


Compréhension de l'écrit (2)

À partir de supports multiples

Séries ES, S, L et technologiques

« L'épreuve de compréhension de l'écrit prend appui sur un, deux ou trois documents en langue étrangère et peut comporter des éléments d'iconographie. Ces documents renvoient à des notions du programme du cycle terminal sans exiger des connaissances trop spécifiques. »

Instructions officielles, B.O. du 24 nov. 2011

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Albert Frederick Arthur George, King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions and the last Emperor of India, woke up with a start. It was just after 3 a.m. The bedroom in Buckingham Palace he had occupied since becoming monarch five months earlier was normally a haven of peace and quiet in the heart of London, but on this particular morning his slumbers had been rudely interrupted by the crackle of loudspeakers being tested outside on Constitution Hill. "One of them might have been in our room," he wrote in his diary. And then, just when he thought he might finally be able to go back to sleep, the marching bands and troops started up.

It was 12 May 1937, and the forty-one-year-old king was about to face one of the greatest – and most nerve-racking – days of his life: his coronation. [...]

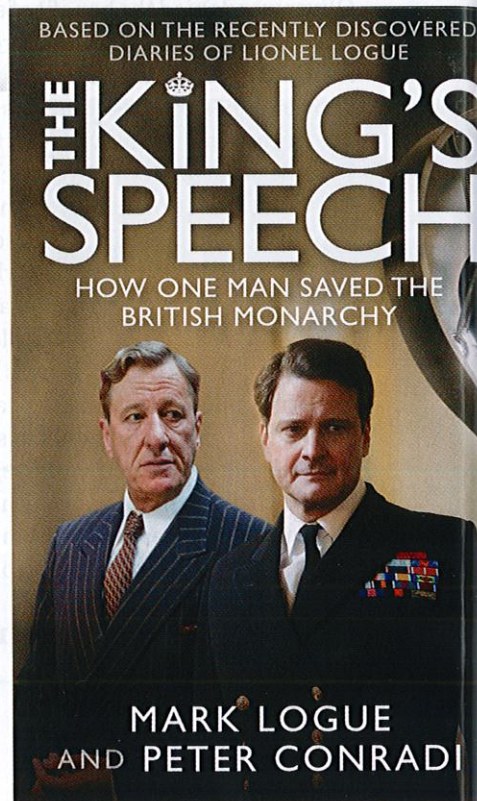
As the hours ticked by and the streets of London began to fill with crowds of well-wishers, many of whom had slept on camp beds, [...] the King had a 'sinking feeling' inside and could eat no breakfast. "I knew that I was to spend a most trying day and to go through the most important ceremony in my life", he wrote in his diary that evening. "The hours of waiting before leaving for Westminster Abbey were the most nerve racking." [...]


To be at the centre of such a ceremony – all the while balancing an ancient 7lb crown on his head – would have been a huge ordeal for anyone, but the King had particular reason to view what was in store for him with trepidation: plagued since childhood by a series of medical ailments, he also suffered from a debilitating stammer. Embarrassing enough in small gatherings, it turned public speaking into a major ordeal. The King, in the words of America's *Time Magazine*, was the 'most famed contemporary stammerer' in the world, joining a roll call of prominent names stretching back to antiquity that included Aesop, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Virgil, Erasmus and Darwin.

Worse, in the weeks running up to the coronation, the King had been forced to endure a whispering campaign about his health, stirred up by supporters of his embittered elder brother, who was now living in exile in France. The new King, it was rumoured, was in such poor physical state that he would not be able to endure the coronation ceremony, let alone discharge his functions as sovereign.

Mark Logue and Peter Conradi,

The King's Speech: how one man saved the British Monarchy (2010)



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The king's speech

The real story

The story of the stuttering sovereign: the epic events that inspired the Oscar-tipped film, 'The King's Speech'



↑ A staged photograph of George VI announcing the declaration of war to the nation in September 1939

There are many forms of irony – verbal, dramatic, situational and so on – but the one that surely applied to King George VI was the irony of fate. It was as if the gods, or Fates, were amusing themselves by toying with his mind, mocking his failings, reminding him that he was very much a mortal. It was, after all, almost impossible for him to pronounce the letter 'k', thanks to his debilitating nervous stammer. A cruel fate for a king.

Even crueller, his reign coincided with a revolution in mass communication. For the first time in British history, subjects could listen to their monarch addressing them through their wireless sets, as if he were with them in their living rooms.

But the technology didn't allow George VI to pre-record his broadcasts, as would be the case for the generations that followed.

When he addressed the nation, it had to be done through a live microphone, without editing, an agony for a stammerer.

The layers of irony did not end there. Because he had been told that cigarettes might help with his stammer, George VI chain-smoked – and he consequently died of lung cancer at the age of 56 in 1952. And the greatest irony of all? This vulnerable and stammering king proved to be exactly the right man at the right time.

The stammering that defined him, and the courage with which he tried to beat it, came to symbolise the

vulnerability of the British people as they stood alone against the Nazi tyranny that had the rest of Europe in its grip. A certain solidarity between monarch and subject emerged, especially when George VI overruled requests from the government that he and his family relocate to the safety of Canada. ■

By Nigel Farndale,
telegraph.co.uk,
05 Jan 2011