

The cradle of civilization history essay



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While the cradle of civilization may have been in the Fertile Crescent, the birth of humanity laid in the heart of Africa. After the Diaspora of human beings around the world, people began to gradually forget about Africa as civilizations began to materialize. Up until the 18th century in fact, the area was largely serene, impervious of the perils of the humanity. When Imperialism began in nations, Africa was the final frontier. No one knew Africa. No one knew but those in Africa itself. This led to many explorers as they set out in the uninhabited jungles of Africa, touching on land their ancestors escaped from thousands of years before. Soon, Africa was divided up between many of the imperial powers. Each nation took their part. England with their superior status at the time took the most land. South Africa, which after conquest became English, soon had a major role in the affairs of imperialism. One man, Cecil Rhodes, and his vast fortune which continues to affect the world today, played the crucial role of leading England down the path of glory and wealth.

Cecil Rhodes was born on the 5th of July 1853 in England to a priest of the Church of England, Francis William Rhodes. His mother described him as a quiet boy, solitary, and constantly pondering alone. Despite this, he was his mothers favorite out of her many kids (13). Cecil Rhodes grew up different from the kids around him. He was also a sickly child, troubled with problems in his lungs (1). After attending a grammar school nearby, he was sent to his brother who had immigrated to Natal. Rhodes' parents were hoping that the pleasant weather would ease the lung problems.

In Natal, he joined his brother Herbert on a cotton farm. He came with three thousand pounds from his aunt (1). In the early 1870's, the brothers staked a

claim in the newly opened Kimberley diamond fields (2). At this time, “diamond fever” swept through the region. Many British hopefuls saw promises of fame and fortune in the land. Colonial Commissioners put Kimberley under the control of the Cape Governor. This brought more British hopefuls to this land.

To recuperate from a heart attack in 1872, Cecil Rhodes heads out on a trek to the north by ox wagon. However, he also wanted to search for gold prospects out in the wild, new ventures which he can access and acquire (1). It inspired a love in wild in Rhodes, he was becoming attached to the wild in which he lived and gain a profit in. This would prove helpful for him later on when he starts to expand his economic empire. When he treks through the Transvaal and Botswana, he suddenly envisions an Africa colored a British red, land connecting from Cape Town to Cairo. This idea drove him forward and changed his beliefs towards what he was accomplishing. He felt the need, as an Englishman with power, to benefit his home country as much as possible.

However, his ideology quickly developed into racism. Cecil Rhodes was often quoted saying racist remarks, especially towards those who were black. He also had the perception that white Anglo-Saxon race was superior to all, most loved by God. This greatly influenced his political career and his actions during his time as prime minister. “Africa is still lying ready for us it is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race more of the best the most human, most honorable race the world possesses.” (7). As this quote

and the many more he said, it is evident that Cecil Rhodes had an imperialistic view on his job. Cecil Rhodes was doing all that he had done partially for Great Britain.

To Cecil Rhodes, the blacks were an inferior race, an obstacle to the goal he was trying to accomplish. They lived on the land he wanted and occupied areas which were rich in resources. He put in effect the country's first black reserve in the eastern Glen Grey district. Each family was allowed to have 3.2 hectares of land which they were unable to sell and the only relatives that could inherit the land were the eldest sons in each family (7). Also, they were forced to pay hut taxes and men who could not find jobs outside of the reserve within a year were forced to pay a labor tax. These were all put in effect while he was administering the colony. With the laws he set up, he was able to move many black people away from the valuable land into unwanted land, thus maximizing his profit.

The Colony which Cecil Rhodes administered was made up of three major groups. At the top of the social ladder were the British men and women. The British seized the land of South Africa once in 1795, handed it back to the Dutch and finally permanently seized it in 1815 (20). They exhibited little interest in the area until diamonds were found. After that, many fortune seekers immigrated to South Africa. The Boers were another group of people. Boers were the descendants of the northern European people who settled in the cape area in the late 17th century (21). They slowly became an agrarian based society and the majority of Boers in Cecil Rhodes' time were farmers. The bottom of the social ladder were the blacks. Even after being emancipated from slavery, the white people always looked down on the

blacks (10). Politically, Blacks were also inferior as they did not have as many rights as the whites did. They mostly worked in low paying labour jobs and were paid very minimally (9).

Blacks in the Cape Colony were routinely experiencing visible racism from both British and Boers.