

A double celebration of June coronations



This month marks the anniversaries of two coronations: Queen Elizabeth II was crowned 63 years ago and Queen Victoria, whose coronation took place 178 years ago.

Do you remember the rather damp river pageant in 2012 on the Thames in London?

It was a celebration to mark Queen Elizabeth's diamond jubilee, her 60 years on the throne that began on 6 February 1952. Although she ascended the throne in 1952, the actual coronation took place over one year later.

Elizabeth was officially proclaimed queen immediately after the death of her father, King George VI, but it was thought inappropriate to have a celebration marking her ascendancy to the throne during the period of mourning. Therefore it was delayed by over a year, and took place in Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953. Planning had begun over 16 months earlier for the elaborate one-day ceremony and celebration. While many overseas guests were invited to the ceremony, including members of the Commonwealth, the only participants in the ceremony itself were from the United Kingdom, as it was deemed to be a religious rite unique to Britain.

Elizabeth's white silk dress was designed by the well-known designer Norman Hartnell and was embroidered with floral emblems: the English rose, the Scots thistle, the Welsh leek, the Irish shamrock for Northern Ireland, the wattle of Australia, the maple leaf of Canada, the New Zealand fern, South Africa's protea, two lotus flowers for India and Ceylon, and Pakistan's wheat, cotton and jute.

Approximately three million spectators lined the procession's route from Buckingham Palace along the Mall to Westminster Abbey. The ceremony was performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and was watched around the world by more than twenty million viewers, for this was the first coronation to be televised.

Over one hundred years earlier, Queen Victoria's coronation took place on 28 June 1838 just over a year after she had ascended the throne on 20 June 1837 after the death of her uncle, King William IV. Newspapers reported excessive crowds lining the streets to see Victoria in the procession to Westminster Abbey. She was only nineteen years old and had already become a popular figure.

A special ring was made for Victoria's coronation, but unfortunately the royal goldsmiths made the ring for the wrong finger, thinking it should go on the little finger. The Archbishop forced it on her ring finger and Queen Victoria had to soak her hand in iced water after the ceremony.

However, any pain seems to have been soon forgotten as she wrote in her diary: *'It was a fine day, and the crowds of people exceeded what I have ever seen; many as there were the day I went to the City, it was nothing, nothing to the multitudes, the millions of my loyal subjects, who were assembled in every spot to witness the Procession. Their good humour and excessive loyalty was beyond everything, and I really cannot say how proud I feel to be the Queen of such a Nation.'*

If you would like to know more about the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, then click here and watch a short video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGLN1kREJ2Q>.

And if you would like to read about Queen Victoria's coronation, then click here <http://www.queenvictoriaonline.com/Queen-Victorias-coronation.html>.

If you would like to use the two coronations as a topic in your classroom from A1.2 upwards, we have provided you with an activity.

You'll find it in the following Teacher's notes and on the Worksheet.

Teacher's notes

Two coronations in June (level A1.2 upwards; 15+ mins)

- Make one copy of **Two coronations in June** (see Worksheet) for each student.
- On the board write the word *coronation*. Encourage the word *crown*. You could do this by miming putting a crown on your head and looking regal. Point to the 'crown' and ask students what it is. Explain that *crown* is also used as a verb. Ask which people get crowned (kings and queens).
- Tell students they are going to read about two British queens who were crowned in the month of June: Elisabeth II crowned in 1953 and Victoria crowned in 1838.
- Hand out the worksheets.
- Ask students to read the two texts and tick the right boxes in the exercise. Help with any unknown vocabulary.
- Check answers together in class.

Key: Victoria 1, 3, 7, 8, 9; Elisabeth 2, 4, 5, 6, 10

Worksheet

Two coronations in June

Read these two texts and then complete the exercise below.

Queen Victoria was crowned on 28 June 1838. She was only 19 years old and she was single and did not have any children. Four hundred thousand visitors went to London to see the coronation. There were twelve carriages and six horses pulled each carriage. She was the niece of the King William IV, who died in 1837. The Archbishop of Canterbury put the coronation ring on the wrong finger and it hurt her hand.

Queen Elizabeth II was crowned on 2 June 1953. The Queen travelled to Westminster Abbey with her husband, The Duke of Edinburgh, and her son, Prince Charles, was also at Westminster Abbey. Her daughter, Princess Anne, was too young!
There were 8,251 guests at Westminster Abbey. The BBC filmed the coronation. 27 million people in Britain watched it on TV and 11 million listened to it on the radio. Elizabeth's father, George VI, died in 1952 when Princess Elizabeth was on a tour of Africa.

Whose coronation was it? Tick the right boxes.

	Victoria's	Elizabeth's
1 The queen was unmarried.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Her son was at the coronation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Her uncle was the king before her.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 The coronation was on television.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Her husband was in Westminster Abbey with her.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 11 million people listened on the radio.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 She was 19 years old.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 The ring hurt her finger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 She was born nearly two hundred years ago.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 She was the daughter of a king.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>