



### Kings, Queens and Coronations trail – teachers’ notes

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it will be a useful teaching tool during your visit to Westminster Abbey.

As we continue to grow our free catalogue of teaching resources, we’d really appreciate a few minutes of your time to let us know what you liked and what could be improved. Please complete this [five-question survey](#).

#### 1) The Great West Door

Imagine this is your coronation day. How might you be feeling? What are you thinking about as you stand here now? **Encourage pupils to be still for a moment, to look around and be aware of how they feel standing in this space. You might want to provide prompts such as, ‘My first impression is ...’ or ‘This building makes me feel ...’**

Remind pupils that coronations take place inside Westminster Abbey (at the High Altar), and past monarchs will have stood where they stand now.

The first stone church was built here by King Edward the Confessor and completed in 1065. Edward died soon afterwards and was buried inside his church. When William the Conqueror (King William I) became king in 1066, he decided to be crowned in the place where Edward, the previous king, had been buried. From then on, for nearly 1,000 years, Westminster Abbey has been the coronation church. His Majesty King Charles III was the 40th monarch to be crowned here.

#### 2) The Coronation Chair

Who was the last person to sit on this chair? **HM King Charles III (on 6th May 2023).**

Who do you think the next person will be? **The next in line to the throne is HRH Prince William, the Prince of Wales, followed by his son HRH Prince George.**

It can get busy around the Coronation Chair, so you might want to suggest pupils look at the chair and then complete the drawing activity where there is a bit more space.

The Coronation Chair has been the centrepiece of coronations since 1308, when King Edward II was crowned. 27 monarchs have used the chair in their coronations. It was commissioned by King Edward I to enclose the Stone of Destiny (or Stone of Scone), the ancient coronation stone used by Scottish kings. Edward I captured the stone when fighting with Scotland and brought it to Westminster Abbey in 1296. The stone has now been returned to Scotland but there is an agreement that it is re-united with the chair during coronations. It’s placed underneath the seat, above the lions. The monarch sits on the chair for the stages of the coronation known as the anointing, the investiture and the crowning – see 6) The High Altar for more information.

---

# Westminster Abbey

## Learning



### 3) King Richard II portrait

What is this man's job? How can you tell? **This portrait shows King Richard II. We can tell he was a king because he is wearing a crown and holding an orb and sceptre – Coronation Regalia objects which are part of the Crown Jewels. Pupils might also say he is dressed in fancy clothing, including a robe and ermine collar.**

Can you match the Coronation Regalia objects with their meaning?

- Orb – symbolises God's rule over the world, shown by the shape of the object
- St Edward's Crown – symbolises royalty
- Sceptre – symbolises authority and power

Why do you think it is important that people of different faiths were included? **Because Britain is a multicultural country. Many of the king's subjects are not Christians. It's important that people of all faiths, as well as people with no faith, can take part in the service. During his coronation, leaders of other faiths blessed King Charles III as he processed out of Westminster Abbey. This could not be heard by the congregation or TV audience as microphones were not used to respect the Chief Rabbis' observance of the sabbath.**

The portrait of Richard II is the earliest known portrait of an English monarch. It could be used to encourage pupils to think and talk about the changing power of kings and queens. Although he had the help of powerful nobles, Richard ruled at a time when monarchs believed themselves to have absolute power. Parliament existed but did not yet have the powers it has today.

Fun fact: Richard II is credited with inventing the pocket handkerchief!

The orb is a reminder that while the monarch has authority on Earth, God is still the higher power. This can be seen by the symbol of the cross (symbolising God) on top of the orb (symbolising Earth).

St Edward's Crown weighs the same as a two-litre bottle of fizzy drink. It's so heavy that during the coronation service it gets swapped for a lighter crown – the Imperial State Crown. You could point out to your pupils that this is the crown King Charles III is wearing in the image at the bottom of this page of the trail.

### 4) The nave

*Ask a marshal to let you through the blue rope and move down the Abbey.*

Can you spot the kings in the stained-glass windows on your left?

# Westminster Abbey

## Learning



Edward the Confessor



Henry III



Henry V

- **Edward the Confessor** - built the first stone church here in 1065, as well as the Palace of Westminster across the road (now better known as the Houses of Parliament). He was a very religious king and after his death was made a saint. He is often illustrated holding a ring because of a story in which he gave a beggar a priceless sapphire ring.
- **Henry III** - rebuilt Westminster Abbey as the Coronation Church from the 1240s onward. This is the church you are standing in now. Henry spent one tenth of the nation's wealth on re-building Westminster Abbey.
- **Henry V** - was known as a warrior king and is therefore often shown wearing armour. Henry won a famous victory against the French army at Agincourt. In the 15th century it was important for kings to be good warriors. Fun fact: one of the jewels in the Imperial State Crown may have come from a helmet he wore during the Battle of Agincourt.

For King Charles III's coronation there were 2,300 people invited to the Abbey. This included many volunteers and community champions. Young people representing charitable organisations were also invited to watch from St Margaret's Church next to the Abbey. You could mention to your pupils that perhaps they might be invited to a coronation one day.

### 5) The quire

*Pass under the gold screen.*

Do you like singing? You might like to ask pupils if they're part of a choir, or if they sing at school or at home.

If you were organising a coronation, what type of music would you have? This could be a nice discussion around pupils' favourite music, genres, artists or songs. Would they want traditional or modern music at their coronation?

