

NAME:

BLOCK:

- CENTRAL HISTORICAL QUESTION(S) -
HOW DID AFRICANS RESPOND TO EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM?

FEATURED BELOW: Photo of the Tirailleurs Senegalais, Africans under imperial French rule, 1915. Over 500,000 African troops served in World War I, constituting a major manpower resource for France. French West Africans fought in every major battle, playing a notable role at Verdun. These soldiers, much like the Sepoys of the British East India Company, worked as soldiers voluntarily.



LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

- 1). **COMPARE** the economic experiences of economic life under European imperialism in Africa
- 2.) **IDENTIFY** the varied African responses to European imperialism

QUICK READ: BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA¹

In South Africa there was a complex mix of peoples - British, Boers (descendants of Dutch settlers from the 1600s) and native African peoples like the Xhosa, the Zulu and the Matabele. The British wanted to control South Africa because it was one of the trade routes to India. However, when gold and diamonds were discovered in the 1860s-1880s their interest in the region increased. This brought them into conflict with the Boers.

The Boers disliked British rule. They wanted a simple farming life. British rule made their country increasingly a country of industry and business. The Boers also felt that the native Africans were inferior and should be treated as slaves. The British insisted that Africans should have rights. Despite this, they fought several wars with African peoples in the 1870s and effectively broke the power of the Zulus.

From this point on, economic life in South Africa changed. Driven by the need for money, by the loss of land adequate to support their families, or sometimes by the orders of colonial authorities, millions of colonial subjects across Africa sought employment in European owned plantations, mines, construction projects and homes.

In the case of British-imperialized South Africa, people migrated to European-owned farms or plantations because they had lost their own land. In the settler colonies of Africa in the later 19th century, permanent European communities, with the help of colonial governments, obtained huge tracts of land, much of which had been previously home to



A rickshaw run by an African in the South African city of Durban around 1900. This is typical of the type of jobs that the majority of black Africans could expect to achieve. There was a small, privileged African class, but their numbers were tiny compared to the mass of ordinary Africans.

¹ Ways of the World: A Global History, Robert W. Strayer, 2009 & <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/empire/g2/cs3/background.htm#bullet4>

African societies. A law in 1913 in South Africa defined 88% of the land belonging to whites, who were then only about 20% of the South African population.

With skilled and highly paid work reserved for white miners or farmers, South Africans were left with largely unskilled labor at a fraction of the wages of the whites. Racially segregated, often unsanitary living conditions, nonetheless, South Africa was seen as a mecca of opportunity for people all across the social spectrum. Traditional elites, absentee landlords, and wealthy businessmen found opportunity as teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and professional specialists, but more often as clerks in European business offices and government bureaucracies. Far more numerous were the construction workers, rickshaw drivers, food sellers, domestic servants, prostitutes and others who made up the urban poor of colonial cities.

1.) How is this account of economic life in the British-imperialized country of South Africa (*ie detailed to the right*) different from what you know about the economic experience for the Congolese people under the direct, imperial control of Belgium?

2.) How might the account of working conditions in South Africa, as described in the excerpt below, be problematic for the British, or any imperial power for that matter?

“The wages of the majority of African workers are too low to enable them to obtain accommodation which is adequate to any standard. The high cost of housing relative to wages is in itself a cause of overcrowding, because housing is shared to lighten the cost. This, which the high cost of food in towns, makes family life impossible for the majority”

SOURCE: British Investigation Committee, 1955.²

² Ways of the World: A Global History, Robert W. Strayer, 2009

PART III: TYPES OF AFRICAN RESPONSE TO EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM

DIRECTIONS: It is important to go beyond the rather well-known history of abuse laid upon the African continent throughout the history of the world and make note of the varied ways in which people of the African continent have resisted imperialism. Additionally, it is also valuable to recognize ways in which people respond to abuse that go beyond basic, direct violence.

Go to these websites: <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-colonization-of-africa.html> & <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-resistance.html>.

On the website, you will encounter information detailing African resistance to European imperialism. Additionally, to the right, you will see a collection of images. Your goal is to read the information and analyze the images (*as many as you feel to be sufficient enough to complete the task at hand*), in order to narrow down the **categories** of African response (*i.e. violent? peaceful? accommodating? etc.*) to European imperialism to three.

So, to be clear, you and your partner(s) are categorizing and title **three** types of African responses to European imperialism. Then, you are explaining which images supports your category.

