africa, Asia, Central America, South America, and Australia.

In *Orientalism*, Said continues to argue that imperialistic nations create false and distorted images of the indigenous and natives of the colonies for nationalistic promotion. He surmises that publications about European colonies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries purposely include repeated illustrations and written images of people of the colonies. For example, women are portrayed as being sensual, men are depicted as barbarians, and the places are described as dark and mysterious. After extensive research, Said concludes that the publications had little or nothing to do with the actual places and the natives, and that the English systematically used false images to maintain and gain power over the territories. In his words:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) the occident. Thus, a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists,

economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, 'mind,' destiny, and so on.... (Said 615).

Thus, Said argues that English novels of the nineteenth century are all novels of imperialism.

Discussion of literature must include the perspectives of the indigenous for teachings to be authentic and accurate. All literature needs to be read through the lens of postcolonial theory and include multiple perspectives so that both the colonizer and the colonized are reasonably understood. Postcolonial theorist Ania Loomba argues that English publications manipulate "readers' distorted conceptions of non-Europeans" (Loomba 110). In her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Loomba insists that "colonial attempts to classify, record, represent, and educate non-European societies [are] efforts to re-order worlds often incomprehensible to the masters and make them more manageable and available for imperial consumption and exploitation" (Loomba 110). Major strategies in gaining power over people are to separate Europeans from non-Europeans and make them outsiders. So according to Loomba, the rationale of British writers is to convince readers that the English are good and fair, and the "others" are evil and irrational; therefore, "others" need to be governed by Europeans. Moreover, Loomba's statement that the English made efforts to "re-order worlds" supports my argument that imperialist British writers purposefully omitted non-European points of view to shape the minds of readers and justify colonization of remote nations. Loomba's book is essential in connecting my thesis to postcolonial theory and the dangers of teaching Orwell's *Burmese Days* solely from an English viewpoint; instead, literature discussion must include the perspectives of the indigenous. By stating that the colonizers wanted to "educate non-Europeans," and "re-order

worlds,” Loomba surmises that anything written by the “masters” is for self-centered imperialistic purposes. The author further explains how the categorization of indigenous people is not an invention of colonialism and that racial stereotyping goes back to the Greek and Roman periods “which provide some abiding templates for subsequent European images of ‘barbarians’ and ‘outsiders’” (Loomba 113).

Furthermore, Loomba asserts that in the late-nineteenth-century, “Scientific discussion, rather than challenging existing stereotypes, extended the notion and developed the beliefs of native barbarism over sexuality and savagery” (Loomba 125). In essence, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the theory of Social Darwinism was used as a philosophical justification for imperialist, colonialist, and racist policies since it sustained the belief that Anglo-Saxon and Aryan cultures were biologically superior. According to the theory of Social Darwinism, “the weak [are] diminished and their cultures delimited while the strong [grow] in power and in cultural influence over the weak. Social Darwinists [hold] that the life of humans in society [is] a struggle for existence ruled by ‘survival of the fittest’” (“Social Darwinism”). According to Social Darwinism, Europeans are more advanced than non-Europeans because those who have conquered foreign lands are the fittest to rule over the people they have dominated.

While I agree with Said and Loomba, and their arguments that literature has promoted the worldview of Europeans and has demeaned non-Europeans, I believe scholars and teachers need to re-educate people to give a voice to the natives of former British colonies. By reeducation, I mean that educational institutions need to use historical and cultural data about the indigenous of the land when they teach literature of imperialism. Other postcolonial theorists disagree with Loomba on how postcolonial literature should be taught. They believe that the past should

remain in the past and theorists need to play a more supportive responsible role in bringing forth understanding between the former colonizers and the colonized. For example, postcolonial critic Gayatri Spivak recognizes that the voices of the subjugates must be heard but states that it is an impossibility to reconstruct their voices (Rai 2). Spivak espouses that Postcolonial theorists need to participate in a more responsible role to bring forth unity between the subjugator and the subjugated. She argues that postcolonial theorists need to critique literature “without inclining toward irrationalism: obtuse angling,” and perpetually arguing about the “evils” of imperialism and its aftermath because revealing the “evils” alone is not an effective means to re-educate people (Rai 3). I disagree with Spivak because if readers are made aware of the vices of imperialism, they may assume that the subjugation of people groups are natural and essential in history.

