

## Dear Educator,

Explore the world of kings and the wonder of words with this free educational program, *The King's Speech: Rated PG-13*, from The Weinstein Company and curriculum specialist Young Minds Inspired (YMI).

Winner of 4 Academy Awards, *The King's Speech* has inspired millions with its uplifting story of personal triumph and friendship. To make the film available to younger viewers, The Weinstein Company has produced *The Kings Speech: Rated PG-13*, which is coming to theaters nationwide on April 1st.

The movie follows King George VI on his path to the throne as he struggles with self-doubt and a lifelong speech impediment to find his voice and lead his people as they face the terrors of World War II. The story's depiction of personal battles, fear, perseverance, and an unlikely friendship shows the human issues challenging the Royal Family, while the world they live in faces turbulent times.

The award-winning film's characters and themes inspired this engaging in-school program with easy-to-implement activities. Students will explore the role royal responsibility and social influences play in the lives of kings. They will also be challenged to evaluate the art of communication. Students can complete the activities and engage in class discussions without seeing the film.

Please share this program with your colleagues teaching history, English, theater, film studies, and language arts. Although these materials are protected by copyright, you may make as many copies as you need for your classes. **Please share your comments on the program at [www.ymiclassroom.com/kingspeechfeedback.html](http://www.ymiclassroom.com/kingspeechfeedback.html).** We depend on your feedback to continue providing free educational programs that make a real difference in students' lives.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired



# THE KING'S SPEECH

**RATED PG-13**

## FOCUSED LEARNING

This program is designed for students in high school courses in history, English, theater, film studies, and language arts.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To challenge students to examine the influences on the lives of national leaders
- To encourage critical thinking using primary sources
- To strengthen students' communication skills
- To engage students in creative writing exercises

## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- This two-page teacher's guide
- Two reproducible activity masters
- A transcript of the speech delivered by King George VI when Great Britain entered World War II

## HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM

Review the program materials and schedule the activities to suit your timeframe. Each activity is designed for one class period, with additional follow-up lessons. Read the film synopsis aloud prior to beginning the activities. It is not necessary to see the film to complete the activities. Distribute a copy of each activity master and the transcript of King George VI's speech to each student.

## NATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS\*

### Historical Understanding

- Analyzes the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history
- Analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history and studies how things might have been different in the absence of those decisions

## Language Arts

- Uses strategies to address writing to different audiences (e.g., includes explanations and definitions according to the audience's background, age, or knowledge of the topic, adjusts formality of style, considers interests of potential readers)
- Uses strategies to adapt writing for different purposes (e.g., to explain, inform, analyze, entertain, reflect, persuade)
- Writes compositions employing persuasion
- Uses criteria to evaluate own and others' effectiveness in group discussions and formal presentations
- Uses a variety of strategies to enhance listening comprehension
- Responds to questions and feedback about contributions to discussions and formal presentations (e.g., clarifies and defends ideas, expands on a topic, uses logical arguments, modifies organization, sets goals for future presentations)
- Understands influences on language use (e.g., political beliefs, positions of social power, culture)

\*Source: [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)

## THE STORY OF *THE KING'S SPEECH*

After the death of his father King George V (Michael Gambon) and the scandalous abdication of King Edward VIII (Guy Pearce), Bertie (Colin Firth), who has suffered from a debilitating speech impediment all his life, is suddenly crowned King George VI of England. With his country on the brink of war and in desperate need of a leader, his wife, Elizabeth (Helena Bonham Carter), the future Queen Mother, arranges for her husband to see an eccentric speech therapist, Lionel Logue (Geoffrey Rush). After a rough start, the two delve into an unorthodox course of treatment and eventually form an unbreakable bond. With the support of Logue, his family, his government and Winston Churchill (Timothy Spall), the king will overcome his stammer and deliver a radio address that inspires his people and unites them in battle. Based on the true story of King George VI, *The King's Speech: Rated PG-13* follows the royal monarch's quest to find his voice.



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## ACTIVITY ONE: ROYALTY VS. LOYALTY

In this activity, students explore the influences on the lives of national leaders.

**PART A.** Students are presented with select facts and events from the lives of three British kings—George V and his two sons, Edward VIII and George VI. Students use this information to compare and contrast the kings, and to engage in discussion about what it means to be royalty, and what impact social perceptions and personal preferences have on each monarch's decisions.

Have students read the activity and complete Part A. You might complete this as a class, or have students work in groups to discuss their thoughts. Then discuss their answers to the questions.

Additional discussion questions:

1. What message do you think George V's decision to change the Royal Family's name sent to other nations?
2. Do you think Edward felt compelled to abdicate or wanted to step down?
3. Why would George VI be concerned that his speech impediment would impact his ability to lead?

**PART B.** Students examine the similarities and differences in the roles and responsibilities of U.S. presidents and the royal monarch. Have a class discussion to review students' responses to the questions.

