

- 1492: Columbus discovered America
- 1497: Vasco de Gama discovered a route to Asia
- 1607: Sir Walter Raleigh discovered Virginia
- 1770: James Cook discovered New Zealand
- Private companies (supported by the government) set up trading post.
- The colonies provided Britain with raw materials, such as cotton, sugar, spices, oil, fruit and tobacco
- After the Reformation: The Protestant Church of England (Puritans and Catholics) emigrated to escape religious persecution
- 1775 - 1783: In the American War of Independence: Britain lost 13 colonies