



Before you read

Here are some pictorial glimpses of the history of our country from 1757 to 1857. These pictures and 'speech bubbles' will help clarify your understanding of the conditions that led to the event known as the First War of Independence in 1857.

1. The Martyrs

At a function in Delhi



2. The Company's conquests (1757-1849)

With its superior weapons, the British East India Company was extending its power in 18th century India.



INDIA 1765

- Indian Princes
- British Territory

Indian princes were short-sighted.

That upstart Rajah Bah! Call the English merchants. They will help me to defeat him.

The people had no peace due to such constant fights.

The rivalries helped the East India Company and it could easily subdue Indian princes one by one.

A far-seeing ruler like the brave Tipu of Mysore fought the British till he died fighting!

Thank God, there is peace in the country now! No more wars and no looting by thugs!

It is God who sent the British!

Our destiny is linked with them!

How did Indians react to these conquests?

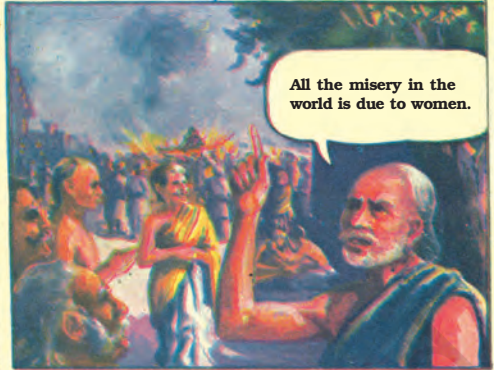
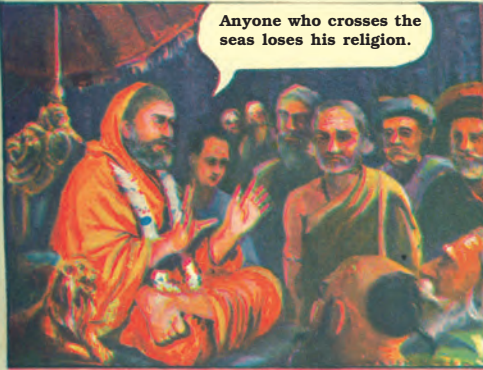
The white man has killed or dethroned our kings.

Some kings were not good, but after all, they were of this land.

Now we have become slaves of foreigners!

3. British Rule (1765-1836)

Religious leaders preached ideas like untouchability and child marriage.



The truth was that Indians had lost self-respect. The British scorned them.



Being merchants, the British wanted quick profits, their heavy taxes forced farmers to abandon their fields.



Still, the British invented other methods which gave them more profits.



Inevitably famines followed. Between 1822 and 1836 fifteen lakh Indians died of starvation.



4. Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)

Ram Mohan Roy, a learned man from Bengal, understood what was wrong with the country.

Let us not despise ourselves, our ancient culture is great. And we are capable of greater achievements. We must first reform our society. Superstitions have been ruining us.

He told his wife Uma-

Cows are of different colours, but the colour of their milk is the same. Different teachers have different opinions but the essence of every religion is the same.

He was attracted by science and modern knowledge.

Knowledge should be practical and scientific.

He crossed the seas and went to England to see what made the British powerful. There he told them-

We accept you as rulers, and you must accept us as subjects. But you must remember the responsibility a ruler owes to his subjects.

He started newspapers but the suspicious British stopped them in 1823.

5. Oppression (1765-1835)

But the British continued to oppress Indians. In 1818, they had passed Regulation III. Under it, an Indian could be jailed without trial in a court.



All the time British officers in India drew big salaries and also made fortunes in private business.



By 1829, Britain was exporting British goods worth seven crore rupees to India.



Governor-General Bentinck reported back home -

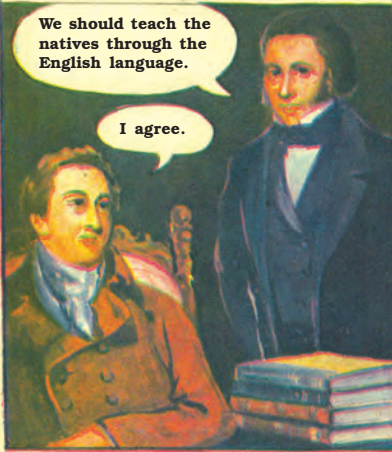
The British prospered on the Company's loot while Indian industries began to die.