As a matter of fact, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries, fictional literature was used as propaganda in the British Imperial Curriculum to promote the expansion of the British Empire. British educators used novels like *Burmese Days* to justify colonization in foreign lands. Though most critics in the twenty-first century now refer to *Burmese Days* as an anti-Imperialist novel, the damages from past improper teachings of the novel have not been erased. Indeed, Orwell sets himself apart from other writers of imperialism, like Kipling and Forster because he establishes the precept that colonialism is an ineffective, self-serving system. However, in *Burmese Days*, Orwell does not go far enough in his criticism of imperialism since his novel does not include examples of grievous afflictions colonization causes on the natives in Burma. Moreover, the author does not provide substantial perspectives from the natives’ point of view; instead, *Burmese Days* is an Englishman’s assessment of Burma and its people. Readers need to approach literature from multiple perspectives and be better educated about not only the

content of a novel, but also about its context. To truly understand how *Burmese Days* is not an anti-Imperialist novel, readers need to know about George Orwell's biography and details of his relationship with the Burmese.

Eric Arthur Blair and George Orwell

George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair on June 25, 1903, in Motahari, British India near Katmandu. His father Richard W. Blair was a British civil servant agent in the "Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service" during a time when the Opium trade was a viable legal commodity (Shadow 2). His mother Ida Blair (nee Limouzin) came from a French family and was born in British India; she grew up in Burma in the port town of Moulmein, where her family was in the distillery and timber business (Wright 10). The author changed his name from Eric Arthur Blair to George Orwell just before he published his first book in 1933, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, a memoir of when the author spent six years in poverty on the streets of Paris and London. One of Orwell's biographers writes that Orwell changed his name because he was "afraid of shaming his family" (Sutherland 1). Since the contents of the author's memoirs include how he lived in poverty as a vagrant, Orwell felt his writings could embarrass his "middle-class family." Yet, some critics conjecture that he changed his name because he never liked the name "Eric Blair," and thought "George Orwell" sounded more English (Sutherland 1). It is interesting that he would want a name that was more outwardly "English," and attaches him to the system of imperialism. His new name closely associates Orwell to a society whose government policy of imperialism he grows to despise.

His mother moved him and his sister to England to raise them as "English subjects" while his father remained in India (Shadow 3). Orwell grew up in England and spent five years at the prestigious Eton School for "princes and non-princes alike" from 1918-1921 (Shadow 4). At a

young age, he experienced how the upper class of society belittled the lower classes and how the “elite” classes had a sense of entitlement (Hays 1). In George Orwell’s autobiography, he states that he was not fond of attending a university, so in 1922, like his father, he joined the Imperial Civil Services in British India. He chose to go to Burma instead of India because his mother’s family still resided in Burma and there, Orwell became a policeman and oversaw over 200,000 English and Burmese civil servants. Incidentally, his first post was Moulmein which was the setting of his famous essay “Shooting an Elephant.” The depicts a semi-autobiographical event that occurred when he was serving here as a police officer in the 1920s (Hays 5). George Orwell worked as the sub-divisional police officer of Moulmein and like the rest of the British who were military occupiers, he was hated by most of the people in the village and the “Burmese [tripped] Orwell during soccer games and [hurled] insults at him as he [walked] down the street” (Meyers 21). He was later transferred to the village of Katha, which is the setting for the book *Burmese Days* that he changed to Kyauktada. In his biographies and interviews, Orwell is ambiguous about his years spent in Burma, and most of the details about his experiences in Burma are found in his essays about Burma and his novel *Burmese Days* (Meyers 3). Orwell quickly became disillusioned with the system of imperialism, so after serving in Burma for five years, he abruptly left the country and went back to England in 1927.

