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Opening extract from

Tony Robinson's Weird World of Wonders! British

Written by

Tony Robinson

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Other books by Tony Robinson

The Worst Children's Jobs in History

Bad Kids

Tony Robinson's Weird World of Wonders: Romans

Tony Robinson's Weird World of Wonders: Egyptians

Tony Robinson's Weird World of Wonders: Greeks

TONY ROBINSON'S WEIRD WORLD OF WONDERS BRITISH



Illustrated by Del Thorpe

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Jessica Cobb is my researcher. This means she does all the work on the book while I jet off to the West Indies, drink delicious non-alcoholic cocktails full of exotic fruit and pieces of coconut carved into the shape of hummingbirds, dance till dawn to the sound of a thousand guitars and sleep till noon in a bed the size of an Olympic swimming pool. Thanks, Jess

Sol Hobbs has known Nits all his life. When his family got her from the dogs' home, they called her Jessie Tat, then when she came to our house we called her Winnie. But Sol reminded us that her nickname had always been Nits, and we've called her that ever since. This book's for you, Sol. Thanks, mate



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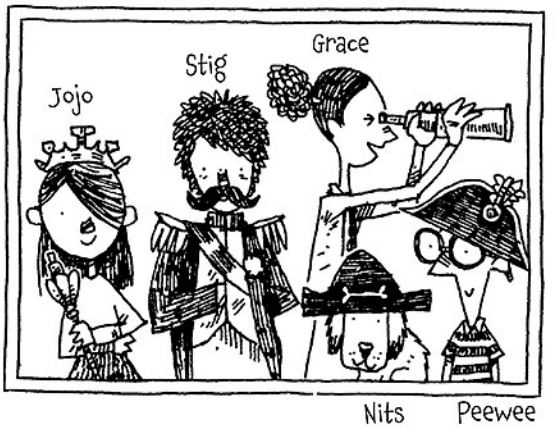
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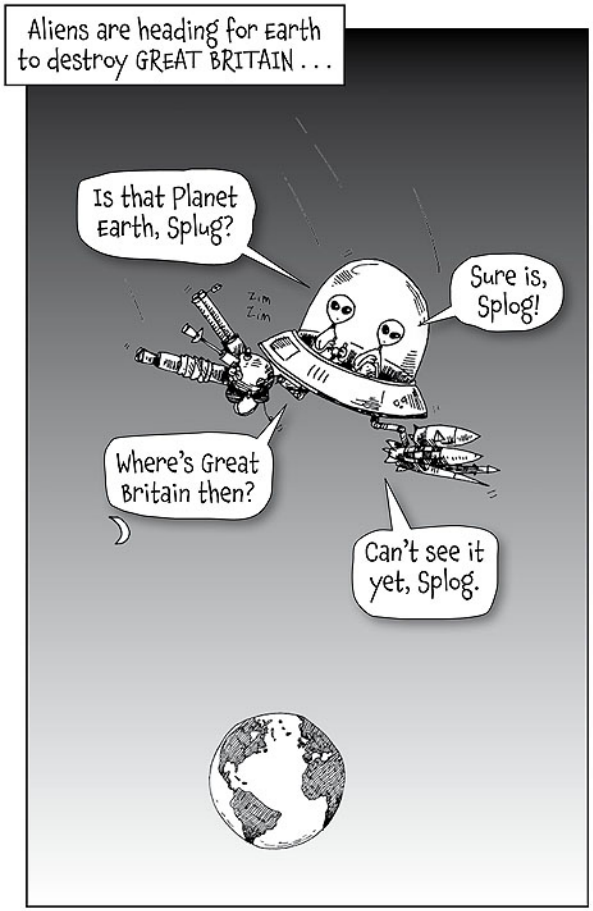
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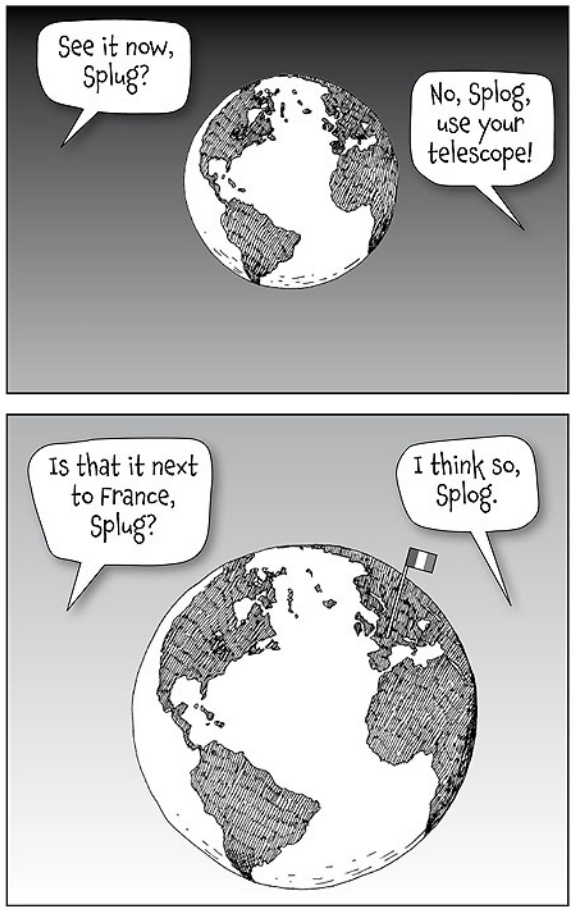
Hi! We're the Curiosity Crew. You'll probably spot us hanging about in this book checking stuff out.

