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Modern History Sourcebook: Rudyard Kipling, The White Man's Burden, 1899

This famous poem, written by Britain's imperial poet, was a response to the American take over of the Phillipines after the Spanish-American War.

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,

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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 proffered 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!

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