Primary Source:
*"The White Man's Burden" (1899)**

Introduction

In February 1899, British novelist and poet Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem entitled "The White Man's Burden: The United States and The Philippine Islands." In this poem, Kipling urged the U.S. to take up the "burden" of empire, as had Britain and other European nations. Published in the February 1899 issue of *McClure's Magazine*, the poem coincided with the beginning of the Philippine-American War and U.S. Senate ratification of the treaty that placed Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippines under American control. Theodore Roosevelt, soon to become vice-president and then president, copied the poem and sent it to his friend, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, commenting that it was "rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansion point of view." Not everyone was as favorably impressed as Roosevelt. The racialized notion of the "White Man's burden" became a euphemism for imperialism, and many anti-imperialists used the phrase the frame critiques of the system. Henry Labouchère's poem "The Brown Man's Burden" and Lulu Baxter Guy's "The Black Man's Burden," exemplify this tactic.

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*Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden: The United States & The Philippine Islands, 1899," *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition, 1855–1918* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1919), 371–72.

Map of the British Empire in red, 1850

Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" (1899)

Portrait of Rudyard Kipling, 1895

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
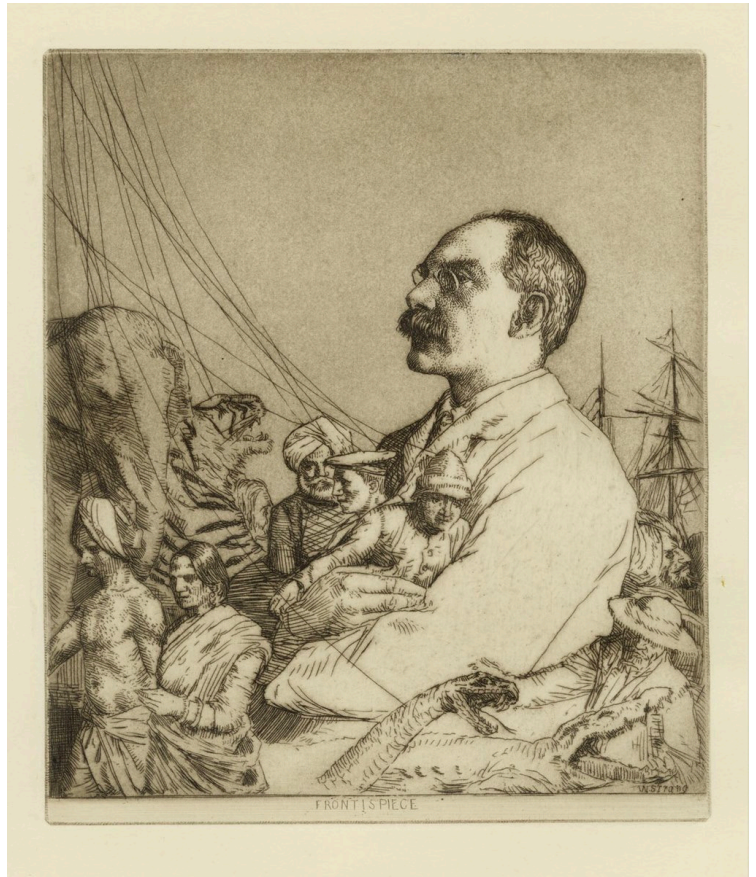To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

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,
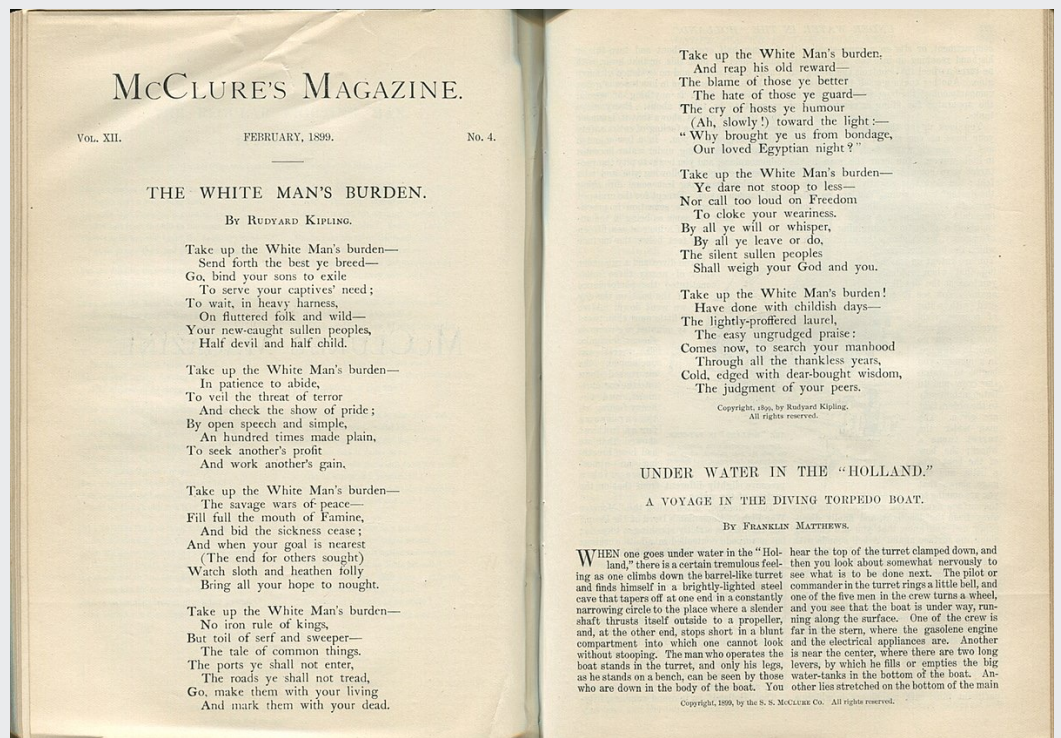Go mark them with your living,
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden—
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
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!

Etching depicting Rudyard Kipling, by William Strang, 1901

Original publication of Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden," in McClure's Magazine, February, 1899 (Vol. XII, No. 4)

Image Citations:

Page 1:
Portrait of Rudyard Kipling, by John Collier, 1891,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Collier_1891_rudyard-kipling.jpg

Page 2:
British Empire throughout the world exhibited in one view, by John Baartholomew, 1850, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C., Public Domain, https://lccn.loc.gov/98687124
Portrait of Rudyard Kipling, June 15, 1895, by Ellion & Fry, Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rudyard_Kipling_(portrait).jpg

Page 3:
William Strang, Rudyard Kipling, in Thirty etchings, illustrating subjects from the writings of Rudyard Kipling (London: Macmillan and Co.,, 1901), Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Strang_The_author_Rudyard_Kipling.jpg
Original publication of Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden." McClure's Magazine, February, 1899 (Vol. XII, No. 4), Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Original_publication_of_The_White_Man%E2%80%99s_Burden.jpg