<p>AFRICAN RESPONSE TO EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM CATEGORY TITLE #1:</p>	<p>AFRICAN RESPONSE TO EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM CATEGORY TITLE #2:</p>	<p>AFRICAN RESPONSE TO EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM CATEGORY TITLE #3:</p>

HOMEWORK

DIRECTIONS: Below are two textbook excerpts and a book review on the story of the attempted Italian imperialism in Ethiopia. Read each excerpt and, to the best of your ability, using the provided information, create a timeline of the landmark events of the story of the attempted Italian imperialism in Ethiopia.

TEXTBOOK 1

Ethiopia was the only African nation that successfully resisted the Europeans. Its victory was due to one man – *Menelik II*. He became emperor of Ethiopia in 1889. He successfully played Italians, French, and British against each other, all of whom were striving to bring Ethiopia into their spheres of influence. In the meantime, he built up a large arsenal of advanced and modern weapons purchased from France and Russia. In 1889, shortly after Menelik had signed a treaty with Italy, he discovered differences between the wording of the treaty in the Ethiopian language and in Italian. Menelik believed he was giving up only a tiny portion of Ethiopia. However, the Italians claimed all of Ethiopia as a protectorate. Meanwhile, the Italian forces were advancing into northern Ethiopia. Menelik declared war. In 1896, in one of the greatest battles in the history of Africa – *the Battle of Adowa* – the advanced Ethiopian military successfully defeated the Italians and kept the nation independent. After the battle, Menelik continued to stockpile rifles and other modern weapons in case another foreign power challenged Ethiopia's liberty.

SOURCE Beck, R. B., Black, L., Krieger, L.S., Naylor, P.C., Shabaka, D.I. (2006) *Modern world history: Patterns of interaction*. McDougal Littell. p. 349. Published in New York, NY.

TEXTBOOK 2

Foreign Relations with Italy

Menelik had very close relations with foreign nations, especially with Italy. The relationship between Italy and Ethiopia began as a friendly one, but it deteriorated after the Treaty of Wuchale was signed between them in 1889. The cause of the conflict was Article XVII of the Wuchale Treaty, which was written differently in Amharic (*ie Ethiopian language*) and Italian. The Amharic version says that Ethiopia could use the services of Italy in her foreign relations with Europe. The Italian version bound Menelik to make all his foreign decisions through Italy. Menelik asked Italy to change the Italian version of Article XVII. Italy refused. As a result, Menelik rejected the entire treaty. Thus, when peaceful methods of trying to occupy Ethiopia failed, the Italian government began preparation to occupy Ethiopia by force. In 1895, the Italians invaded Ethiopia in the north. In the same year, 1895, Menelik declared war on Italy and marched northwards to fight the Italians.

The Battle of Adwa (1896)

The Battle of Adwa was fought in March 1896 between the Ethiopian army commanded by Menelik and the Italian army commanded by General Baratieri. The Italian commander Baratieri started the battle because he was given orders by the Italian prime Minister Crispi to start the war quickly.

