

Lesson 2: Rapanui People and Explorers of Empire

You will need access to the [Taken Rapanui Heritage Explorer maps](#) for this lesson (please note these are in development).

Exercise 1: European presence on Rapa Nui Easter Island

Teacher notes: 20 minutes

Rapanui people living on Rapa Nui Easter Island today are descendants of a group of people who travelled the Pacific as great ocean navigators thousands of years ago. These explorers are known as the 'Polynesians' and they were the first people to find Rapa Nui Easter Island about 1500 years ago. They settled there and developed their own way of life living off the land and the sea.

The first recorded visit by European explorers was made by a Dutch (Netherlands) expedition that was travelling around the world 300 years ago. The Dutch had a large empire at this time in South East Asia. The first British explorers to land on Rapa Nui Easter Island were led by Captain Cook about 250 years ago. Both expeditions stayed just for a few days, took notes on what they saw, collected artefacts and then departed to carry on their journeys.

One thing these European explorers noticed in the South Pacific was the abundance of whales in the oceans. The Industrial Revolution happened in Britain, North America and Europe a few years after their expeditions and oil sourced from whales became an important source of fuel for providing street and factory lighting. Many whale ships (that caught whales and collected their oil) followed in the footsteps of Cook into the Pacific.

This began a pattern of European settlement on Rapa Nui and taking of land during the C19th (1800s) that by 1900 had almost wiped out a local way of life and cost the lives of many thousands of local people.

Let's take a look at some of these 'entanglements' between Rapanui and European people. Explore the [Taken Rapanui Heritage Expeditions Map](#) and find an example for each of the following types of visit to Rapa Nui. Fill in the information requested.

					
	Naval explorers	Whalers	Missionaries	Slavers	Nations
Name of ship and expedition leader					
Port where the expedition came from					
One fact about this expedition					

We will add this information to a new *Explorers and the British Empire* map we will create for your work over the next few months.

Exercise 2: Impact on Rapanui lives past and present

Teacher notes: 20 minutes

Continue your exploration of the Taken Rapanui Heritage Expeditions Map and find an expedition that helps illustrate each of these legacies of empire we introduced last week (one expedition for each)

					
	Loss of land	Loss of life	Loss of family and friends	Loss of culture, language and name	Loss of control
Name of expedition					
Date of expedition					
Describe what happened					

Exercise 3: Heritage taken from Rapa Nui Easter Island

Teacher notes: 15 minutes

European visitors had materials that local Rapanui people found valuable for their way of life – cloth and iron objects for example. They traded fresh food for these items and sometimes also traded ‘cultural’ items like wooden carved statues and stone axes. Sometimes the visitors wanted to take items of special meaning to Rapanui people – for example, stone carved statues or ‘moai’ – and they found a way to make this happen often by persuasion or possibly force. Many of these objects taken are now in museums around the world.

Using the [Taken Rapanui Heritage Museums Map](#) find an object in a museum collection based in each of these areas of the world:

			
	Europe	North America	South America
What is the object			
What country and museum is it in now?			

Exercise 4: Resistance and Strength – Hoa Hakananai’a

Teacher notes: 20 minutes

Hoa Hakananai’a is a moai taken from Rapa Nui Easter Island by a British expedition on board HMS Topaze in 1868. It is now on display at the British Museum. Rapanui people living today on Rapa Nui Easter Island are calling for the return of this moai, ‘the lost or stolen one’, because it is an important symbol that represents their ancestors.

Today there are about 8,000 people living on Rapa Nui Easter Island, 60% of which are descended from original Rapanui inhabitants of the Island. They are working hard to reintroduce their ancestors’ culture, language and traditions so they are not forgotten.

As a class, search for where Hoa Hakananai’a originally came from on Rapa Nui Easter Island using the [Rapanui Taken Heritage Island Map](#) One person in the class read out the following case for returning Hoa Hakananai’a; and another reads out the statement from the British Museum

Vote for whether you think Hoa Hakananai’a should be returned to Rapa Nui Easter Island and say why.

The Case for returning Hoa Hakananai'a to Rapa Nui Easter Island

'We are just a body. You, the British people, have our soul. We want the museum to understand that the moai are our family, not just rocks. For us Hoa Hakananai'a is a brother; but for them it is a souvenir or an attraction.' (from speeches made by Rapanui people visiting the British Museum, November 2018)

Hoa Hakananai'a (a Rapanui word that translates into English as 'lost or stolen friend') is a living person relevant to the Rapanui community. It should be treated as human remains rather than object. The return of Hoa Hakananai'a will inspire Rapanui children young people with senses of ownership and pride of their culture...

The British Museum's Position

The Museum recognises the significance of Hoa Hakananai'a for the Rapanui community today, and acknowledges the impact of its removal from the island in 1868. The Museum is developing a long-term relationship with the community of Rapa Nui...and we plan to develop projects with artists, scholars and other community members in Rapa Nui.

Hoa Hakananai'a represents one of the world's great sculptural traditions, and is witness to the global significance of Rapanui culture. Its presence increases public understanding of the history of Rapa Nui...the British Museum...allows millions of visitors an understanding of the cultures of the world and how they interconnect.