**THE BRITISH EMPIRE**

In the 19th century Great Britain reached its biggest glory and power. Thanks to Industrial Revolution The United Kingdom improved the agricultural productivity, its economy but also favoured the expansion of territories and colonies. In the last decade of the 19th century Great Britain occupied an area of 4 million square miles, a quarter of the lands above sea-levels. Colonies were present in every continent : Europe, America , Asia and Oceania. Some of the conquered territories and states were Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Hong Kong: that is the reason why the population who lives there speaks English. The creation of the Suez canal favoured the trade to Asia and improved its territorial power in Africa; Sudan,Somalia Uganda passed quickly under the control of Great Britain. The expansionistic policy started at the end of the 13th century in Europe but it was only during the reign of Elisabeth I that Great Britain started to conquer part of America and Asia.

1877 was an important day for England’s history because Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India. In this was India passed officially under the direct rule of Great Britain and it will remain till 1947. When she died the Title continued to his son Edward VII who became “Emperor of India”.

The expansionistic policy was justified as the “the white man’s burden ” according to which Europeans , in particular white men, had to conquest all the territories and rule over the other populations considered inferior . British Empire ruled over 400 million people who were considered barbarians and primitives. Therefore there wasn’t just a physical difference but also an intellectual and cultural one . That’s why Britains brought their way of life, institutions, laws and politics on native peoples.

**CHARLES DARWIN AND EVOLUTION**

As we have already said in the previous lines, the 19th century was an age of great discoveries and progress. One of the theories that had revolutionised the way of thinking and that changed the Christians idea about the natural evolution was Charles Darwin’s book “On the origin of Species”. His idea about natural selection discarded the version of the Bible according to which all the living creatures were created by God and didn’t change in time . Darwin thought that all living creatures have taken their forms through a process of change and adaptation in a struggle for survival. Animals, plants and men had to adapt themselves to the habitats where they lived. But we have to say that Darwin was not the first one to make connections between the man and the monkeys because of their physical aspects. His theory scandalised the public opinion , some of the scientists found the answer to their questions, on the other hand, in particular religious fanatics, accused Darwin of heresy. On the contrary how Reverend Charles Kingsley accepted with enthusiasm Darwin’s theory because it explained God’s ruling method. Darwin’s intuitions and thinking favoured scientific researches and many of them started excavations which brought to surface many fossils. Economist instead used his idea to justify social and living conditions of the population. Economic competition was the same as natural selection: poor sans oppressed did not deserve compassion.

In the extract taken from his book “ The Descent of Man” Darwin affirms that man descended from barbarians. After a long study on Fuegian, indigenous inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of South America, Darwin make some suppositions about the way of living of man’s ancestors. They were probably naked and communicated only with signs and body language. They used to live in clans ruled by just one person and, just like animals, used to protect their territory with violence and terror. They probably used to make human or animal sacrifices and haunted animals with arrows and lances. It is interesting what Darwin affirms, today’s population is very similar in some aspects to our descendants even if living conditions are different and even if we have learnt to speak.