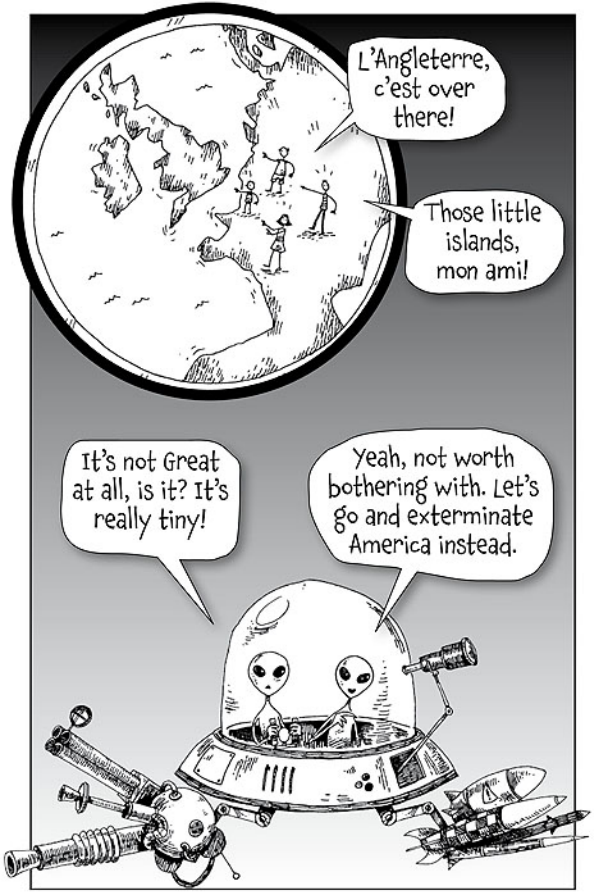
This is the story of how one tiny country ended up in charge of most of the world . . . and then lost it all again!

We'll tell you about spectacular naval battles, bonkers inventions and big moustaches. Read on to find out . . .




Aliens are heading for Earth to destroy GREAT BRITAIN . . .
Is that Planet Earth, Splug?
Sure is, Splog!
Where's Great Britain then?
Can't see it yet, Splog.

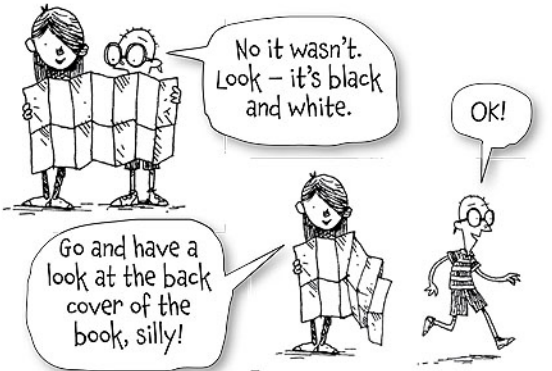

See it now, Splug?
No, Splog, use your telescope!
Is that it next to France, Splug?
I think so, Splog.

