



Assembly



The Royal Visit to Ireland

Theme:

- The attributes needed to be a successful Queen

Introduction

When you were a young child, and an adult asked, 'What would you like to be when you grow up?', what did you answer? When I grow up, I want to be a . . .

Encourage pupils to think back to their early childhood and remember their hopes and dreams. If appropriate, take some answers from the pupils.

Answers may include:

- A racing driver
- A princess
- A fireman
- A doctor
- A soldier
- A teacher
- A pop star
- A model
- A footballer
- A spaceman
- Superman



(Or some other roles relevant to your pupils)
And now think, what are the main characteristics that you will need to become a . . . ? *(whatever they answered)*

When Kate Middleton was a child, I wonder what she wanted to be when she grew up? Like many little girls, did she dream of becoming a princess? And did she ever think about the characteristics needed to be a 'princess'? Did she dress up in frilly dresses with tinsel in her hair and play

'princesses and princes' with her friends at nursery? Maybe, but somehow, I doubt that she ever really believed that one day she would be Queen! Yet, she might well become queen! So what characteristics might she need to be successful in that role? *(Encourage pupils to think about this)*

Looking Deeper

The courage of the Queen

Princess Elizabeth became Queen Elizabeth II at her coronation in 1953. She has now been Queen for nearly 60 years. In that time, she has made hundreds of visits overseas to 129 different countries. She is widely respected and regarded as having been 'successful' in her role, displaying dignity, perseverance, wisdom and thoughtfulness whilst 'doing her duty' as Queen.

In all that time, she has never set foot in the country which is our nearest neighbour, Ireland. The last British monarch to do so, was her grandfather, King George V in July 1911, almost 100 years ago. Now, in May 2011, she has just made her first visit.

Despite being such a near neighbour, and sharing a common border where the Republic of Ireland meets the six counties of Northern Ireland (which are part of the United Kingdom), relations between Britain and Ireland have been fraught and violent for centuries (hundreds of people have died in fighting between Britain and Ireland). The battles over several centuries were the result of British rule and dominance in Ireland, in various forms and guises, but were particularly bloody in the Irish war of independence between 1919-1921, when the Irish fought and won their independence from Britain.



Current Affairs Assembly

KS3 Active Citizens – Character and integrity

Assembly

40



Page
2 of 3

So the Queen's State visit to Ireland this week is particularly remarkable. She was invited by the Irish Prime Minister, the taoiseach (*pronounced tee-shock*), Enda Kenny, and will visit the Irish Parliament, the Dail (*pronounced doil*). She will meet the President of the Irish republic, Mary McAleese, and there will be formal dinners. There will also be visits to the Irish national horse stud, as horse racing is a particular interest of the Queen's.

But arguably, the most significant events during the four day visit will be her visit to the Garden of Remembrance and to Croke Park, the huge national sports' stadium in Dublin.

The Garden of Remembrance was built to honour all those who were killed fighting for Irish freedom from the British.

Memorials include one to the United Irishmen, who were killed in the 1798 uprising against the British, and one for those killed in the Easter Uprising in 1916, and the Irish War of Independence between 1919-1921.

During November 1920, in the bitter fighting of the War for Independence, British troops entered Croke Park during a gaelic football match, and fired indiscriminately on the crowd of spectators, killing 14 and wounding many more. This was a retribution attack for the assassination of undercover British agents in Dublin by the IRA.

At both these venues, the Queen will lay a wreath in memory of those who were killed fighting against the British forces. The Queen has laid many wreaths at memorials over the years, but laying a wreath in memory of those who were killed by British forces is VERY unusual.

So, these visits make this State visit by the Queen rather different from her usual State visits! She was greeted by cheering crowds

as she usually is on a State visit, but there were also many people in Ireland who resent this 'the British Crown' and all that the Queen represents and who still continue fighting against the British.

The Queen's visit is in response to an invitation from the political leaders in Ireland who have offered the hand of friendship, and who want to see reconciliation and harmony between the two countries. In accepting the invitation, the Queen has needed courage, as certainly there are threats against her life, and she also has displayed dignity and humility. By laying wreaths for those killed by British soldiers, and bowing her head in respect as she did so, she is making a gesture of humility and seeking reconciliation between the two nations.

Humility and behaviour which seeks reconciliation, acknowledging wrongs done and asking for forgiveness. These are not attributes usually associated with members of the Royal family. That takes courage! The Queen is the head of the Church of England. As such, she is seeking to follow the advice given by St Paul in the Bible (in Colossians 3:12-13), where he writes, " As God's chosen people, clothe yourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

In the much earlier Bible book, Proverbs, the writer advises, 'The fear of the Lord teaches wisdom, and humility comes before honour.'(Proverbs 15:33).

So maybe we can all learn, along with those in positions of power in our country, whether politicians or royalty, that important characteristics to develop are wisdom and humility which come from listening to God and following the example of Jesus.



Current Affairs Assembly

KS3 Active Citizens – Character and integrity

Assembly

40



Reflection

'The fear of the Lord teaches wisdom, and humility comes before honour.'
(Proverbs 15:33).

Think for a moment about the courage the Queen needed to undertake this visit to Ireland considering the threats to her safety, and what we can all learn from the humility she displayed when laying the wreath in the Garden of remembrance.

Prayer

Lord God, we ask for forgiveness for our nation for wrongs done in the past. We pray for the healing of grievances, bitterness and hurts, particularly between the Irish nation and the British. We ask for real reconciliation and a new spirit of working together as a result of this symbolic visit by the Queen to Ireland.
Amen.

Key words:

Queen Elizabeth II
Characteristics of greatness
Humility
Courage
Reconciliation
Forgiveness
Ireland



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II