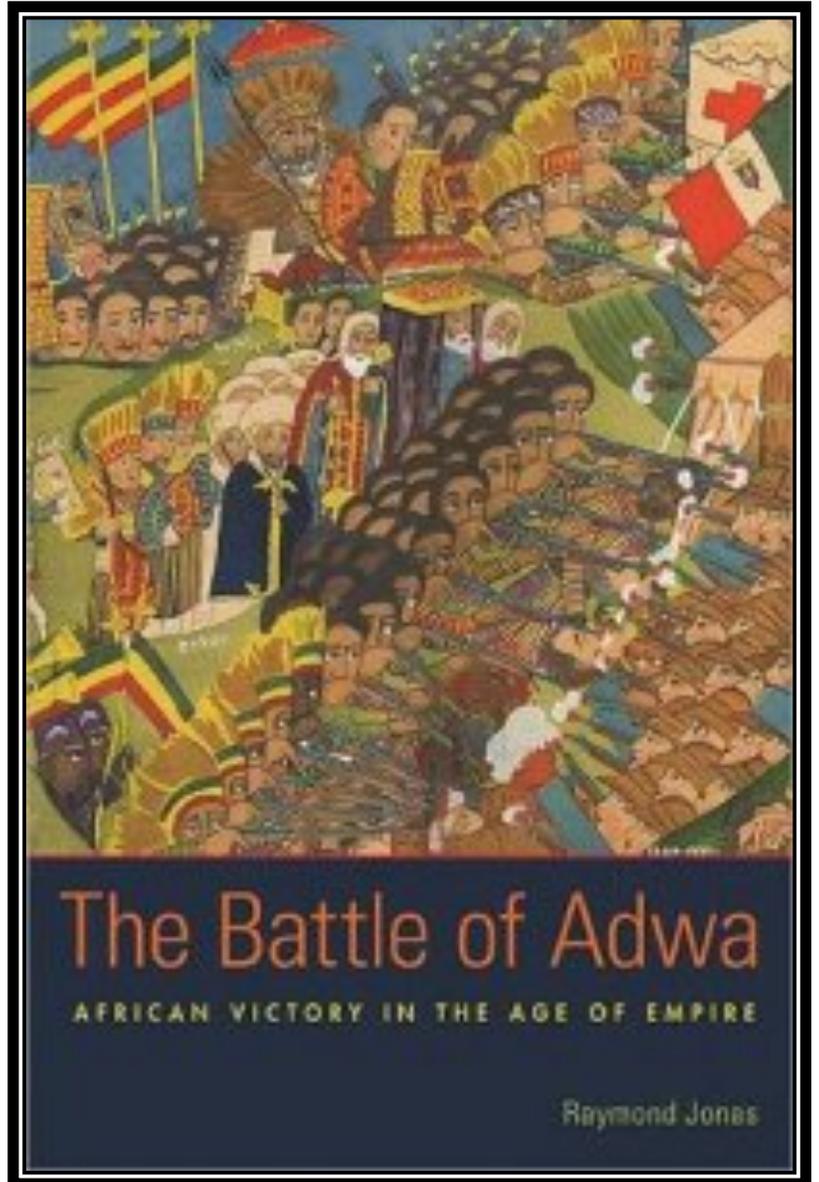
The battle began at dawn on March 1, 1896. The battle lasted for one full day. The result of the battle was unexpected and surprising to the world. With high morale and a united sense of pride in the nation, the ill-trained and not well-armed Ethiopian force defeated the well-trained and well-armed Italian force. Ethiopia was victorious because of her people's high degree of unity, courage and the full support of the people. Non-soldiers supported the Ethiopian army. For example, Ethiopian women supplied water and arms to the fighters. They carried the wounded to camps and encouraged the fighters to fight with great courage.

SOURCE: Mehari, Getachew, Mamo, A., Alemu, T., T'Giorgis, S., & Dissassa, M. (2006). Social studies student textbook: Grade 10. Published in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Educational Materials Production and Distribution Enterprise. p. 86-88

BOOK REVIEW

"This is the story of a world turned upside down." So begins *The Battle of Adwa: African Victory in the Age of Empire*. While no attribution is suggested, it is likely Raymond Jonas had in mind the famous ballad played by the British at their surrender at Yorktown. As much as the victory by the colonials was a rebuke to conventional wisdom so the battle of Adwa was to European attitudes towards Africans during the Age of Imperialism.

The Battle of Adwa in 1896 was the result of Italian encroachments south of their colony of Eritrea on the Red Sea. Though bound by the Treaty of Wichale (1889) to friendship, the Italians and Ethiopians had different opinions about the nature of that friendship. This was the famous "mistranslation" where the Italian treaty indicated Ethiopia would be a protectorate of Italy, while Emperor Menelik II argued no such wording existed in his copy. After the Italians occupied the northern Ethiopian city of Adigrat Menelik summoned his forces and defeated the Italians at the battle of Amba Alage.



In response to this defeat thousands of Italian troops were ferried to Eritrea and, with great pressure from Rome to attack quickly, General Oreste Baratieri advanced and, due to a series of blunders by his subordinate commanders, his force was overwhelmed. Aside from numerous casualties, one mission reported roughly 3,600 dead though the exact number remains unknown, the Ethiopians also captured 1,900 Italians and 1,500 Askari (African soldiers serving in the Italian armed forces). The scope and scale of this victory - the campaign covered more miles than Napoleon's advance into Russia - should rank alongside any European campaign in the 19th century and assured Ethiopia as the only independent nation, apart from Liberia, in Africa at that time.

First, Jonas illustrates the fractured nature of Italian imperialism. As Adwa is held up as a symbol of resistance to colonialism it is ironic that Italy is given the position of imperialist archetype. If any quality typifies Italian colonial efforts it would not be jingoism but apathy. The Italian statesman Marquis d'Azeglio, after Italian unification, commented that "We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians." Italy was divided along religious, political, and regional lines. It was hoped by some, such as Prime Minister Crispi, that imperialism would improve the standing of the Italian government within the nation and across Europe.

