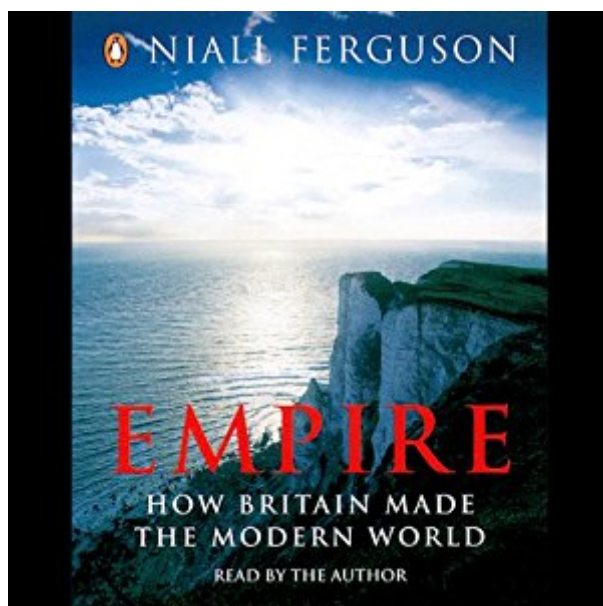


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Empire: The Rise And Demise Of The British World Order



Synopsis

Ferguson's most revolutionary and popular work, this is a major reinterpretation of the British Empire as one of the world's greatest modernising forces. Based on the Channel Four series that will be aired simultaneously with the book, it shows on a vast canvas how the British Empire in the 19th century spearheaded real globalisation with steam power, telegraphs, guns, engineers, missionaries, and millions of settlers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have read a few of Ferguson's book and, for the most part, I found them to be thought-provoking. Ferguson is an original thinker, and even though I don't necessarily see eye to eye with him all the time, I almost always find his interpretations of history to be intriguing. In "Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World," he provides a broad overview of how the greatest Empire which ever existed shaped the world. The main thesis of this book is that it's a mistake to label the British Empire as a force of good or evil in the world. Ferguson shows, fairly convincingly, that the British Empire was both, often at the same time. On the evil side, the British Empire was involved in the slave trade, famines, and the brutal force British soldiers used to suppress the local inhabitants in the colonies. On the other hand, at a later stage, the British Empire used the Royal Navy to put a stop to the slave trade. According to Ferguson, the most important legacy of the British Empire is the establishment of the rule of law, government institutions (the Israeli tax code is based on the British system), free trade, and in some cases, although not in all, the establishment of democracy. I have quite enjoyed this book and found it to be quite educational. I still remain somewhat unconvinced about some of Ferguson's arguments. Prose-wise, the flow of this book is not as good as Ferguson's other books,

which have been true pager turners. Nonetheless, it is an interesting read about the legacy of the British Empire.

I thoroughly enjoyed Professor Ferguson's effort to give us an abbreviated history of the British Empire. He makes some controversial conclusions about the legacy of that empire but he supports these claims in his narrative. The only thing that prevents me giving a 5 star review is the choppy nature of his subject transitions. One moment you are reading about British contributions to winning World War 2 and the next minute Professor Ferguson has fast forwarded to the Suez Crisis of 1956. If you already have a firm grasp of British history this isn't a problem.

I selected this popular history of the British Empire with the evanescent hope that I would learn what are the attributes that allow for an empire to rise and in the case of England to be such a success that the sun never sets on the territory ruled by the Brits. I got a very readable history that begins with Morgan's piracy and follows the accretion of power and wealth to its zenith. Ferguson does deal with the local politics of England that ended with American independence that contained the same arrogance of the US towards Indo China. It would seem that success in Empire when the Brits are compared with the rest of their Euro compatriots stems from not trying to unload Christian Anglican values and religious practices with the manufactured goods sold to the colonials. The sepoy rebellion in India or George Washington's citizen army were most reactive when in the case of sepoy rebellion Cromwell tried to change religious practices and of course for the thirteen colonies the attempt to raise revenue through taxation. Both these practices failed to lengthen the reach or terms of the British Empire. Ferguson finds positive value in the Colonialism of the British Empire and has been attacked for this position. I think the jury may still be out, but it was good to hear a strong defense for empire when current cultural attitudes only inculcate sneering.

Campaigns such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, a call for free decolonized, quality education for all are raging in South Africa. The context provided in this book would serve both proponents and opponents of these campaigns well. Only through learning and better understanding can we hope to create a better future.

My initial exposure to Dr. Ferguson's ideas was through video, not a survey work like Empire, but I dove into his ideas on the basis of my exposure to his television narratives. Not being a historian, I hesitate to be critical of la bonne instructeur on his own turf. However, a few quibbles: His overview

of the restive nature of the American colonialists does not offer the American student of history anything new, and that these revolutionaries were the "richest citizens of the Empire," on a per capital basis, strikes me as dubious. It also seems to me that the book within the book is about Enlightenment/Victorian era rule in India, and Niall might have proved his contention about the basic good of British Imperial rule by staying more or less on this topic, rather than riding the rails to the rise of American power, or throwing out the thumbnail theorem that WW2 was an Allied victory because the British had more territory than the Axis powers did. This is an oversimplification, especially since Nazi Germany brought Britain to her knees. His claim that the Rape of Nanking, as a spectre of Japanese expansive cruelty "being worse than anything the British ever did," seems to be a bit of comparative whining. The historical formation of any classical imperial state, or the nearly modern, as the British Empire was, seems rife with episodic loss of human life that does not need judgment on the basis of killing or starving the indigenous with more or less brutality, and he does gloss over administrative mismanagement of things like the Indian famine, about which I would have liked to learn more; despite these objections, however, Dr. Ferguson's heart hits the right place, and British civilizing virtues win their argument.

I think that I learned quite a bit, but the book is very biased toward the positive elements of the empire and doesn't deal at all with its consequences or how Britain just walked away from the problems that it created.

Love this book. Haven't finished reading it but it's really good so far. I highly recommend it to anyone with an interest in the British Empire

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