



The Roles of The King

PowerPoint Teacher Notes

The British Monarchy is a part of government by which a hereditary King or Queen reigns over the United Kingdom, the Crown dependencies (the Bailiwick of Guernsey, the Bailiwick of Jersey and the Isle of Man) and the British Overseas Territories.

King Charles III acceded the throne on 8 September 2022 following the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II.



Head of State

A Head of State is the public persona who officially embodies a State in its unity and legitimacy. Depending on the country's form of government and separation of powers, the Head of State may be a ceremonial figurehead (such as The King) or concurrently the Head of Government and more (such as the President of the United States).

In a parliamentary system, such as the United Kingdom or India, the Head of State usually has mostly ceremonial powers, with a separate Head of Government, such as a Prime Minister

One of the most important roles of the modern Head of State is being a living national symbol of the State; in hereditary monarchies this extends to the monarch being a symbol of the unbroken continuity of the State.

Heads of State often greet important foreign visitors, particularly visiting Heads of State. For example, The King assumes a host role during a State Visit which may include inspection of military troops, official exchange of gifts, and attendance at a Banquet at Windsor Castle or Buckingham Palace.

Head of Nation

The King represents the nation at times of national mourning and to speak for and to the nation at times of crisis. His Majesty also leads the nation at times of celebration such as the broadcasting of the Christmas message.

The monarchy represents stability and continuity in times of change and different age groups in the population can relate to different generations in the Royal Family, old or young.

In the UK, The King and the Royal Family are expected to attend various events and occasions, such as artistic or sports performances or competitions, expositions, national day celebrations, dedication events, remembrance events, prominent funerals, visiting different parts of the country and people from different walks of life, and at times performing symbolic acts such as cutting a ribbon, ground-breaking, ship christening and laying the first stone.

Through royal visits and award ceremonies the monarchy recognises and draws attention to public service and achievement in all walks of life.

Head of the Commonwealth

The origins of the Commonwealth come from the former British Empire. Many of the members of the Commonwealth were territories that had historically come under British rule at various times by settlement, conquest or cession. The administration of such colonies evolved in different ways, to reflect the different circumstances of each territory.

After achieving independence, India was the first of a number of countries which decided that, although they wished to become republics, they still wanted to remain within a Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 independent countries, almost all of which were formerly under British rule.

To reconcile these aims, the 1949 London Declaration recognised King George VI as Head of the Commonwealth. Prior to Queen Elizabeth II's death, the Commonwealth leaders recognised King Charles III in that capacity.

Head of The Church of England

The sovereign is the 'Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England'. These titles date back to the reign of King Henry VIII.

On the advice of the Prime Minister, The King appoints Archbishops, Bishops and Deans of the Church of England, who then swear an oath of allegiance and pay homage to His Majesty.

The Crown's role in the Church of England is simply a title; the most senior clergyman, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is the spiritual leader of the Church and of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The King also takes an oath to preserve the Church of Scotland but otherwise plays no part in its governance, and exerts no powers over it. The sovereign plays no formal role in the Church in Wales or Church of Ireland.

The King acknowledges and celebrates religious diversity and tolerance in the UK and the Commonwealth. This is reflected in his Christmas and Commonwealth Day messages, which often address the theme of inter-faith harmony and tolerance.

Head of the Armed Forces

As Sovereign, The King is Head of the Armed Forces, and brothers and father and sons have served in the Forces. He has a long and close relationship with the Armed Forces, both in the United Kingdom and in the Commonwealth.

The King maintains a close relationship with the Armed Forces through regular visits to service establishments and ships. He holds many military appointments and honorary ranks.

As is the tradition for the monarch's birthday, The King's birthday is celebrated every year with the great military display of Trooping of the Colour. The King often attends the ceremony on horseback, dressed in military uniform.

The King also spends much time meeting servicemen and women of all ranks, and their families, both at home and on overseas trips.

In addition to awarding various military honours at investitures, The King also leads the nation each year in paying respects to the fallen on Remembrance Sunday.

Constitutional Duties

The King has to remain strictly neutral with respect to political matters.

By convention, The King does not vote or stand for election, however His Majesty does have important ceremonial and formal roles in relation to the government of the UK.

The formal phrase 'King in Parliament' is used to describe the British legislature, which consists of the Sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The King's duties include opening each new session of Parliament, granting Royal Assent to legislation, and approving Orders and Proclamations through the Privy Council.

His Majesty also has a special relationship with the Prime Minister, retaining the right to appoint and also meeting with him or her on a regular basis.

In addition to playing a specific role in the UK Parliament based in London, The King has formal roles with relation to the devolved assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Charities

Members of the Royal Family have links with hundreds of charities, military associations, professional bodies and public service organisations. Some are well known, while others may be smaller bodies working in a very specialist area or on a local basis only.

Having a royal patron or president provides vital publicity for the work of these organisations, and allows their enormous achievements and contributions to society to be recognised. Through its patronage and support the monarchy nurtures voluntary action and civil society, reaching parts of the population beyond the reach of politicians.

Above all of these roles, we should not forget that The King is, of course, also a much loved husband, father and grandfather.