But even this small clique of colonialists demanded their aims be accomplished on the cheap. It was just such pressure to win cheaply and quickly that made General Baratieri advance instead of his preferred defensive stand. The concern for cost was tied to the strong anti-colonial movement in Italy, due to having so recently been occupied by Austria, which was distinct in Europe. In response to the first defeat at Amba Alage students from the University of Rome

marched through the street chanting "Viva Menelik!" and after Adwa there were legislative calls to abandon Africa entirely. This domestic scene is important as the willingness of Italy to accept defeat ensured Adwa was an Ethiopian success.

Second, Emperor Menelik II is shown to be a complex and engaging historical figure as well as a crafty politician. Too often heroes lose their humanity in the effort to place them on a pedestal and Jonas does admirable work in fleshing out the reality of Menelik. He documents the complex political web that Menelik had to navigate, and the admirable support he received from his wife Empress Taytu. It is hard not to see this marriage, linking the southern Shoa (Menelik) and northern Tigray (Taytu) regions of Ethiopia, as important as the one between Ferdinand and Isabella in unifying Spain. Jonas illustrates how Menelik slowly solidified his position, even using the Italians to help crush a rival claimant to his throne, and assured that



Ethiopia entered the Battle of Adwa with a stronger domestic commitment to the conflict than his opponents.

Jonas also underscores Menelik's strategic acumen. For example, the Italians occupied the city of Adigat for over a year before Menelik confronted them. Rather than a sign of weakness, as the Italians believed, he used that delay to import European weapons to such an extent that his artillery outclassed those of the Italians. Jonas even offers the intriguing hypothesis that the supposed "mistranslation" of the Treaty of Wichale, the entire basis for the conflict, was a strategic choice.

Jonas suggests that Menelik used his protectorate status to his advantage, such as a loan of four million lire from Italy used to purchase weapons, until his position was strong enough to claim there was a "mistranslation." These include his choices after the battle, such as not invading Eritrea and his care of the Italian prisoners, which preserved his strong negotiating position and assured he did not undo the effort he made in the European press, including a colored lithograph in *Vanity Fair* the 19th century equivalent to a *Time* cover, to foster sympathy for Ethiopia.

Third, Jonas illustrates how Adwa became a symbol for African, and African-American, resistance despite Menelik himself. Menelik saw Adwa as a way to solidify his rule and preserve his independence. The desire to see Ethiopia as a symbol of resistance came from others. Benito Sylvain of Haiti, a pan-African visionary, traveled to Ethiopia in 1904 to help celebrate Haiti's hundredth anniversary of independence. As Haiti was home of the first successful slave revolt, Sylvain saw a kindred spirit in Menelik. Far from finding a receptive audience, Menelik agreed that the "the negro should be uplifted" but noted that he was of little value as he was Caucasian. For a leader who had secured his position with the Dervishes against Italy by appealing to common "blackness" this suggests a malleable definition of race which Menelik would adopt based on his political goals. Much of the symbolism surrounding Adwa came from others, such as W.E.B. DuBois and others in the global African diaspora, after the end of the First World War.

Jonas claims that Adwa served as the model for future anti-colonial efforts. His narrative suggests that other resistance fighters learned lessons from the Ethiopian experience, such as using the press to build public sympathy.

In fact, exposing how the symbolism of Adwa developed far after the battle and divorced from Ethiopian support undercuts so much of the received wisdom that it is hard not to imagine most of the "lessons" are ex post facto rationalizations from other de-colonial conflicts. While he suggests that Adwa "set in motion the long unraveling of European domination of Africa" it is, again, a point the reader must accept on sentiment rather than evidence. Ethiopia was a shock to European self-assurance but was quickly forgotten which is why Europe was, again, shocked by Japanese victory against Russia in 1905.

Whatever the practical lessons Adwa provides, Jonas' book the *Battle of Adwa* documents the figures, both large and small, that took part in such a major turning point in history exceptionally well. His excellent archival work helps the reader see into the decisions made by the leaders, and humanizes the soldiers facing the consequences of these decisions, on both sides and leaves the reader leaves with a rich understanding of the significance of a battle which turned the world upside down.

THE STORY OF ITALY & ETHIOPIA IN THE AGE OF NEW IMPERIALISM

TIMELINE

***your timeline should have at least TEN landmark events*