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:** Several countries in contemporary society have monarchies. Some are constitutional; others are not. Have students research the monarchies that exist today. What role do these monarchs play? Are they figureheads or do they exercise governmental power?

## ACTIVITY TWO: THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

In this activity, students explore the role of voice and character in effective communication.

**PART A.** Students listen to and read the speech featured in *The King's Speech: Rated PG-13*, and evaluate it. As a class, review students' reactions to King George VI's speech and their answers to the questions.

**PART B.** In this part of the activity, students match speakers to quotes from famous speeches.

**ANSWERS:** 1. John F. Kennedy (Inaugural address, Jan. 20, 1961); 2. Abraham Lincoln (Senate nomination speech, June 1858); 3. Ronald Reagan (Brandenburg Gate, June

12, 1987); 4. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ("I Have a Dream" speech, Aug. 28, 1963); 5. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (first Inaugural address, March 4, 1933); 6. Eleanor Roosevelt ("The Struggle for Human Rights" speech, Sept. 28, 1948)

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:** After completing the activity, have students listen to or read some of the speeches featured on the activity sheet. Then ask students to consider the question: Would these words have been so powerful if delivered by another person, during another time? Have students imagine that Lincoln, Roosevelt, King, or Reagan delivered Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you" speech. How would their voice and character have changed the speech? Students can write the speech as one of these other figures.

## DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Speech therapy has evolved over the years. Have students research methods of treating speech impediments, from those used in ancient times to current-day treatments. What methods have been used? What has changed? What has stayed the same?
- King George VI faced a personal challenge with his speech. As a class, brainstorm other national figures who were conflicted with or overcame personal challenges to lead their nations. How did they address their challenges?

## POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

- Both Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (Helena Bonham Carter), who becomes Queen Elizabeth, and the eccentric speech therapist, Lionel Logue (Geoffrey Rush), are instrumental in helping King George VI so that his speech challenges didn't debilitate him. Have students discuss how they would characterize the queen and Logue.
- Have students research additional information about George VI's relationship with Lionel Logue and the impact it had on the king's reign.
- King Edward VIII abdicates the realm within one year of taking the throne. Have a class discussion about why Edward abdicated. Students can debate whether or not they think Edward should have stepped down.
- After abdicating, Edward marries Wallis Simpson and leaves England. Have students research the life of Edward after he abdicates and explore the question: If King Edward VIII had not abdicated, what if any impact would this have had on the outcome of World War II?



## RESOURCES

*British History and Government*

- BBC History [www.bbc.co.uk/history](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history)
- Daily Mail, "The quack who taught King George VI to speak" (10/26/10) [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1323769/Colin-Firth-stars-The-Kings-Speech-quack-cured-George-VI.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1323769/Colin-Firth-stars-The-Kings-Speech-quack-cured-George-VI.html)
- The official website of the British Monarchy [www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)

## SPEECHES

- American Rhetoric [www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com)
- Audio of King George VI's Sept. 3, 1939 speech [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAhFW\\_auT20](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAhFW_auT20)
- Library of Congress <http://memory.loc.gov>
- Miller Center of Public Affairs, UVA <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches>
- Our Documents Initiative [www.ourdocuments.gov](http://www.ourdocuments.gov)
- Text of King Edward VIII's abdication speech [www.royal.gov.uk/pdf/edwardviii.pdf](http://www.royal.gov.uk/pdf/edwardviii.pdf)
- Text of King George VI's speeches [www.royal.gov.uk/pdf/georgevi.pdf](http://www.royal.gov.uk/pdf/georgevi.pdf)
- The History Channel [www.history.com/speeches](http://www.history.com/speeches)
- *The King's Speech* (official movie website, with links to an audio of the speech) [www.kingsspeech.com](http://www.kingsspeech.com)

# ACTIVITY ONE ROYALTY VS. LOYALTY

## PART A. LIFE AS A MONARCH

The British royal monarch plays an important role in the life of his or her nation. As head of state, the monarch represents Great Britain to the world, but to the people, the monarch also provides a focus of national identity, an embodiment of national values, a source of confidence in turbulent times, and an inspiration to public service.

What is it like to serve as the royal monarch, a public figure who has to balance the demands of the world he or she lives in with centuries of traditions and expectations? How does the king or queen balance loyalty to the Crown and nation with loyalty to his or her personal beliefs? How does the public influence the monarch? Think about these questions in relation to the information about each British king given below.

### GEORGE V (REIGNED 1910-1936)

- He left a career he enjoyed as a naval officer in 1892 when he became heir to the throne upon his brother's death. He returned home and married, and later became king in 1910.
- In 1917 during World War I, anti-German sentiment led King George V to change the family name from the Germanic Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor.
- George V started an annual tradition in 1932 by delivering a Royal Christmas speech on the radio. It was believed that he was persuaded to do this because it was what his people wanted.

