

# 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”





**THE WORLD**  
1897  
The British Possessions are coloured Red.

ARCTIC

ARCTIC OCEAN

OCEAN

Beaufort Sea

Greenland Sea

Kara Sea

Taimyr Pen.

Liakof I<sup>s</sup> or New Siberia

Pt. Barrow

Jan. Mayen

North C.

Chelyuskin C.

Wrangel I.

Alaska

DOMINION OF CANADA

Hudson Bay

NEWFOUNDLAND

Iceland

Stockholm

Archangel

Siberia

Arctic Circle

Sea of Okhotsk

St. Lawrence

NORTH AMERICA

UNITED STATES

Channel I<sup>s</sup>

London

Paris

Vienna

Constantinople

Teheran

Calcutta

Tokio

San Francisco

Washington

Bermudas

Madrid

London

Constantinople

Teheran

Calcutta

Shanghai

Tokio

PACIFIC OCEAN

Mexico

West Indies

The Sahara

Carro

Calcutta

Burma

India

Philippine Islands

Japan

PACIFIC OCEAN

Guatemala

Jamaica

Sierra Leone

Lagos

Aden

Calcutta

Burma

Sumatra

Java

PACIFIC OCEAN

Brazil

Ascension I.

St. Helena

Madagascar

India

Sumatra

Java

Philippine Islands

Japan

PACIFIC OCEAN

Valparaiso

Buenos Ayres

Cape Town

Cape Colony

India

Sumatra

Java

Philippine Islands

Japan



# 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 Jallianwala 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.

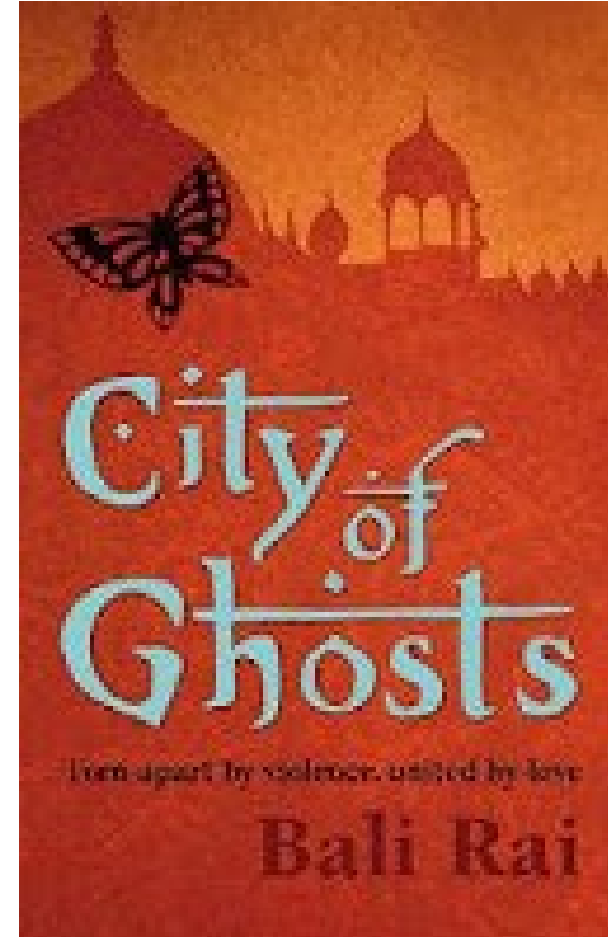


# What is Gothic?

- **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?