Orwell originally began writing *Burmese Days* in 1928, after returning from Burma, but it took the author over six years to complete the novel because he was conflicted about his feelings about the Burmese people (Hays 6). *Burmese Days* was published in 1934 when the British Empire was at its decline. The novel not only reflects Orwell’s views about the injustices of imperialism, but it also reveals his internal conflict about his experiences in Burma and his attitudes towards the Burmese and their culture. Like the narrator in “Shooting an Elephant,”

Orwell becomes disillusioned and “[finds] himself attracted and revolted at the same time by the Burmese” (“Shooting an Elephant” Orwell). Through vague descriptions of the indigenous and unclear relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, Orwell demonstrates his ambivalence that was also on display in his autobiographical essay “Shooting an Elephant.” In the essay, the narrator remarks, “All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the Empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible” (Orwell, “Shooting”). If the author intended his novel to be a mockery of British imperialism, then Orwell only presents the system’s injustices through the perspective of an Englishman. The novel emphasizes how colonialism negatively affects Anglo-Indians, people of “British descent or birth but living or having lived long in British India” (“Anglo-Indian,”). *Burmese Days* obscures how the ineffective form of an imperialistic government destructively impacts the Burmese. Critic Malcolm Muggeridge suggests that for all his criticism of British rule in India and Burma, “there was much in the British Empire official that Orwell admired” (Maes-Jelinek 343). Since the author is not able to sort out his feelings about the indigenous until his later years as an author, his psychological struggles manifest itself not only in his essays, but also in the novel *Burmese Days*.

Close Reading of *Burmese Days*

Readers need to read *Burmese Days* with a critical mind and view the narrative through multiple lenses to better understand what is factual and what is reflective of the author’s bias. My close reading of *Burmese Days* shows how the novel misguides readers about the Burmese people, the Burmese culture, and Burmese-English relationships. Orwell does not provide authentic representations of the natives and indigenous of Burma because their descriptions are

ambiguous. The author writes *Burmese Days* as an Englishman looking on a group of people and making cultural judgments through his writings.

Burmese Days is about the struggle of Anglo-Burmese, or Englishmen living in Burma as British subjects, and their relationships with each other during the waning days of the British Empire. The main characters, John Flory and Elizabeth Lackersteen, are Anglo-Burmese and English. The minor characters, U Po Kyin and Dr. Veraswami, are non-Europeans. Orwell's real-life experience in Burma closely mirrors the character of the Englishman John Flory, living in the village of Kyauktada. Some critics believe the novel is Orwell's struggle to express his ambivalence to the Burmese. Literary critic John Knapp claims that Orwell writes *Burmese Days* as an "allegory of power relationships among people who live in a totalitarian environment" (Knapp 12). I argue that Knapp bases his assertion not solely upon the contents of *Burmese Days*; instead, he conjectures that the novel serves as an allegory because he connects this early text to his later metaphoric novels, *Animal Farm* and *1984*. The assumption that Knapp makes is that most of Orwell's writings are allegories and criticism of a society ruled under a totalitarian government. The characters in *Animal Farm* work under a societal system where one animal makes the decision for all the animals and opposing opinions are suppressed for the good of the community. However, most readers in the early twentieth century did not read *Burmese Days* as an allegory. Even if Orwell meant the book to be an allegory, that is not how it was taught in colleges and secondary schools in the early twentieth century, which will later be discussed in this paper. I disagree with Knapp that Orwell intended *Burmese Days* to be a political allegory because the Burmese seem to be least affected by the totalitarian rule. The power struggles are prevalent between the English characters within their circle in the European-only Kyauktada

Club. The Burmese characters are minimalized, and Orwell falsely implies that the Burmese passively accept British rule.

