



Britain, Colonial India and Gothic Fiction

Aims

- Learn about Britain's Empire and colonial rule in India
- Think about how fiction represents our past
- Analyse how "gothic" writing brings neglected history to life





What is Empire?

- Imperialism a policy of extending your rule over foreign countries
- Colonialism practice of gaining control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.
- "Red on the map"





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Investigating Historical Sources

In pairs look at the sources you have been given

- What do they tell you about Britain's imperial relationship with India?
- Do you learn anything about what Britain gained from India?
- Do you learn anything about opposition to rule in India?

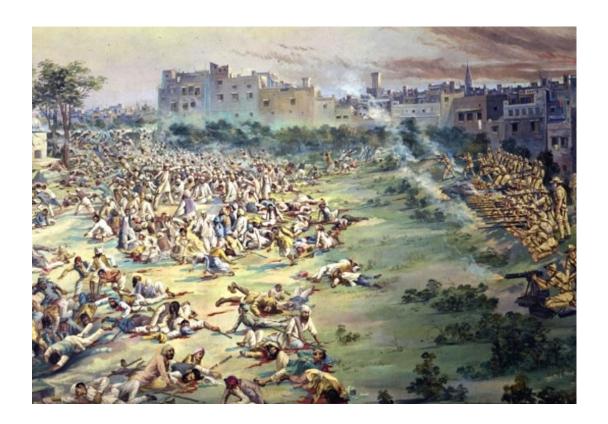
Be prepared to share your findings with the class





The Massacre at Amritsar (1919)

- British troops killed at least 379 unarmed demonstrators at Jallianwalla Bagh.
- Most of those killed were Indian nationalists
- They were protesting the British government's forced conscription of Indian soldiers and the heavy war tax imposed against the Indian people.
- British Brigadier General Reginald Dyer admitted to ordering the attack for its "moral effect" on the people of the region.
- British authorities later removed him from his post.



Draft Version

What is Gothic?

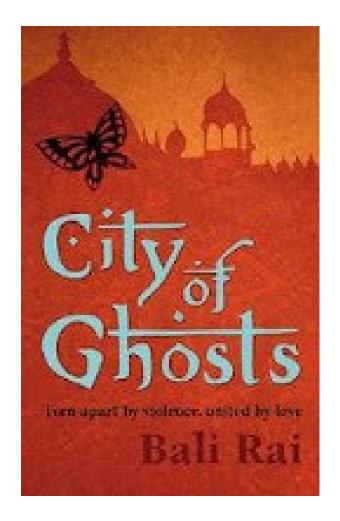
- Some Gothic tropes:
 - ghosts and hauntings
 - Body horror and violence
 - villainy
- The "Gothic effect" (Chris Baldick):
 - "a fearful sense of inheritance in time"
 - "a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space"
 - "descent into disintegration"
- Gothic as a process (Robert Mighall):
 - Eras, institutions, places, and people are "Gothicized"
 - "That which is Gothicized depends on history and the stories it needs to tell itself"





City of Ghosts - Summary

- Set in 1940 and 1919
- Cast of characters caught up in events leading to the massacre at Amritsar
- One of the protagonists (Bissen) suffers from 'shell shock' after serving the British in WW1
- Colonial rulers and British soldiers are depicted as cruel, self-serving villains



Close Reading – Group Activity

- How has Bali Rai represented colonial rule in India?
- Can you identify Gothic elements or Gothic language/imagery?
- What impressions and feelings are created?

Discuss the extract as a group and prepare some key findings to share with the rest of the class.





What do you think?

- What do you think about the history of Britain's colonial rule in India?
- Why is it important to tell these stories about Britain's past?
- How does Gothic help us understand this part of Britain's history?



