

# Britain in 1900

Our course begins in 1906 so you won't be examined specifically on anything from before this date - but you must have some general understanding and knowledge of what Britain was like at the turn of the century.

## **1. Richest and most powerful country on earth**

- Greatest trading nation in world, empire covers  $\frac{1}{4}$  globe
- London – heart of banking, finance, investment
- Built 60% of world's merchant ships. Navy bigger than any 2 other nations.
- UK population – 43 million, mostly employed in industry, living in cities.
- New industries developing – chemical, electrical, cars
- Queen Victoria on throne, parliament led by aristocratic Lord Salisbury, class system entrenched.
- Edward VII 1901 – can be seen as a continuation of Victorian era OR as a prelude to the Twentieth century age of change and modernity.

## **2. Warnings were evident**

### **Economic**

- industrial and commercial superiority being challenged.
- GB dependent on older industries and suffering from overseas tariffs
- 10% of population owned 90% wealth

### **Military**

- War against Boers in SA 1899-1902 had highlighted military weaknesses and some serious military failings.
- Poor physical condition of working men for army raised questions of National Efficiency
- Loss of 20,000 lives, incompetence on part of army command, introduction of concentration camps led to criticism.

### **Social**

- living conditions appalling in poorest areas
- 4 million people living below subsistence levels
- social degeneracy reported in urban areas
- many working men and no women were entitled to vote

### **Tasks**

Extend your understanding of what GB was like in 1900 by making notes from the following website

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/census/main.htm> (have a good snoop about under the various tabs – some really good background information in here)

Make notes on the video – Andrew Marr – first 37 minutes.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nB\\_PFyLgTw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nB_PFyLgTw)