"The bones of cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."



6. Dissatisfaction (1835-56)

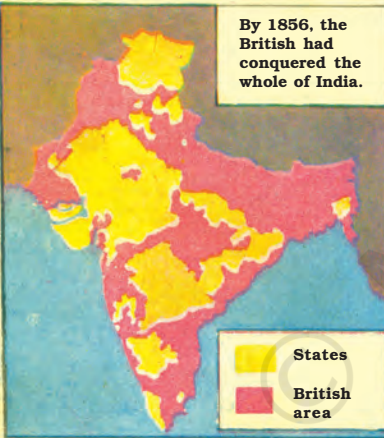
Education in India was in Persian and Sanskrit. In 1835, an Englishman named Macaulay suggested a change.



English education produced clerks to whom the British gave petty jobs under them. Incidentally, it also produced a new generation of intellectuals.



By 1856, the British had conquered the whole of India.



They cared little about the needs of Indians.



7. The Sparks (1855-57)

Taxes continued to ruin the peasants. In Bengal, the Santhals who had lost their lands under new land rules, became desperate. In 1855, they rose in rebellion and massacred Europeans and their supporters alike.

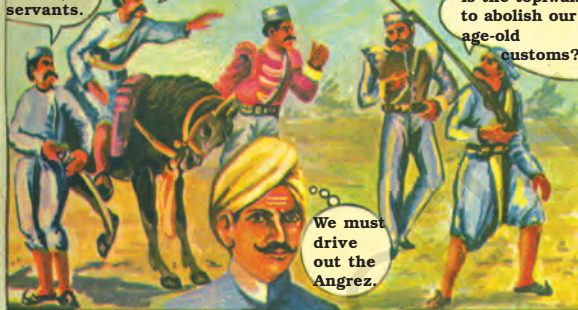


Discontent was brewing in the East India Company's army too.

The white soldier gets huge pay, mansions to live in, servants.

While we get a pittance and slow promotions!

The Angrez asks us to cross the sea which is against our religion. Who is the topiwala to abolish our age-old customs?



We must drive out the Angrez.

Sepoy Mangal Pande attacked the adjutant of his regiment and was executed.

Thousands of other sepoys revolted. They were stripped of their uniforms,



humiliated and put in irons.

Few Englishmen had cared to understand Indian customs or the people's mind.

Oh, proud Brahmin soldiers, do you know that the grease on the bullet you have to bite is made from the fat of cows and pigs?

What?

The white man has deceived us too!



Soon, chapaties were sent from village to village to tell the people that their emperor would want their services.



Yes, all my village men will be ready

Similarly lotus flowers circulated among Indian soldiers.

Death to the foreigner!



The masses gave all help and shelter to the patriots.

8. Revolt (1857)

Then there was a violent outbreak at Meerut.



The sepoys marched to Delhi.



The rebellion spread wider.



Many landlords had lost their lands because of the British policies, and they were sore.



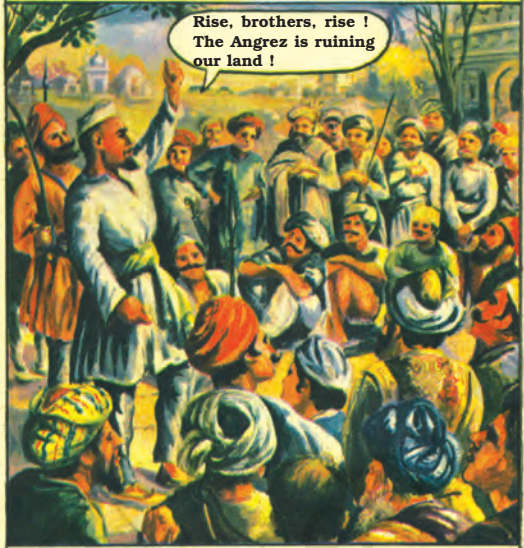
9. The Fight for Freedom (1857)

Many former rulers like Begum Hazrat Mahal of Lucknow were bitter.