Because the novel moves between reality and fiction, readers are left to determine which part of the narrative are fact or fabrications. Due to the high cost of traveling overseas, most people could not afford to travel outside of their community at the beginning of the twentieth century. Novels provided a way for readers to experience other cultures on their native soil. Critics do not address inaccuracies in descriptions of the natives and the damage the inaccuracies do to the way Europeans perceive Burmese. Readers may assume that the Burmese are uneducated “savages” and that Europeans are superior to the natives of British colonies.

Orwell diminishes the value of non-Europeans through the actions of the main protagonist, John Flory and uses grotesque deformations to reveal the ills of imperialism. Flory is the only Burmese sympathizer in the novel who seems to understand the miseries of non-Europeans in Burma under British rule. He has a Burmese mistress and is close friends with an Indian doctor, Dr. Veraswami. However, Orwell paints Flory as a weak character who is physically and mentally flawed, so his character does not go far enough to present the Burmese as equals let alone people who deserve to be heard. Flory is also flawed physically because he has a substantial purple birthmark on the left side of his face. Flory’s flaw is so obvious that “the first thing that one [notices] in Flory [is] his hideous birthmark stretching in a ragged crescent down his left cheek, from the eye to the corner of the mouth” (Orwell 17). Orwell’s treatment of Flory as deformed by his birthmark is a way of showing how his character is deformed too. Flory’s birthmark suggests that people who associate with non-Europeans are flawed and that their defects are so incredibly pronounced that they cannot be hidden. The color blueish purple could indicate that his actions have damaged his bloodline and it makes him inferior to the other

Englishmen. He moves his head and body in ways that constantly keep others from seeing his birthmark. In a sense, Flory is also targeted as the “other” in the novel. He tries to hide his association with the Burmese and Indians in the town. Flory avoids talking about his friendship with Dr. Veraswami when he is with other Englishmen. He repeatedly ignores Dr. Veraswami’s request to be nominated as a member of the elite European Club. Flory tends to cower and hide unless he is inebriated.

Flory also hides his affair with a young Burmese woman named Ma Hla May like he hides his birthmark. Flory keeps the company of Ma Hla May until an English woman by the name of Elizabeth Lackersteen comes into the town of Kyauktada. After Flory is publicly humiliated in a church by Ma Hla May, Elizabeth Lackersteen rejects him for being sexually involved with a Burmese woman. Elizabeth’s denunciation leads him to commit suicide at the end of the novel. In allowing Flory to kill himself for the sake of an English woman, Orwell suggests that those who sympathize with the Burmese and oppose imperialism are cowards who are destined to fail. The tragedy in *Burmese Days* is that the only European sympathetic to the Burmese people takes his life because an English woman rejects him. The author places far greater importance on English relationships than on non-Europeans.

The leading female character in *Burmese Days* is an Englishwoman, Elizabeth Lackersteen, whose rejection of Flory’s proposal for marriage causes him to commit suicide. Although she is a shallow person in the novel, she is a developed character with dialogues and multiple points of view. If her character were to be placed in England rather than Burma, she probably would not be considered an interesting character. Orwell makes even the most boring shallow characters more critical than Burmese natives. When Elizabeth finds out that Flory has a mistress, she is not upset about the affair, she is horrified that the mistress is a Burmese woman

