**Passage 1**

**The Rise of the British Empire**

The British Empire did not appear all at once. It grew over hundreds of years, starting in the late 1500s and expanding rapidly between the 1600s and the 1800s. At first, it was about trade, exploration, and competition with other European powers like Spain, France, and the Netherlands.

In the time of Queen Elizabeth I, English sailors such as Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh explored new lands and claimed territory. England began to set up colonies—starting with Jamestown in North America in 1607. Soon after, Britain established colonies in the Caribbean and later in parts of Africa and Asia.

Trade played a key role in Britain’s rise. Goods like sugar, tea, cotton, and spices were in high demand, and British merchants made huge profits from shipping these products across the world. The East India Company, a powerful trading company, became especially important in India. Over time, it didn’t just trade—it ruled. The company controlled large parts of India until the British government took over in the mid-1800s.

Another reason for Britain’s growing empire was its naval power. Britain had the strongest navy in the world, which allowed it to protect trade routes and defeat rivals. During the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), Britain gained even more land, including Canada and important parts of India.

By the 1800s, Britain had become the world’s largest empire. Its motto seemed to be “trade, ships, and colonies.” But this power came with problems. Some people in the colonies were treated unfairly or cruelly. Others lost their land and freedom. Over time, many began to resist British rule.

Still, for many years, the British Empire was a symbol of wealth, control, and pride for many British citizens. It shaped much of the modern world—and left a complex legacy that we still study today.

**Please Answer the following questions in your own words.**

1. When did the British Empire begin to grow?
2. What was the main goal of the British Empire in its early years?
3. What was the role of the East India Company in building the empire?
4. How did Britain’s navy help the empire expand?
5. What problems or conflicts started to appear as the empire got bigger?

**Passage 2**

**A Changing World and the End of Empires**

In the early 20th century, many European countries still ruled over large overseas empires. Britain, for example, controlled lands across Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and beyond. Its empire was so vast that people used to say, “the sun never sets on the British Empire.” But that was about to change.

This kind of rule over other lands is called imperialism—when a powerful country controls weaker regions for its own benefit, often by force or through economic power. For a long time, imperialism was seen by many in Britain as a sign of greatness and pride. But in the 20th century, that idea began to be questioned.

World War II played a major role in this transformation. The war left Britain deeply in debt and its economy damaged. The British people were tired, and rebuilding the country became the top priority. Meanwhile, the people living in colonies had also fought in the war—and many began demanding freedom. In India, strong independence movements led by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi showed the world that empires could be challenged peacefully. Other colonies, in Africa and the Caribbean, began to follow.

At the same time, the world’s attitude toward imperialism was changing. After the horrors of war, more people believed in human rights and equality. Holding on to colonies began to seem unfair, even shameful, to many. The newly formed United Nations encouraged self-determination—the idea that people should choose their own governments.

By the 1960s, Britain had lost most of its empire. This was not just a political or economic change—it also affected how the British people saw themselves. Without an empire, what did it mean to be British?

As for Britain’s role on the world stage, it was no longer a global superpower. The United States and the Soviet Union took on that role after World War II. Britain had to find a new way to stay important.

**Please Answer the following questions in your own words.**

1. Why did global attitudes toward imperialism change after World War II?
2. How did World War II weaken Britain’s ability to maintain its empire?
3. How did World War II influence people living in British colonies, and what role did India play in inspiring other independence movements?