They joined the upsurge against the foreigner.

Popular leaders like Maulvi Ahmedulla of Faizabad told the people -



The people rose everywhere, in Bareilly, Kanpur and Allahabad.

Azimulla Khan told Tatya Tope

We should have Peshwa Nana Saheb as our leader in this war of independence



The patriots pounced upon the British and fought pitched battles all over North India.

Eighty-year old Kunwar Singh of Bihar received a bullet in his wrist.



from *Our Freedom Movement*
S.D. SAWANT

Comprehension Check

1. Look at picture 1 and recall the opening lines of the original song in Hindi. Who is the singer? Who else do you see in this picture?
2. In picture 2 what do you understand by the Company's "superior weapons"?
3. Who is an artisan? Why do you think the artisans suffered? (picture 3)
4. Which picture, according to you, reveals the first sparks of the fire of revolt?

working with the text

Answer the following questions.

1. Do you think the Indian princes were short-sighted in their approach to the events of 1757?
2. How did the East India Company subdue the Indian princes?
3. Quote the words used by Ram Mohan Roy to say that every religion teaches the same principles.
4. In what ways did the British officers exploit Indians?
5. Name these people.
 - (i) The ruler who fought pitched battles against the British and died fighting.
 - (ii) The person who wanted to reform the society.
 - (iii) The person who recommended the introduction of English education in India.
 - (iv) Two popular leaders who led the revolt (Choices may vary.)
6. Mention the following.
 - (i) Two examples of social practices prevailing then.
 - (ii) Two oppressive policies of the British.
 - (iii) Two ways in which common people suffered.
 - (iv) Four reasons for the discontent that led to the 1857 War of Independence.

working with language

In comics what the characters speak is put in bubbles. This is direct narration. When we report what the characters speak, we use the method of indirect narration.

Study these examples.

First farmer: Why are your men taking away the entire crop?

Second farmer: Your men have taken away everything.

Officer: You are still in arrears. If you don't pay tax next week, I'll send you to jail.

- The first farmer asked the officer why his men were taking away the entire crop.
- The second farmer said that their men had taken away everything.
- The officer replied that they were still in arrears and warned them that if they did not pay tax the following week, he (the officer) would send them (the farmers) to jail.

1. Change the following sentences into indirect speech.

(i) *First man:* We must educate our brothers.

Second man: And try to improve their material conditions.

Third man: For that we must convey our grievances to the British Parliament.

The first man said that _____

The second man added that _____

The third man suggested that _____

(ii) *First soldier:* The white soldier gets huge pay, mansions and servants.

Second soldier: We get a pittance and slow promotions.

Third soldier: Who are the British to abolish our customs?

The first soldier said that _____

The second soldier remarked that _____

The third soldier asked _____

speaking and writing

1. Playact the role of farmers who have grievances against the policies of the government. Rewrite their 'speech bubbles' in dialogue form first.

2. Look at the pictures.



Fox accidentally falls into a well



“How do I get out of here?”



“Hello! Is this water sweet?”





“Too sweet! I’ve had so much, I might faint.”



“Let me taste it.”



“Thanks for the help. Come out when you can.”



“My mother used to say: Be careful how you take the advice of people you don’t know.”

(i) Ask one another questions about the pictures.

- Where is the fox?
- What is the fox thinking?
- What does she want to know?
- What happens next?
- Where is the fox now?
- How did it happen?
- Who is the visitor?
- What is the fox’s reply?
- Where is the goat?
- What is the goat thinking?

(ii) Write the story in your own words. Give it a title.

3. Read the following news item.

History becomes fun at this school

Mumbai: Students in the sixth grade of a certain school in Navi Mumbai love their history lessons thanks to a novel teaching aid. It is not surprising given the fact that their study material includes comic books and they use their textbooks for reference to put things into perspective. Besides, students are encouraged to tap other sources of information as well. During history classes, students pore over comic strips of historical periods, enact characters of emperors and tyrants, and have animated discussions on the subject. History has become fun.