as the narrator states, “The thought that he [Flory] had been the lover of that grey-faced, maniacal creature made her shudder in her bones” (Orwell 274). In the narrative, Elizabeth calls the Burmese woman a “creature” and dehumanizes her. Elizabeth is an Englishwoman and did not grow up in the colonies, so she represents England. She resents everything non-English from seeing Eurasians, “which excited a peculiar dislike in her,” to walking through the bazaars of Kyauktada (Orwell 126). What mostly appalls her are Burmese women, and as she describes them, she sneers, “Aren’t they too simply dreadful? So coarse looking; like some kind of animal. Do you think anyone could think those women attractive?... But that black skin- I don’t know how anyone could bear it” (Orwell 119). In one paragraph, Elizabeth describes Burmese women as unattractive black “animals.” She takes no account of Flory’s rebuttal to her comments about the native women; instead, she considers his ideas “funny” (Orwell 119). Orwell weakens Flory’s character as a Burmese sympathizer when he associates him with Elizabeth because she detests anything Burmese. Her discriminatory statements taint the representation of Burmese women. Because Orwell does not denounce her biased words, the author validates the fallacies in Elizabeth’s beliefs of Burmese women being inferior to English women.

Even loathsome British characters like Ellis get a voice and have depth in character. Ellis is a distasteful character who is consumed with hatred for non-Europeans and flings racial slurs about the natives in the colonial club. In *Burmese Days*, Orwell displays his distaste for mixed-race peoples and preferences for “pure blooded” Europeans. Eurasians, or children, who are born to one Burmese parent and one English parent, are called half-breeds and do not have a voice in the novel (“Eurasians”). When Ellis mentions church services on Sundays, he mocks the two Christian missionaries who are half European and half Burmese and states, “And then those two yellow-bellies, Francis and Samuel-they call themselves Christians too. Last time the padre was

here they had the nerve to come up and sit in the front pews with the white men” (Orwell 27). Orwell uses nicknames to set mixed races apart from Europeans, and so monikers set the natives apart from the English. The term “yellow-bellies” refers to the color yellow and indicates fear or pollution, while the word “belly” indicates an animal that crawls on the ground. People of mixed races become part of taxonomy like animals and plants. False representation of the Burmese in literature was a weapon the English used to maintain power within Colonial Burma.

Scholar and author Michelle Aung Than states that the authenticity of mixed races in early colonial discourse is rarely acknowledged in the literature. She further asserts that mixed races are spoken about or described the same way artifacts are described in a museum. Than suggests that half race “cannot be completely binary of self because the skin is a literal, figurative representation of self,” so limitations of belonging or not belonging have to do with how white one is by one’s genetic purity (Than 25). *In Burmese Days*, Europeans consider Anglo-Burmese to be impure because they have native blood in them. Orwell confirms that the English believe they have control over the natives when natives are shown not to belong to the ruling race. The use of nicknames and views of European characters in the novel promote racism.

In contrast to Europeans, all Burmese characters are illustrated as caricatures in the backdrop of the lives of the British. A prime example of distortion in *Burmese Days* is in the character of the antagonist, U Po Kyin. When Orwell uses grotesque deformations to reveal the ills of imperialism, he, unfortunately, transfers the distortions to the Burmese characters. The author represents U Po Kyin an exaggerated caricature of a self-serving Buddhist. Since the people of the Karen tribe were placed in high levels of authority as noted earlier in the research paper, it is highly unlikely that Po Kyin would have been a magistrate if he is a Burman

Buddhist. As previously mentioned, most natives placed in high positions of authority in the British Empire tended to be Christians from the Karen tribe because they knew how to speak, read, and write English. Most people from the Burman tribe were illiterate. Nonetheless, in *Burmese Days*, the antagonist, U Po Kyin is lumped into one homogenous people group called the Burmese. The narrator describes the antagonist as an obese animal that eats like a pig. Critic Jergen Lieskounng concludes that “what emerges most forcefully from the text is that this inner and outer deformation leads in the first instance to their inability to perceive the natives as other than distorted” (Lieskounng 66). Lieskounng asserts that Orwell purposefully distorts the Burmese characters to make a literary statement that the British cannot see the Burmese as equals; in doing so, the critic argues that Orwell uses satire to make a radical indictment of colonialism and critiques it as an inhumane and criminal system. While I agree that Orwell may be trying to use satire in *Burmese Days* to demonstrate how imperialism and colonialism are inhumane, I do not concur that Orwell’s use of satire absolves the author from having created “grotesque distortions” of the Burmese because misconceptions lead readers to assume the natives are less than human. In the beginning of the novel, Orwell describes the protagonist U PO Kyin and his eating habits when he writes, “With the bowl close to his nose, he stuffed the food into himself with swift, greasy fingers breathing fast. All his meals were swift, passionate and enormous; they were not meals so much as orgies” (Orwell 14). The image of a pig eating in a trough comes to mind when I read the passage, so even if Orwell intends distortions to reveal corruptions in the colonial system through grotesque satire, all the Burmese characters are shown as being barbaric. Moreover, readers are not given information about any important cultural values of the Burmese, so they assume the attitude and actions of U Po Kyin are behaviors of all Burmese people. Orwell undermines the Buddhist religion when he emphasizes how U Po Kyin intentionally lies,

