



The History of English in Ten Minutes

English and Empire

Narrator:

With English making its name as the language of science, the Bible and Shakespeare, Britain decided to take it on tour.

Asking only for land, wealth, natural resources, total obedience to the crown and a few local words in return.

They went to the Caribbean looking for gold and a chance to really unwind – discovering the ‘barbeque’, the ‘canoe’ and a pretty good recipe for rum punch. They also brought back the word ‘cannibal’ to make their trip sound more exciting.

In India there was something for everyone. ‘Yoga’ – to help you stay in shape, while pretending to be spiritual. If that didn’t work there was the ‘cummerbund’ to hide a paunch and - if you couldn’t even make it up the stairs without turning ‘crimson’ – they had the ‘bungalow’.

Meanwhile in Africa they picked up words like ‘voodoo’ and ‘zombie’ – kicking off the teen horror film – and even more terrifying, they brought home the world’s two most annoying musical instruments – the ‘bongo’ and the ‘banjo’.

From Australia, English took the words ‘nugget’, ‘boomerang’ and ‘walkabout’ - and in fact the whole concept of chain pubs.

Between toppling Napoleon (1815) and the first World War (1914), the British Empire gobbled up around 10 millions square miles, 400 million people and nearly a hundred thousand gin and tonics, leaving new varieties of English to develop all over the globe.