In the class students are asked to read the comic strip aloud, after which they break up into groups of four, discuss what they have heard and write a summary. Each group leader reads his group's summary aloud and the whole class jumps into discussion and debate, adding points, disagreeing and qualifying points of view. A sixth grade student says, "It's a lot of fun because everyone gets a chance to express themselves and the summary takes everyone's ideas into account."

According to the school principal the comic strip format and visuals appeal to students. A historian feels that using comics in schools is a great idea. Comics and acting help students understand what characters in the story are actually thinking.

(adapted from *The Times of India*, New Delhi, October 2007)

Based on this news item, write a paragraph on what you think about this new method of teaching history.

4. Find the chapters in your history book that correspond to the episodes and events described in this comic. Note how the information contained in a few chapters of history has been condensed to a few pages with the help of pictures and 'speech bubbles'.
5. Create a comic of your own using this story.

Once the Sun and the Wind began to quarrel, each one saying that he was stronger than the other. At last they decided to test each other's strength. A man with a cloak around his shoulders was passing by. The Wind boasted, "Using my strength I can make that man take off the cloak." The Sun agreed. The Wind blew hard. The man felt so cold that he clasped his cloak round his body as tightly as possible.

Now it was the turn of the Sun which shone very hot indeed. The man felt so hot that he at once removed the cloak from his body. Seeing the man taking off the cloak, the Wind conceded defeat.

Glimpses of the Past

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Macavity : The Mystery Cat

Do you have a pet cat? Have you ever noticed anything mysterious about it? It is not easy to say whether every cat is a mystery, but Macavity is one, for sure. What is it that makes him a perfect mystery cat? Read the poem and find out.

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw —

For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.

He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:

For when they reach the scene of crime — Macavity's not there!



Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,

He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.

His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,

And when you reach the scene of crime — Macavity's not there!

You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air —

But I tell you once and once again, Macavity's not there!

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;

You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.

His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed;

His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.
He sways his head from side to side, with movements
like a snake;
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in
the square —
But when a crime's discovered, then Macavity's not there!

T.S. ELIOT

glossary

defy: disobey or resist openly

Scotland Yard: the headquarters of the London police force

Flying Squad: a group of police or soldiers ready to move into action quickly

levitation: floating in the air without support

fiend: devil

feline: of, or relating to, a cat

depravity: moral corruption

working with the poem

1. Read the first stanza and think.
 - (i) Is Macavity a cat really?
 - (ii) If not, who can Macavity be?
2. Complete the following sentences.
 - (i) A master criminal is one who _____
 - (ii) The Scotland Yard is baffled because _____
 - (iii) _____ because Macavity moves much faster than them.
3. "A cat, I am sure, could walk on a cloud without coming through".
(Jules Verne)

Which law is Macavity breaking in the light of the comment above?

4. Read stanza 3, and then, describe Macavity in two or three sentences of your own.
5. Say 'False' or 'True' for each of the following statements.
 - (i) Macavity is not an ordinary cat.
 - (ii) Macavity cannot do what a *fakir* can easily do.
 - (iii) Macavity has supernatural powers.
 - (iv) Macavity is well-dressed, smart and bright.
 - (v) Macavity is a spy, a trickster and a criminal, all rolled in one.
6. Having read the poem, try to guess whether the poet is fond of cats. If so, why does he call Macavity a fiend and monster?
7. Has the poet used exaggeration for special effect? Find a few examples of it and read those lines aloud.

Rick: What did Papa Firefly tell Mama Firefly?

Hick: I don't know.

Rick: Isn't our child bright for his age!

Mary: Why isn't a nose twelve inches long?

Jo: I don't know. Why?

Mary: Because if it was twelve inches long it would be a foot.

Anita: I got a hundred in school today.

Mother: That's wonderful. What did you get a hundred in?

Anita: Forty in Maths and sixty in English.