cheats, and steals because he thinks his sins will be forgiven in the afterlife. U Po Kyin's entire life is shrouded in obtuse deformations that make him seem like an improbable sketch. Critics like Lieskounig suggest that Orwell intentionally distorts the native Burmese characters to show how imperialism distorts the truth. I argue that if readers are not taught how to discern misrepresentations, then the caricatures become authentic models of the natives.

Another tragically flawed character in the novel is Ma Hla May, Flory's Burmese mistress. She is overtly hypocritical because even though she is having an affair with another man, May is upset at Flory for wanting to marry Elizabeth. It is somewhat curious that Orwell names Flory's mistress Hla which in the Burmese language means "pretty" ("Hla"). She is represented as anything but beautiful. May demands gifts and money from Flory for having sex with her, then when Flory yells at her she replies, "That is a nice way to speak to me! You treat me as if I were a prostitute," (Orwell 55). The irony is Flory does pay her like a prostitute, and she expects payment. May is one of the main female Burmese characters in the novel and she is a prostitute. Readers could assume Burmese women are prostitutes. Her caricature is amplified when she walks into a church with torn clothes and shrieks "like a maniac" that Flory owes her money for her sexual services (Orwell 273). May yells at Flory in front of the entire church, "Look at me, you white men, and you women, too, look at me! Look how you have ruined me" (Orwell 273). Flory has ruined her just as colonizers ruin and mistreat the colonies. However, Ma Hla May's actions dwarf Orwell's criticism about imperialism because May is the one out of control while the dignified English sit speechless and in shock. In this particular narrative, Orwell paints a picture of a wild native Burmese woman who needs to be tamed by an Englishman.

Not only are the Burmese men and women misrepresented in *Burmese Days*, but Orwell distorts all non-Europeans in *Burmese Days*. Readers could assume that U Po Kyin's hatred for the Indian, Dr. Veraswami, is an indication that the Burmese hate and resent all Indians. Dr. Veraswami is the quintessential model of a British subject whose only goal in life is to be a member of the European colonial club. Orwell goes overboard and presents Veraswami as a person who continually praises colonialism. When Flory criticizes imperialism, Veraswami retorts, "My friend, my friend, you are forgetting the Oriental character. How is it possible to have developed us, with our apathy and superstition? At least you have brought us to law and order. The swerving British Justice and Pax Britannica" (Orwell 41). Here Orwell demeans non-Europeans and praises the contribution of the British in the colonies. The author also mocks how Veraswami talks like a snake and uses "iss" instead of "is," and gives the doctor animalistic attributes. The passage can easily be read out of context because Orwell does not criticize Dr. Veraswami's behavior. The author goes too far in explaining how non-Europeans beg to be considered equals to Europeans, and Orwell confirms the superiority of Englishmen to the natives.

