Read and annotate the following poem. Remember to look up words that you don’t know. Then, answer the questions that follow.

“White Man’s Burden”

By Rudyard Kipling, 1899

Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden--
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden--
The savage wars of peace--
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden--
No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper--
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go mark them with your living,
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden--
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard--
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:--
"Why brought he us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden--
Ye dare not stoop to less--
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloke your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden--
Have done with childish days--
The lightly proferred laurel,
The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgment of your peers!

Comprehension questions

1. Who is Kipling referring to when he mentions the people who are “half-devil, and half-child”? What do these labels reveal about how Kipling views these people?
2. What do you think Kipling means when he says that white men need to “To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.”?
3. Who are the “heathen”? What is “sloth”? What do these lines reveal about Kiplings’ view of the people White Men should help?
4. What does Kipling say will be the White Man’s reward for “taking up the burden”? Why do you think the White man should do it if this is his reward?
5. Can imperialism be done in a manner that is truly altruistic? (By that, I mean, can one engage in imperialism solely for the benefit of the nation being imperialized?)

6. What are the pros and cons of imperialism? Do the cons outweigh the pros?

Directions: For each of the following statements, find lines from the poem that support that statement. THEN write a sentence explaining how that line supports that statement.

1. Saving African tribes-people from their ungodly ways is something that white men should do.
2. Kipling views African people as unintelligent and animal-like creatures.
3. Kipling views African people as ungrateful for the help from the White Man.
4. Taking up the “White Man’s Burden” will be extremely difficult.

What is the "White Man's Burden?" Why does Kipling regard this as a burden?

2. At the end of the second stanza, Kipling writes "To seek another's profit, and work another's gain." What does this imply about his views of imperialism? Is he correct in this assertion?

3. How does Kipling view those being imperialized? Is he correct in this assumption? Why did many Westerners hold the same belief as Kipling?

4. At the end, Kipling writes (or implies) that those doing the imperializing will most likely not receive any thanks from those who are benefiting (the imperialized nation) and will face the judgment of their peers. If that is the case, why would someone engage in imperialism?

The next few questions ask you to think hypothetically about imperialism in general.

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