TEMA

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The Building and Administration of the British Colonial Empire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. J. Conrad and R. Kipling

Construcción y administración del Imperio colonial británico en los siglos XVIII y XIX. J. Conrad y R. Kipling.

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Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 1883 the Cambridge historian John Robert Seeley published The Expansion of England, a book that sold so well that it was reprinted ten times in the year of its appearance. It contains one of the most famous sentences ever written about British imperial history: "We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind." Was the empire really acquired by accident, or was it the product of trade, war, sea power and calculation? The two writers named in the title, Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, gave opposite literary answers: one saw a moral darkness hidden behind an idea, the other a duty and a destiny.

The topic covers roughly one hundred and fifty years, from the Treaty of Paris of 1763 to the eve of the First World War, so selection is essential. I will first examine how the empire was built, from the settlement of the eighteenth century and the loss of America to the Victorian expansion in Asia, the Pacific and Africa. Secondly, I will analyse how it was administered: the government of India, the settler colonies, the crown colonies, the economic ideas behind it and the ideology that justified it. Thirdly, I will study Joseph Conrad and then Rudyard Kipling, paying attention to their lives, their main works and their attitudes towards imperialism. Finally, I will consider the pedagogical and didactic implications of the topic in Secondary Education and Bachillerato.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the main sources consulted: William Roger Louis (ed.), The Oxford History of the British Empire, published by Oxford University Press from 1998; Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism, first published in 1993; Andrew Sanders, The Short Oxford History of English Literature; and Ronald Carter and John McRae, The Penguin Guide to Literature in English. Dates and texts have been checked against institutional sources such as the US National Archives, the Nobel Prize website, Project Gutenberg and the Kipling Society. The legal framework is Ley Orgánica 3/2020 (LOMLOE), Real Decreto 217/2022, Real Decreto 243/2022 and the Extremaduran Decretos 110/2022 and 109/2022.