### EDWARD VIII (REIGNED JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1936)

- The eldest son of George V, who had been a popular figure, Edward took the throne upon his father's death.
- Because he had fallen in love with a married (and subsequently divorced) American named Wallis Simpson, who would not have been acceptable as queen, Edward abdicated less than one year after becoming king and married his love in 1937.
- During World War II, he lived in Paris and Lisbon before being appointed governor of the Bahamas. He remained abroad for the duration of his life.

### GEORGE VI (REIGNED 1936-1952)

- Edward's abdication left his younger brother Albert next in line for the throne. Albert, who took the name George VI, never anticipated and, it is believed, never wanted to be king.
- Albert had a fear of public speaking due to a speech impediment. He saw many doctors, and spent years working with a speech therapist to help him develop his speech and overcome his fear.



- Like his father, George VI was well-liked by the public and made numerous visits to troops and hospitals during the war.

Each of these kings made sacrifices out of loyalty to the Crown and to uphold their responsibilities to the people. Consider the world these kings lived in and discuss the questions below.

1. How do you think being royalty affected each king's decision—George V to change the family name, Edward to abdicate, and Albert/George VI to seek speech therapy?
2. What role do you think society or social perception played in each king's decision?
3. How do you think each king's personal preferences factored into his decision?
4. Would you consider each of the three kings to be loyal to his duties? Why or why not?

## PART B. AMERICAN LEADERS

Think about the responsibilities the U.S. president has to the American citizens. Discuss the questions below.

1. Does the president have the same roles as a British king?
2. How do American leaders represent their loyalty to the citizens?
3. George V sacrificed his career and name. Edward VIII sacrificed the throne for love. Compare and contrast the type of sacrifices American leaders might make to those of these two kings.
4. Aside from the political responsibilities, how do you think the positions of U.S. president and the British royal monarch (currently Queen Elizabeth II) are alike and different?

# ACTIVITY TWO THE ART OF COMMUNICATION



## PART B. WHO SAID IT?

A leader's voice and character play an integral role in his or her ability to effectively deliver a speech that resonates with people. Test your knowledge of these famous people and quotes from speeches that they made.

Abraham Lincoln	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Eleanor Roosevelt	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
John F. Kennedy	Ronald Reagan

1. "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

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2. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

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3. "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

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4. "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

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5. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

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6. "People who continue to be denied the respect to which they are entitled as human beings will not acquiesce forever in such denial."

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Now, consider this: How is each person's voice and character reflected in the quote?

Listen to or read the speeches of these six people at American Rhetoric [www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com) or The History Channel [www.history.com/speeches](http://www.history.com/speeches).

## PART A. EVALUATE THE VOICE

In *The King's Speech: Rated PG-13*, Colin Firth's character Bertie seeks the help of several doctors and works with a peculiar speech therapist on his stammer. Ultimately, through determination, he is ready for the moment when a leader must connect with his/her people through the spoken word. That moment comes when Firth's character delivers King George VI's speech to the citizens of Great Britain on September 3, 1939, announcing the nation's entrance into World War II.

Why was it so important for King George VI to find his voice and be prepared for such a moment? To answer this question, compare King George VI's written speech with the recording of the speech, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAhFW\\_aUT20](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAhFW_aUT20).

1. What comes through in the recording that is not present in the text?
2. Why couldn't the king simply issue a proclamation on this occasion?
3. What do his voice, his character, and what his people feel toward him add to the message?



BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

In this grave hour, perhaps the most fateful in history, I send to every household of my peoples, both at home and overseas, this message, spoken with the same depth of feeling for each one of you as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself.

For the second time in the lives of most of us, we are at war. Over and over again, we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between my *own self* ~~Government~~ and those who are now our enemies. But it has been in vain. We have been forced into a conflict, for which we are called, with our allies, to meet the challenge of a principle which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilized order in the world.

It is a principle which permits a state, in the selfish pursuit of power to disregard its treaties and its solemn pledges, which sanctions the use of force or the <sup>threat</sup> ~~treat~~ of force against the sovereignty and independence of other states. Such a principle, stripped of all disguise,

is surely the mere primitive doctrine that might is right, ~~x~~  
 if it were established through the world, the freedom of  
 our own country and of the whole British Commonwealth  
 of nations would be in danger. But far more than this the  
 peoples of the world would be kept in bondage of fear,  
 and all hopes of settled peace and of security, of justice  
 and liberty, among nations, would be ended.

This is the ultimate issue which confronts us. For  
 the sake of all that we ourselves hold dear, and of the  
 world order and peace, it is unthinkable that we should  
 refuse to meet the challenge.

It is to this high purpose that I now <sup>Call</sup> ~~summon~~ my people  
 at home and my peoples across the seas, who will make our  
 cause their own. I ask them to stand calm and firm and unite  
 in this time of trial. The task will be hard. There may be  
 dark days ahead, and war can no longer be confined to  
 the battlefield. But we can only the right as we  
 see the right, and reverently commit our cause to God.  
 If one and all we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready  
 for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then,  
 with God's help, we shall prevail. of

May He bless and keep us all.