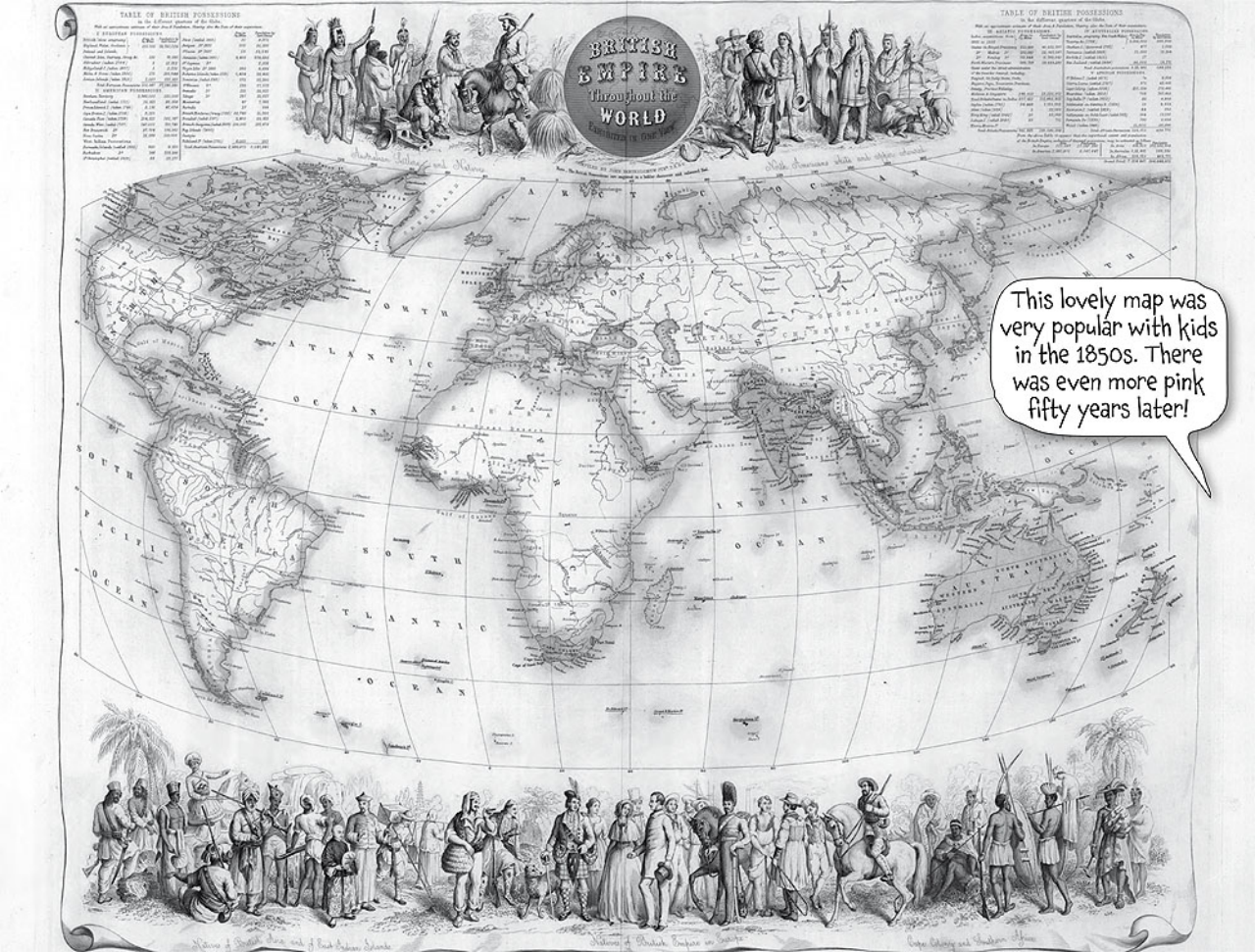


PAINTING THE WORLD PINK

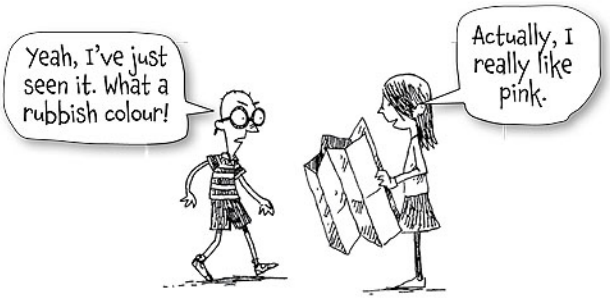
OK – so Great Britain may only look like a little pimple on the face of the Earth to a flying saucer full of aliens, but just over 100 years ago it was the greatest superpower the world had ever seen. It ruled more than 400 million people across five continents!

You'd have had no trouble at all spotting the British Empire in those days, even from outer space. More than a quarter of the world belonged to Britain, and on coloured maps it was painted pink.




BRITISH EMPIRE
Throughout the WORLD
This lovely map was very popular with kids in the 1850s. There was even more pink fifty years later!

Originally the plan had been to paint the British Empire red, the colour of the uniforms of the British Army. But the mapmakers complained that red was too dark to be able to read the names of the countries written on top of it. So they chose pink instead.



People used to say that *'the sun never sets on the British Empire'*, because it was so big the sun was always shining on at least one part of it. From high mountains to flat coral islands, from chilly lands full of penguins to deserts chock-full of camels, the British ran it all!

Today one out of every four people in the world still speaks English, because they live in countries that were once part of the British Empire. The Brits gave them their laws, their daft sports, like cricket and rugby, their boiled eggs with soldiers for breakfast, and their scones and strawberry jam for tea.