---

# Westminster Abbey

## Learning



Can you spot the large musical instrument that is used to accompany the choir's singing during coronations? *Clue: look up!* **This is an organ, which can be found above the gold screen you just walked through. You may notice the grey organ pipes against the walls.**

Quire is an alternative way of spelling 'choir'. The choir always plays an important role at every coronation. A mixture of new pieces and traditional pieces are sung. Handel's anthem 'Zadok the Priest' was composed for the coronation of King George II in 1727 and has been sung at every coronation since. You will see the burial place of Handel later at 8) Poet's Corner.

The organ was built in 1937 for the coronation of King George VI. It's made up of hundreds of buttons, pedals, keys and pipes – and the whole instrument is powered by wind.

The large open space in-between the quire and the High Altar is unique to Westminster Abbey. It was built specifically so that as many people as possible could see the monarch during a coronation. This is where the Coronation Theatre is erected.

### 6) The High Altar

Draw an X where you think the Coronation Chair is placed. **The pink circle in the centre of the pavement is where the Coronation Chair is placed for the coronation service.**

These are the stages of a coronation service. Which do you think is the most important part and why? **The anointing is the most important part, as this is the moment when the monarch is blessed by God. It's a very holy moment and so is usually kept private. During King Charles III's coronation, we couldn't see the anointing as he was surrounded by beautiful screens.**

What might these objects be called? **They are the Ampulla and Coronation Spoon.**

Beneath the Cosmati Pavement was the original burial place of Edward the Confessor. After becoming king through battle, William the Conqueror decided to be crowned here – the place where the previous king was buried. Although the Abbey was rebuilt from the 1240s (with the Cosmati Pavement added in 1268), monarchs continued to be crowned here, in the same place where William's coronation had taken place in the earlier church.

Anointing is a very ancient tradition. In the Bible, King Solomon was anointed by Zadok the Priest. The coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey continues the ancient tradition of anointing.

### 7) Royal tombs

As you move past the High Altar towards the Lady Chapel, you will pass the Shrine of Edward the Confessor on your right. The tombs in a circle around the Shrine all belong to kings and queens of England. You could ask your pupils to see who they can spot. This was the favoured place for royal burial, but eventually all the places were taken. When King Henry VII came to the throne, he built the Lady Chapel - a new place for his royal family (the Tudors) to be buried.

---

# Westminster Abbey

## Learning



*The staircase ahead leads you to the Lady Chapel. To view the tomb of Queen Mary I and Queen Elizabeth I, you will need to turn left into a small side chapel, just before you reach the top of the staircase. Once inside, please walk around the tomb in a clockwise direction.*

It can get crowded around the tomb of Mary I and Elizabeth I, so you might want to suggest pupils look at the tomb closely and then complete the activity outside where there is a bit more space.

Look at Elizabeth I's tomb, how can we tell she was a queen? **She is wearing a crown and holding an orb and sceptre (objects from the Coronation Regalia that we learnt about earlier).** Pupils might also mention her dress and jewels, the lions, the grandness of the tomb and the decorative gold leaf, which show she was an important person.

Mary I and Elizabeth I were sisters, and the first queens regnant of England. This means they were female monarchs in their own right, rather than being married to kings. Mary I does not have an effigy but she is buried directly beneath Elizabeth I. Not all monarchs were given a large memorial; their brother, Edward VI, only has a floor stone in the main Lady Chapel.

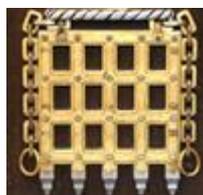
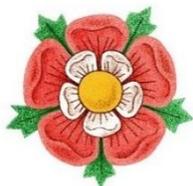
### 7) The Lady Chapel

How many crowns can you spot? **There are lots of crowns in the Lady Chapel and too many to count during your visit. You may choose to put a time limit on this activity.**

What other royal symbols can you see? **Other royal symbols your pupils might see are lions, unicorns, swords, royal standard flags and helmets.**

Encourage your pupils to look up! The ceiling was designed to look like heaven and was considered a wonder of the world. It was all carved by hand.

If you have studied the Tudors, this is where all the Tudor monarchs are buried except King Henry VIII. There are Tudor symbols all over the Lady Chapel – look out for Tudor roses, portcullises and fleur-de-lis.



The wooden seats on the sides of the Lady Chapel are for the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Bath. These people have been knighted by the monarch for military or civil service. They get to design their own flags and helmets to mark their seats.

---

# Westminster Abbey

## Learning



### 8) Poet's Corner

Do you recognise any of their names? Pupils might have heard of:

- C.S. Lewis – wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia*
- Lewis Carroll – wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
- Charles Dickens – wrote *Oliver Twist, A Christmas Carol* etc
- Jane Austen – wrote *Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility* etc

Shakespeare wrote lots of plays and some of them were about past kings and queens of England. What words would you use to describe a good king or queen? **Ask pupils what qualities, characteristics or behaviours they would want in a good king or queen. For example, would they want a monarch to be strong, powerful, fair or kind?**

If you were buried or remembered at Westminster Abbey, what pose would you want your statue to be in? Create your pose to show your classmates! **Encourage pupils to think about how they would stand and what facial expressions they might make. They might like to look around at nearby examples for inspiration.**

The statue of William Shakespeare is a memorial – he is not buried at the Abbey. If you would like to find out more about the poets and writers buried and commemorated here when you are back at school, please head to our [website](#).

### Reflections

If you have time at the end of your visit, you could sit in the cloisters sketching and reflecting. Pupils could write down their favourite thing about their visit, something that surprised them or that they want to find out more about.