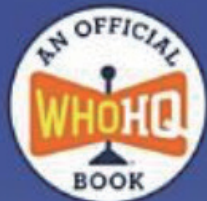


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Who Is Queen Elizabeth II?



by Megan Stine

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by Megan Stine

illustrated by Laurie A. Conley

Penguin Workshop

For Bill, who visited Buckingham Palace with me
and loves his afternoon tea—MS

For my family and our Canadian roots—LAC

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Who Is Queen Elizabeth II?

Ten-year-old Princess Elizabeth had spent time in castles and palaces in England and Scotland since she'd been born. Her father was a duke. Her grandfather was the king of the United Kingdom, or the UK, which included England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Like a fairy-tale princess, Elizabeth led a happy, carefree life in a big house in London.

Called Lilibet by family members, Elizabeth had everything a princess could want—dogs, ponies, tiaras, closets full of pretty dresses, and a lot of free time. She didn't go to school. She was taught by her nanny at home. At the age of six, she was given her own tiny cottage with a thatched roof made of straw. It was a playhouse for her and her younger sister, Margaret. It came

with a working kitchen and child-sized furniture in all the rooms.

Lilibet and Margaret were incredibly popular with the British people. Even as a baby, Lilibet received letters and gifts—three tons of toys!—from people as far away as Australia.

Although Elizabeth was a princess, she never expected to become a queen herself.

Her uncle Edward was the oldest son of the king, so he was first in line for the throne. Lilibet's father, Albert, was second in line. That meant Edward would become king after his father died. Once Edward had children of his own, his oldest child would be second in line. Lilibet's father would move down the list, and probably never become king.

And at first, when Lilibet's grandfather died in January 1936, that's what happened. Her uncle became King Edward VIII.

But later that year, everything changed.

Edward had fallen in love with an American woman. He wanted to marry her. But she had been divorced—twice. According to the Church of England, a king could not marry a divorced woman. Edward wanted to marry her so much, he decided to give up being king.



King Edward VIII

On December 10, 1936, King Edward VIII abdicated—he gave up the throne. He signed papers and immediately stepped down. When he did that, Lilibet's father instantly became the king. Her father's real name was Albert, but he chose George as his royal name: King George VI. Now that her father was king, Lilibet was suddenly next in line for the throne!



King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth

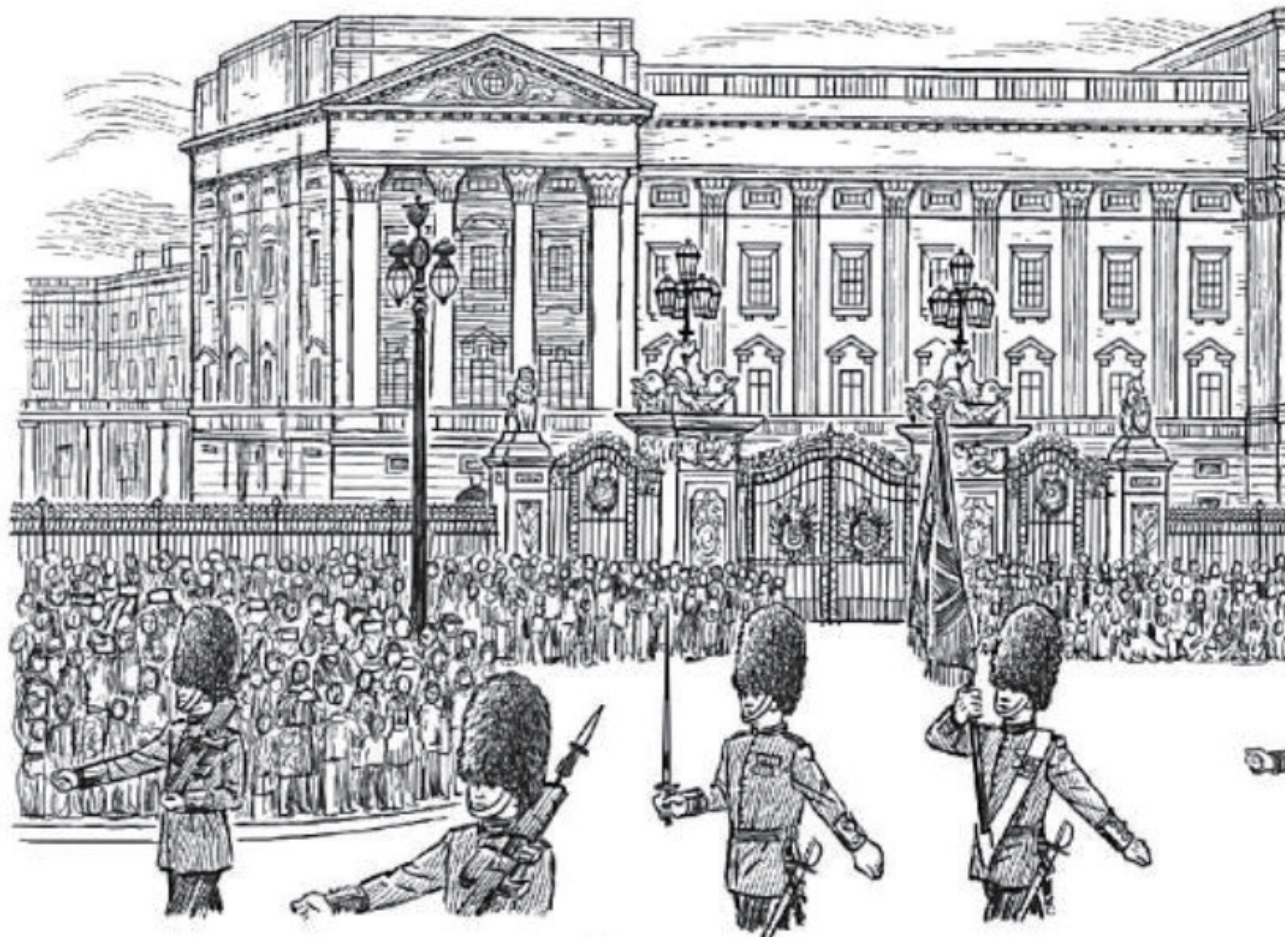
A servant came to tell Elizabeth the news. He bowed as he entered the room. From that moment on, everyone treated her differently, and her life was planned out for her. She had only one job—learning how to become a queen.

