

Volume 2: Chapter 8

Source 8.2

The White Man's Burden versus the Brown Man's Burden

In 1899, Rudyard Kipling published "The White Man's Burden" in the US newspaper The New York Sun to promote US imperialism in the Philippines. Kipling was born in the British colonial city of Bombay in India, and he became a well-known writer of fiction and authored several children's books. In response, Henry Labouchère, an English politician and writer, wrote "The Brown Man's Burden." Both poems were printed side-by-side in the US news magazine The Literary Digest.

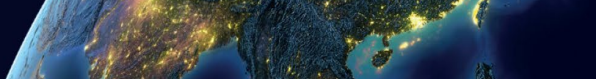
"The White Man's Burden" by Rudyard Kipling

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.

Take up the White Man's burden—
In patience to abide
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain,
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden—
The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden—



No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper—
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go make them with your living,
And mark them with your dead!

Take up the White Man's burden—
And reap his old reward,
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard—
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah slowly!) toward the light—
"Why brought ye us from bondage,
"Our loved Egyptian night?"

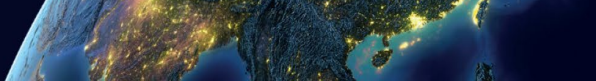
Take up the White Man's burden—
Ye dare not stoop to less—
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloak your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent sullen peoples
Shall weigh your Gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden—
Have done with childish days—
The lightly proffered laurel,
The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years,
Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgement of your peers.

“The Brown Man's Burden” by Henry Labouchère

Pile on the brown man's burden
To gratify your greed;
Go, clear away the "n—s"
Who progress would impede;
Be very stern, for truly
'Tis useless to be mild
With new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.

Pile on the brown man's burden;
And, if ye rouse his hate,
Meet his old-fashioned reasons
With Maxims up to date.



With shells and dumdum bullets
A hundred times made plain
The brown man's loss must ever
Imply the white man's gain.

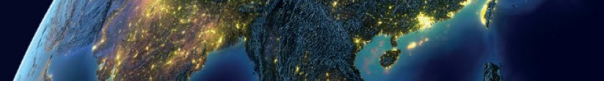
Pile on the brown man's burden,
compel him to be free;
Let all your manifestoes
Reek with philanthropy.
And if with heathen folly
He dares your will dispute,
Then, in the name of freedom,
Don't hesitate to shoot.

Pile on the brown man's burden,
And if his cry be sore,
That surely need not irk you--
Ye've driven slaves before.
Seize on his ports and pastures,
The fields his people tread;
Go make from them your living,
And mark them with his dead.

Pile on the brown man's burden,
Nor do not deem it hard
If you should earn the rancor
Of these ye yearn to guard,
The screaming of your eagle
Will drown the victim's sob—
Go on through fire and slaughter,
There's dollars in the job.

Pile on the brown man's burden,
And through the world proclaim
That ye are Freedom's agent--
There's no more paying game!
And, should your own past history
Straight in your teeth be thrown,
Retort that independence
Is good for whites alone.

Pile on the brown man's burden,
With equity have done;
Weak, antiquated scruples
Their squeamish course have run,
And though 'tis freedom's banner
You're waving in the van,
Reserve for home consumption
The sacred "rights of man"!



Source: “The White Man’s Burden versus the Brown Man’s Burden,” *The Literary Journal*
XVIII, no. 8 (1899): 219.

- How does Rudyard Kipling portray non-white native peoples? According to Kipling, what was the “white man’s burden?”
- How does Henry Labouchère respond to Kipling in “The Brown Man’s Burden”?
- Select a stanza from each poem and interpret its meaning.
- How would you compare both authors’ views of imperialism?