

# Who 'decolonised' in the twentieth century?

Enquiry: Who 'decolonised' in the twentieth century?

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# **‘Decolonising’ the British Empire**

Throughout the twentieth century the British government faced a series of protests and rebellions throughout the British Empire against British rule. Decolonisation began.

Decolonisation was complex. It was sparked by a range of factors. Britain’s economy weakened after WWI and WWII, making empire costly. Nationalist movements pushed for independence and having an empire increasingly damaged Britain’s international reputation.



# Ireland

Ireland was one of the first British colonies. It was also one of the first to become independent. Ireland became independent through violent means. Nationalists took part in the Easter Rising of 1916 and then the war of Independence.

Many of the leaders of the Easter Rising were educated and some held **Marxist** views believing in the rights of workers. After independence veterans of the war of Independence came to lead the Republic of Ireland.



# Ghana

Ghana had been a British colony called the Gold Coast since 1821. By the end of WWII, the Gold Coast was home to a very educated, nationalist population of which men like Kwame Nkrumah was part of.

These men were inspired by the events in Ireland, as well as India's independence (1947), to push for their own. The shooting of unarmed WWII veterans in 1948 helped make nationalism popular. Kwame Nkrumah's nationalist Convention People's party became the most popular party in the Gold Coast.

In the 1950s Kwame Nkrumah became the Prime Minister of the Gold Coast before becoming the president of independent Ghana in 1957.



# Jamaica

Jamaica's nationalist movement was tied to its labour movement. Outbreaks of protests and strikes against low wages and working conditions broke out in 1938. In the same year the People's National Party was established.

The People's National Party and Jamaica Labour Party became the two main parties of the island. Their leaders worked to increase Jamaican self-government through the law from 1944 onward. Jamaica became independent in 1962.



# Glossary

Activist - A person who campaigns to bring about political change.

Labour - Work! Labour parties often focus on the rights of workers.

Nationalism - A person who believes in the rights to control your own country.

Marxism - Marxists believe in the theories of Karl Marx. Marx believed the state should own all businesses and share the wealth.

Pan-African - A belief that all of the peoples of Africa should work together.

Referendum - A vote on a key decision.

Trade Unions - Organised groups of workers who campaigned for better conditions and rights.

Trade Unionist - A person involved in trade unions.

Universal Suffrage - When all have the right to vote.



# Comprehension Task

1. Using a table note down similarities and differences between the processes of decolonisation in Ireland, Ghana and Jamaica.

Similarities	Differences
Nationalism...	

2. Challenge: Can we define 'decolonisation' as a single process or journey that every colony went through?

*It is difficult to come up with a single way of describing the process of decolonisation...*