One day, she would rule over an empire that included fifty-four countries around the world. At the age of ten, Elizabeth had no idea how quickly that might happen.

CHAPTER 1

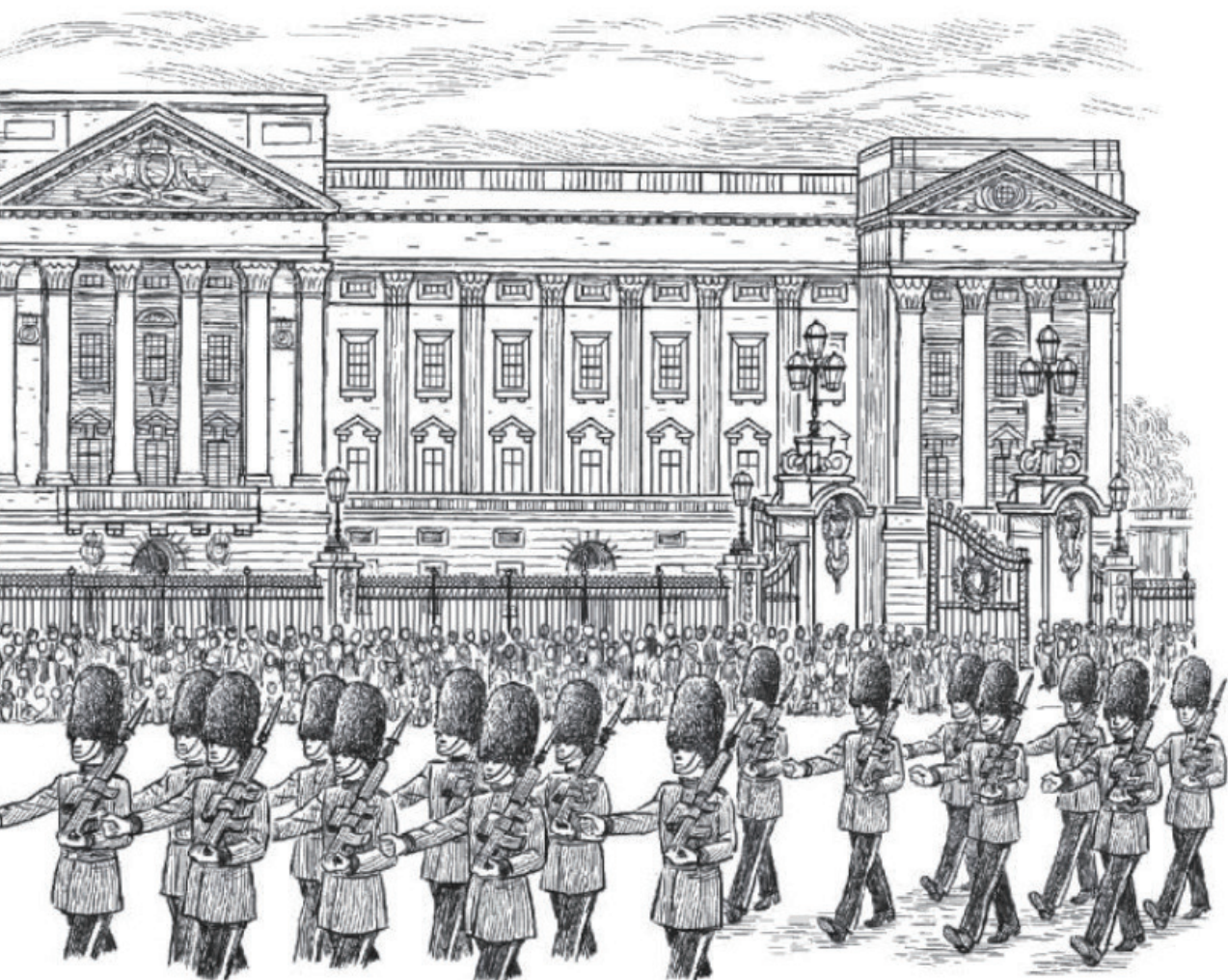
A Young Princess

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor was born at home on a rainy night, April 21, 1926. While Lilibet was a baby, her family moved to an enormous house in London. It had a



ballroom, a library, and twenty-five bedrooms.