Moreover, Orwell parodies the Burmese culture as a whole in his novel. When the Burmese natives incite a riot to avenge the death of a Burmese boy at the hands of a European, hundreds of Burmese gather around the European Club. In a collective effort to gain justice for the boy's murder. As the villagers surround the club armed with bottles and stones the narrator pronounces, "There was a series of crashes as the windows were broken, and then a ceaseless thudding of stones from all sides, that shook the thin wooden walls and seems likely to split them" (Orwell 249). Orwell seems to present the Burmans as formidable opponents, but two sentences later, he quickly undermines their capabilities and declares, that "the Burmans seemed

to have no plan beyond flinging stones, yelling, and hammering at the walls” (Orwell 248). The author presents the Burmans as infantile degenerates whose only means of warfare are stones. After the English finally escape the mob and travel down a river, they run into another crowd of angry Burmans armed with knives. Flory sees an Indian Military Policeman in the midst of the mob and swims through a “sea of bodies” that “flung on him from side to side bumping his ribs and choking him with their animal heat” (Orwell 251). Here again, Orwell gives the Burmans beastly attributes of “animal heat.” When things seem hopeless for the English, a troop of *sepoys*, or Indian soldiers serving under British rule, suddenly rolls into town and shoot their rifles above the Burmese crowd and quell the riot. The narrator describes that the horde of Burmans tries to “recoil,” but the *sepoys* prevent them from escape (Orwell 252). In using the word “recoil” the author makes an additional reference to the natives as snakes that retreat when threatened. The British military men are able to disperse the horde as the narrator claims, “Finally the whole crowd bulged outward and began to roll slowly up the *maidan*” (Orwell 252). A *maidan* is a term the British use for an “open space in or near a towne” in South Asia (“Maidan”). Orwell affirms that the Burmese cannot defend themselves since the riot ends almost as quickly as it begins. Even when Orwell shows natives revolting, he is not really on their side and shows the natives to be incapable and ineffectual to defend themselves. Through the narrative of the riot, the author illustrates how the Burmese use their animalistic traits and primitive weapons to defend themselves. By describing people as creatures or unevolved humans, Orwell is affirming that the Burmese are incapable of controlling themselves; thus, they need subjugating.

Deconstructing the Imperial Curriculum

Literature of imperialism cannot be taught purely as a natural and instrumental part of a curriculum whether it be in history courses or literature classes. Literature of imperialism must

be taught in the context of its lasting impacts on readers and people of the colonized nations. *Burmese Days* not only accepts colonization as an instrumental element in the history of British colonies, but the novel constructs images of the Burmese and non-Europeans as being less human than Europeans. Although Orwell sets out to write an anti-imperialistic novel, he does not omit imperialistic image-construction because he considers the “Oriental” as the “other.” The fact that George Orwell served as a military official in Burma for over five years did not make him an expert on the colonized people of Burma.

The topic of racism within the educational curriculum has not been fully explored. Literature about imperialism is filled with derogatory language against the natives and indigenous in the British colonies. As educational scholar J.A. Mangan writes about the relationships among imperialism, culture, and curriculum, he asserts that the past is part of the present and that most readers do not realize the influences of the relationships when reading literature (Mangan 193). Mangan affirms that “the power of past images should not be underestimated” when studying a piece of literature because “images” produce a culture that evolves with every reading (Mangan 193). In stating that the images in literature yield a society that changes with every reading, he asserts that the images writers produce greatly influence readers and future societies. Many early twentieth-century essays and articles are void of criticism about how school textbooks worsen the “promulgation of ethnocentric attitudes of the English and the ‘labeling’ of colonial peoples” (Mangan 193). Mangan includes comparative historical analysis of education about the British colonies in Africa, Asia, and Australia. The author’s collection of essays analyzes curricular policy and chosen textbooks from both the viewpoint of the colonizers and the colonized, “which few work has done up to date” (193). Chapter one, titled “General purpose of Stereotypes as Explanation for Justification of Racial

Inequality,” explains the framework within formal education that idealizes racial prejudice.

