

# The Success of *The Queen*

***The Queen* was the first film about the present British royal family to appear in world cinemas. Thanks to the writer, director, and the actors, it was a huge success. But it was an unusual subject. So why did anyone want to make a film about the royal family?**

Writer Peter Morgan wanted his story to be as close to the truth as possible. To do this, he spoke to people who worked for both the Queen and Tony Blair's government. He also spoke to people who had stayed at Balmoral as guests. The result is a story that gives a clear picture of the Queen and the royal family during a difficult time.

Stephen Frears, the director, didn't want people to think his film was unfair to the Queen. His film describes the problems between modern and traditional ways of managing the death of Princess Diana. But through it all, Frears shows the Queen as a person who has great feeling and dignity.

## Helen Mirren

Helen Mirren is known throughout the world as a very fine actress.

After watching Helen Mirren as the Queen, the audience at the *Venice Film Festival* stood and clapped for five minutes. Helen had earned her success. 'I studied old news films of the Queen very carefully,' she said. 'I wanted to get everything right – the voice, the hair, the hands - everything.'

Helen loved playing the part of the Queen. But she also said she had never been so nervous of a part before.



*The Queen* won the BAFTA (The British Academy of Film and Television Arts) award in 2007 for the year's best film. It was also nominated for an Academy Award. But the most awards went to Helen Mirren and Peter Morgan. Helen won 29 awards, including an Oscar for Best Actress. Peter won 11 awards, including the *Golden Globe* for best screenplay.

Imagine you have to choose an actor for the 'Best Actor' award. Who would you give it to, and why?



Before *The Queen* was filmed, Helen also invited the other main actors to spend time together as a family at her house. This made acting together easier and more natural.

## Michael Sheen

Michael Sheen played Tony Blair in *The Queen*. He had already played this part in an earlier film called *The Deal*.



## James Cromwell

More than two metres tall, the American actor James Cromwell was the perfect person to play the part of the Queen's tall husband, Prince Philip.



What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.

audience director award  
screenplay nominate producer  
festival

# The British Monarchy



For more than a thousand years, England's kings and queens have been the heads of state of Great Britain and the countries of the Commonwealth. But what is the role of the Queen and the royal family in the 21st century?



For many British people, the Queen is an example of what is good and unchanging about the United Kingdom. As head of the oldest monarchy in the world, she tries to show her people that tradition, dignity, and doing your duty, is still important in modern life.

The Queen is the most-travelled monarch in history. She and Prince Philip often make state visits to other countries. These visits help to keep friendly feelings between the United Kingdom and the rest of the world.

## Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor



**Born:** April 21, 1926.

**Became Queen:** June 2, 1953.

**Head of state:** of sixteen countries, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

**Interests:** horse racing, photography and her dogs

**Political views:** She's never given a public opinion.

Does your country have a royal family? Can royal families still be useful in modern times?

The Queen's days are very busy. Her duties include answering letters, reading state papers and meeting important people. She also visits places which do valuable work such as hospitals, schools, universities, and museums.

Others in the royal family also have public visits and duties. These public events show that the royal family care about what happens in the world and can still play a helpful part today.

What is the future of the royal family? No one is certain. Traditionally, Prince Charles is the next in line to be King, and after him, Prince William.

Prince William finished his university studies at St Andrews

University, Scotland, in 2006, where he studied History of Art. Like his brother, Prince Harry is very interested in sports. He plays rugby and polo. He has a career in the army, and received a medal for the time he spent as a soldier in Afghanistan.



What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.  
monarchy role Commonwealth polo career army medal



# Princess Diana

By the time of her tragic death, on August 31, 1997,

Princess Diana had become the most celebrated woman on Earth. She was also described as 'the world's most photographed woman'. Her picture was always on the covers of magazines like *Time*, *People*, and *Newsweek*. What was so special about Princess Diana? Why was she so popular?

## Diana's early years

Diana was born on July 1, 1961. She was the third child of Edward and Frances Spencer, an aristocratic English family. When Diana was eight, her parents divorced and she went to live with her father. In 1976, her father married again.

These were difficult years for Diana and she spent a lot of time travelling between her two parents' homes.

During her school years, Diana was a good swimmer and dancer. But she was

a poor student. She left school in 1977, after failing all her exams. When she began going out with Prince Charles, she was working as an assistant in a nursery school in London.



## An unhappy marriage

Diana married Prince Charles on July 29, 1981. Over a billion people watched the wedding on TV all over the world. The media described Charles and Diana as 'the perfect couple'.

This wasn't true. In time, their different personalities produced problems in the marriage. Charles was still in love with his old girlfriend, Camilla Parker-Bowles, and he and Diana spent less time together. These problems between Charles and Diana were interesting



to everyone, and newspapers made a lot of money from stories about the royal couple. The media spoke to Charles and Diana's friends and, finally, to the couple themselves.

The Queen wasn't happy about all this media attention on the royal family. She asked the couple to divorce. They agreed and were divorced on August 28, 1996.

## The People's Princess

Diana was not a perfect royal. She made mistakes. She showed her feelings too much in public. Through the media, she became a celebrity. She became famous for her charity work. None of this was the



'royal' way of doing things. But this only made her more popular with the public.

Like many ordinary people in the world, Diana had a difficult background, an unhappy marriage, and a wish to help others.

The public saw her as a beautiful, caring, open woman.

Ordinary people loved her, and they accepted her

faults as much as they celebrated her beauty. Why was this? 'Because,' as one woman said, 'Diana is like us.' This, more than anything, made her 'the People's Princess'.