Once her father was king, her family moved into Buckingham Palace—an enormous palace in the center of London. It had 775 rooms with hundreds of people working there. Huge iron gates at the front kept people out. So did guards dressed in bright red uniforms including tall bearskin hats.



Lilibet's father had never wanted to be king. King George VI was shy and stuttered when he spoke. He loved horses and dogs. When Lilibet was only three, she had her first riding lesson. When she was seven, her father gave her a Welsh corgi named Dookie. From then on, she loved horses and corgis—almost more than anything else.

Lilibet's nanny was named Marion Crawford. Everyone called her Crawfie. She spent nearly all day with Lilibet and Margaret, teaching them



history, reading, geography, and grammar.

As a young child, Lilibet was sometimes naughty. She had a hot temper like her father and grandfather. But as Elizabeth grew up, her mother taught her to control her anger. She told her never to shout at people—especially when she became queen—or people would lose their trust in her.

By the time she was ten, Lilibet had turned into a serious girl. She liked to have fun with her family and could be friendly and charming. But she was quiet and dignified in public. She already knew how to act like a queen.

Lilibet's younger sister, Margaret, was the opposite of her—wild and free. She loved mocking the way famous people spoke. Lilibet laughed but would never do anything like that herself.

Elizabeth's father once said, "Lilibet is my pride. Margaret is my joy." Both girls visited their parents' bedroom every morning to play and have fun. It was a family tradition.

How the British Government Works

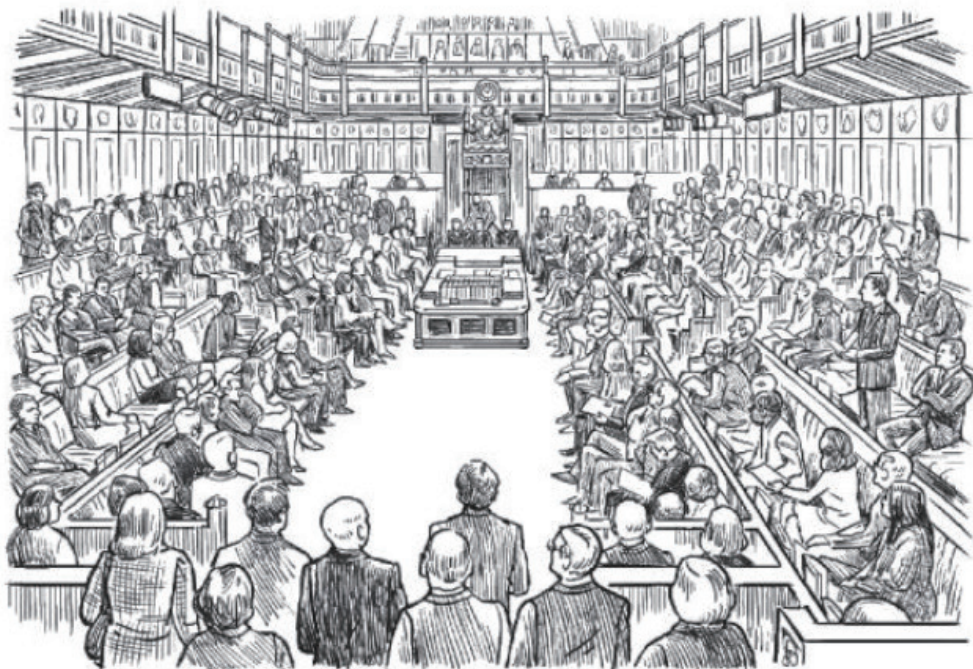
The system of having kings and queens is called a monarchy. At one time, British monarchs had total power to rule. But today, the king or queen holds almost no power.

The government in the United Kingdom is called Parliament. Members of Parliament make the laws,



and the monarch is expected to agree to them. This system is called a constitutional monarchy.

There are two separate branches of Parliament: the House of Lords and the House of Commons.



The House of Lords includes religious leaders, dukes, duchesses, and other members of British nobility. Some are elected, but most are allowed to sit in the House of Lords just because of their titles.

The House of Commons is different. Men and women are elected by the public from all over the United Kingdom. The leader of the House of Commons is the prime minister. That job is similar to being the president in the United States.