**Hunting, the Wilderness, and Imperialism**

0.2 - About this Module for Students

**Introduction**

This module explores the ways humans hunted, poached, and preserved wildlife during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It focuses primarily on imperial case studies in Britain, India, eastern Africa, and the United States. In all these instances, the ruling elites were the ones to define what were “appropriate” methods and practices of hunting. They then used those definitions to deny colonized subjects and the rural poor access to wildlife and wild spaces. Typically, it was also the elite class that commissioned paintings, took photographs, and wrote memoirs documenting their hunting experiences. This means that our historical understanding about the wilderness, animals, and hunting only comes from a small group of people.

By the end of the module, we will be able to historicize the idea of “wilderness” as it relates to the creation of modern hunting practices and national parks. We will learn to read elite primary sources “against the grain” so that we not only understand their perspectives but also the perspectives of people who did not leave a written record such as the working classes, colonized subjects, and the rural poor. We will also reflect on the history of poaching as an act of political resistance alongside international efforts to preserve endangered species. In considering a sustainable future between humans and animals, this module challenges us to investigate local alternatives to global environmental governance.

We designed this lesson to require roughly six hours of class time over two weeks and about twice that amount preparing for class. If it takes significantly more than that, you should talk to your professor. It may be that they can offer some useful guidance to you, or it may be that they can offer some guidance to the *History for the 21st Century* project to adjust the lesson for future students.

**Format**

This module centers on discussions of primary sources—both texts written during the period of time we are studying, and pictures of images and production produced during that time—placed in context by short readings produced by professional historians.

**Learning Goals**

By the completion of our module, you will have analyzed a diverse collection of primary documents that relate to the history of hunting, poaching, and preserving wildlife. You will:

* learn to read a single primary source document “against the grain” in order to understand an event from the perspective of multiple historical actors.
* observe ways in which the relationship between humans and the non-human environment has been historically constructed.
* understand that one’s social position influences how one is able to interact with the non-human environment.

**Schedule and Readings**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **Readings before the class** | **In-class activities** |
| **Before the module** | * About this module
 |  |
| **Lesson 1: Hunting in the “Wilderness”** | * Reading 1: “Hunting in the ‘Wilderness’”
 | * Visualizing your wilderness
 |
| **Lesson 2: Hunting and Masculinity in Imperial Africa** | * Reading 2: “Hunting and Masculinity in Imperial Africa”
* Primary Source 1: “The White Man’s Burden”
* Primary Source 2: excerpt from *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*
 | * Primary source analysis: “The White Man’s Burden”
* Reading *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* with and against the grain
 |
| **Lesson 3: Clearing the Way for National Parks in the United States** | * Reading 3: “Clearing the Way for National Parks in the United States”
* Primary Source 3: *Notes and Letters* by George Catlin
* Primary Source 4: selected paintings by George Catlin
 | * Learning natural and cultural history from Catlin’s work
 |
| **Lesson 4: The Human Experience of National Parks in India** | * Reading 4: “The Human Experience of Wildlife in India”
* Primary Source 5: *My India* by Jim Corbett
 | * Telling Mothi’s tale through *My India*
* Review of major ideas and themes in an Indian context
 |
| **Conclusion** | * Reading 5: “Elite Hunting in the 21st Century: Conservation or Destruction?”
 | * Debating the role of deer and trophy hunting in the 21st century
 |