



UK Snap General Election

Not another one! The British electorate are getting fed up with going to the polling stations and making decisions. As Brenda in Bristol said: There's too much politics going on at the moment!

Germany has known about their forthcoming general election for months – the same in France – and now Theresa May has given the voters of the United Kingdom just 50 days to decide who to vote for on Thursday 8 June. Her reason for calling the election: She wants the country and Westminster to be united for the negotiations about Brexit.

The last general election was held in May 2015 and things have changed a lot in the UK since those days. David Cameron was the Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative party; Ed Miliband was the leader of the Labour party and Nick Clegg led the Liberal Democrats (and was also Deputy Prime Minister as the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives were in a coalition government together). The Scottish Nationalist Party – led by Nicola Sturgeon – had only had six seats in Westminster.

David Cameron won the election with a majority of twelve. Ed Miliband resigned as leader of the Labour Party after losing 26 seats; a similar fate awaited Nick Clegg of the LibDems after losing 49 seats. The real winner was Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP who won almost all of the Scottish seats: 56 out of a possible 59 seats. It is interesting to compare the popular vote (the actual votes each party received) with the number of seats won: Conservatives won 330 seats and 36.9% of the votes; Labour won 232 seats and 30.4% of the vote; Liberal Democrats won 8 seats and 7.9% of the vote and the SNP won 56 seats with only 4.7% of the votes. You will not be surprised to learn that the Liberal Democrats are the party who are pushing for proportional representation!

And now look at the situation today: Theresa May is Prime Minister – and leader of the Conservative party – Jeremy Corbyn is the leader of the Labour party and Tim Farron is the leader of the Liberal Democrats (and has only eight MPs in the House of Commons). Nicola Sturgeon is the only leader who has remained in post since the election in 2015.

Bildnachweis: Fotolia (Rachael Arnott)

At the last general election the important issues were the National Health Service, immigration, the economy, education and social services. This time the main discussion point will be Brexit: hard, soft or even having a second referendum.

And what does the 'snap' actually mean? Just that the decision has been made very quickly with a very short run-up to the actual election. It has been done in the past, most recently in 1966 and twice in 1974. Generally, snap elections are called by the incumbent Prime Minister in order to capitalize on advantageous polls. Theresa May is expecting to increase her majority in the House of Commons. We'll find out on Friday 9th June.

If you would like to know more about the UK snap general election, then click here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_general_election,_2017

If you would like to use the activities based on the UK general election in 2015, then please click here.

http://www.klett-sprachen.de/download/7052/dyk_General_Election_2015_04.pdf

And if you would like to see Brenda (and some other Bristolians) respond to the news about the election, then click here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/video/2017/apr/18/does-brenda-from-bristol-have-the-best-reaction-to-the-election-news-video>

And if you would like to use the UK snap general election as a topic in your lessons, then take a look at the **Teacher's notes** and **Worksheet**.

Teacher's notes

Who's the leader? (Level A2 and above, 15+ minutes)

- Make a copy of the **Worksheet**, one for each student.
- On the board write: **Thursday June 8** and ask students if they know what is happening on that day. (The UK general election.)
- Ask students if they know the name of the four main parties and their leaders.
- Hand out the **Worksheet**, one to each student, and explain that they should read the four texts and then answer the eight "Party" Quiz questions below.
- Help with any unknown vocabulary.
- Students should check answers in pairs and then check answers together in class.
- Key:
 - 1 Conservative party had most: 330, Liberal Democrats had fewest: 8
 - 2 Jeremy Corbyn
 - 3 Nicola Sturgeon: November 2014
 - 4 Theresa May
 - 5 Tim Farron
 - 6 Jeremy Corbyn
 - 7 Nicola Sturgeon
 - 8 Jeremy Corbyn
 - 9 David Cameron
 - 10 Jeremy Corbyn
- If your students are interested in this topic, divide students into groups of three or four and using their phones and devices, ask them to find out more about the four party leaders. Students then present their findings to the rest of the class.

Worksheet

Who's the leader?

Read the short texts below and then answer the ten questions.

The Scottish Nationalist Party has 56 Members of Parliament (MPs) and their leader is Nicola Sturgeon. She was selected in November 2014. She was born in 1970. She lives in the capital of Scotland, Edinburgh with her first husband; they got married in 2010. She wants an independent Scotland.

Theresa May has been the leader of the Conservative party since July 2016. She was born in 1956; she has been married for over 35 years and has no children. She is also the Prime Minister and lives at 10 Downing Street. David Cameron was Prime Minister before her. In the last parliament, there were 330 Conservative MPs.

Sixty-eight-year old Jeremy Corbyn is the leader of the Labour party (which has 229 MPs). He is well known as an anti-war and anti-nuclear activist. He became leader of the Labour party in September 2015. He lives in Islington, north London with his third wife. He has three sons. If he wins the election, he wants British people to have four more public holidays.

With only eight MPs, the Liberal Democrats are a small party. But in 2010 they had over 50 MPs! They hope that many people will vote for them again. The Liberal Democrat leader is 46-year-old Tim Farron, who lives with his wife and four children in the north-west of England. He has been leader since July 2015.

"Party" Quiz

1. Before the election, which party had the most MPs and which party had the fewest number of MPs?
2. Who is the oldest leader?
3. Who has been the leader for the longest time?
4. Who lives nearest to the Houses of Parliament?
5. Who does NOT live in a capital city?
6. Who is well-known for being a peace campaigner?
7. Who wants Scotland to break away from the rest of the United Kingdom?
8. Who has been married most often?
9. Who was the Prime Minister before Theresa May?
10. Who wants to give people more holidays?