Mangan states that “a major purpose of this education was to inoculate the children of the British Empire with appropriate attitudes for dominance and deference” (Mangan 8). In stating that the purpose of education was to “inoculate,” the scholar confirms that the Imperial Curriculum’s purpose was to prevent any tolerance and sense of equality colonizers had with the natives.

Writers fabricated information or exaggerated descriptions of “the other” to impose their political agenda on others and transmit knowledge through theological explanations that linked with imperial and racial theories. The result is that colonizers became empowered and confident while the Burmese and other natives within the British empire remained helpless and disparaged.

Imperialism and colonization were indeed forms of enslavement of peoples in British colonies, yet, very few students are taught such in classroom curriculum. History books are filled with commentaries on the “evils” of twentieth-century leaders like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, but the history of the British Empire somehow seems to be whitewashed to make imperialism acceptable.

Moreover, the legacies of England’s long-lived empire are still taught in high schools and universities without the proper tools to correctly interpret the writings. Teachers need to present novels, especially ones that are canonized such as *Burmese Days*, as instruments of imperialism because the writings do not give the natives and indigenous in the colonies an authentic voice. Instead, the literature of imperialism promotes colonization in foreign lands because the books and novels are written by English men or women that exhibit a British point of view. In the early twentieth century, students were not told that although George Orwell served as a military official in Burma for over five years, his experience did not make him an expert on the people of Burma. One of England’s most well-known figures, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, recently

proposed that “British children should be taught about the histories of the realities of British imperialism and colonialism” because the current curriculum in England does not include “people of color as historical agents” (Heath 1). Corbyn’s statement supports my argument that to teach about British imperialism accurately, educators must treat the voices of the colonized as historical agents. Corbyn further intends to have teachers present history and literature from the perspectives of both the English and peoples of the world the British inhabited. Although I agree with Corbyn that literature of imperialism needs to be taught with different historical points of view, I argue that school curriculums should also include analyses from sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and educational scholars. Most importantly, I insist that the pedagogy is presented through the lens of postcolonial theory, so the voice of the colonized are fairly represented. In history and literature, the voice of the indigenous must be heard.

Conclusion

Through this research paper, I have documented the history of imperialism in Burma and the effects of colonization on the non-Europeans in Burma. More importantly, I have shown how literature about imperialism was only written from an Englishman’s biased point of view. In particular, I exposed how Orwell’s novel *Burmese Days* perpetuated misperceptions of the non-Europeans because the author does not go far enough to show readers the adverse effects of imperialism on the Burmese. Instead, in *Burmese Days*, Orwell focuses on the lives of Anglo-Indians and their ethnocentric conflicts within the confines of the European Club in Kyauktada. When the author does present the Burmese, like U Po Kyin, he is an animated caricature with animal qualities rather than a human being. Moreover, when Orwell presents other non-Europeans, like Dr. Veraswami, he is an overt lover of British imperialism. There are significant

disparities in the way Europeans and non-Europeans are presented in *Burmese Days*; regrettably, these discrepancies create inequitable images of the colonized.

When literature about imperialism is taught in public schools, the discriminatory representations of the natives in the British colonies only teach students that racism is a natural element in history and literature. The power of images in the minds of readers cannot be underestimated because images create opinions in the brain, and biased minds process the opinions. Readers then express their incomplete and erroneous representations of foreign people and their cultures, which can exponentially breed prejudices about non-European people and their societies. The cycle in perpetuating misconceptions about the indigenous in British colonies through the education system must end. Natives in former British colonies must reteach the world about their history which is now a fusion of ancient history and England's history. The education system from kindergarten all the way to colleges and universities is obligated to teach literature about imperialism with historical documents and additional schools of thought to guide readers in holistic learning. If the English exploited the Imperial Curriculum to further the British Empire, then it is the duty of educators everywhere who care about justice to employ strategies to accurately present the voices of the indigenous that have been suppressed for over 600 years.

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