

The British Empire and the spread of English

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the British Empire still covered much of the surface of the earth. People from the British Isles had set up colonies all over the world ever since the settlements in North America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The British Empire brought the English language to these places and, as time has passed, special 'colonial' forms of English have appeared. The most important of these are American English in Canada and the United States, Australasian English in Australia and New Zealand, South African English, Indian English, and English in Far Eastern trading outposts such as Singapore or Hong Kong. All these varieties have over time developed special features which mark them out from each other.

➤ *See also* **Language Study** panels on **English in North America**, **English in the West Indies** and **English worldwide**.