Arguments for Empire

Examine the claims used to defend British rule in Egypt

MWH.C.5.3.A "Explain the economic, political, and social justifications supporting imperialist ideology and colonialism ' (e.g., Social Darwinism, economic gain and resources, Christian missions, strategic advantage, and Nationalism)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each reason given for British occupation of Egypt. In the margin, label each reason E for economic, P for political or strategic, or S for social.

Why Did Britain Occupy Egypt?

1. In 1882, Egyptian army officers led a revolt against their ruler and growing European influence. Britain sent troops, defeated the rebels, and occupied Egypt. British leaders pointed to the Suez Canal, opened in 1869, which shortened the sea journey between Europe and Asia. The canal was a vital route to British-ruled India, so officials argued that British forces had to keep it open. They also said occupation would protect European creditors after Egypt's government had borrowed heavily. Egyptians who wanted to control their own government faced a foreign army instead.

2. British textile factories used Egyptian cotton, and British lenders wanted Egypt's debts repaid. Supporters of occupation argued that a stable government would protect trade and investments. They also feared that a rival European power might gain influence over the canal. In British newspapers, some writers treated control of Egypt as a sign of national strength. These arguments served British interests, but they did not show that occupation benefited Egyptians equally. Many Egyptians opposed foreign control over decisions about their government, taxes, and economy.

3. The debate over Egypt also reflected wider imperial ideas. Some Europeans misused ideas about evolution to claim that powerful nations were naturally entitled to rule others. This belief was called Social Darwinism. Some supporters of empire also described spreading Christianity and European schooling as a moral duty. Egypt already had religious and educational traditions, and most Egyptians were Muslim. Such claims could make foreign rule sound helpful while ignoring the wishes of the people being ruled. A justification explains why someone supported an action, but it does not prove that the action was fair.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did British leaders use the Suez Canal to justify occupying Egypt?

2. Explain two economic interests that supporters said occupation would protect.

3. How did some British writers turn control of Egypt into a nationalist argument?

4. How could Social Darwinism and the idea of a Christian mission each be used to justify imperial rule? Why does the passage challenge those claims?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph presenting two viewpoints on British occupation of Egypt. Have a British supporter use an economic reason, a strategic reason, and one social or religious claim; then have an Egyptian critic respond to those claims and explain who gains and who loses power.

ANSWER KEY

Arguments for Empire

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.5.3.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each reason given for British occupation of Egypt. In the margin, label each reason E for economic, P for political or strategic, or S for social. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did British leaders use the Suez Canal to justify occupying Egypt?	**The canal shortened the route to British-ruled India, so leaders argued that troops were needed to keep it open.**
2	Explain two economic interests that supporters said occupation would protect.	**Occupation could protect the supply of Egyptian cotton used by British factories and help British lenders recover money Egypt owed.**
3	How did some British writers turn control of Egypt into a nationalist argument?	**They presented control of Egypt as a sign of Britain's national strength.**
4	How could Social Darwinism and the idea of a Christian mission each be used to justify imperial rule? Why does the passage challenge those claims?	**Social Darwinism claimed powerful nations were entitled to rule others. A Christian mission presented spreading Christianity as a moral duty. The passage notes that Egyptians had their own traditions and wishes, which these claims ignored.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A British supporter might argue that occupation protects cotton trade and keeps the Suez Canal open for ships traveling to India. The supporter might also claim that European schooling would help Egyptians. An Egyptian critic could answer that British factories and officials gain security and control, while Egyptians lose the power to make decisions about their own country. Schools do not require foreign troops, and Egyptians should decide what kind of education they want. Keeping a trade route open does not give Britain the right to govern Egypt.

Accept economic, political or strategic, and social labels when students can explain their choices. In the final paragraph, look for a distinction between a claim used to justify rule and evidence that rule was fair.