



# BUCKINGHAM PALACE



## CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS: TEACHER NOTES THE STATE ROOMS, BUCKINGHAM PALACE

The imposing façade of **Buckingham Palace** is familiar to millions, but it isn't just a tourist attraction. It's the historic setting for state occasions, banquets and investitures, and a magical background to receptions and garden-parties. It's the formal environment for the business of government - and during the summer opening, offers a vibrant and exciting welcome to thousands of visitors from all over the world.

Any visit to Buckingham Palace makes an intriguing and stimulating source for creative writing. Descriptions can be made of its fabulous rooms and the treasures they hold, and stories and dialogues written about the people who live there. But this year's creative writing sessions for schools will explore the Palace as a background for a very special event for the UK, the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

For fifty years as Prince of Wales, The King has championed many causes about which he felt deeply. As he has said: 'By listening to each other, we will find so many of the solutions that we seek'. He believes in the importance of harmony and sustainability and often spoke with great passion the need to protect the natural world for future generations. He has worked for many years to encourage interfaith dialogue and a greater understanding of different religions. He has also supported charities working in all areas of public life and founded a number of organisations, such as The Prince's Trust, focused on strengthening communities and giving opportunities to disadvantaged young people.

As Duchess of Cornwall, Queen Camilla's joy in reading led to great concern for the promotion of literacy and its importance in creating life opportunities. This has culminated in the establishment of her own book club, 'The Queen's Reading Room', a charity that helps people to connect with books and become lifelong readers.

On their visit, your students will experience and write about the Coronation, King Charles III's new role as Sovereign and how tradition involves sustainability and handing down of artefacts and relics. They will take away with them a 'Writer's Notebook' of ideas and reminders of the two hours spent in the Palace. This writing and the follow-up suggestions at the end of these notes can be developed into longer, finished pieces of writing or other creative projects. A selection of the following images, artefacts and the State Rooms themselves will be used.

### **The Diamond Jubilee State Coach**

Built in Australia to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee, this is the newest of the royal coaches and was first used at the State Opening of Parliament on 4 June 2014. It is over 5m long, weighs over 3 tonnes and needs 6 horses to pull it.



The Diamond Jubilee State Coach combines traditional craftsmanship and modern technology – the body is aluminium and six hydraulic stabilisers prevent swaying.

The gilded frieze around the top of the coach features the national emblems of the rose of England, thistle of Scotland, flax of Northern Ireland and leek of Wales.

The interior wooden panels of the coach are made from objects donated by over 100 historic sites and organisations from across Britain. The seat handrails are from the Royal Yacht Britannia, and the window frames and interior panels include samples of woods, metals and other materials from Balmoral Castle, the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Windsor Castle and seventeen other historic houses around the UK, plus a piece of a Battle of Britain spitfire, a British musket ball from the Battle of Waterloo and digital copies of Magna Carta and Domesday Book. The gilded crown on top of the coach is carved from oak from HMS Victory and can hold a camera to film royal journeys.



### THRONE ROOM

White, Allom & Company

#### *Pair of Chairs of Estate*

Used by Queen Elizabeth II & Prince Philip and by King Charles III and Queen Camilla

1953-2023

Gilt beechwood (frame), silk damask (upholstery)

RCIN 2607

A pair of Chairs of Estate, the back embroidered with an EIIR or P cypher within a garter. The scrolled front legs are joined by a stretcher carved with scrolls and another cypher. The design was probably inspired by a late seventeenth century chair. Both chairs were reupholstered and conserved for King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

Tatham, Bailey & Sanders

#### *Pair of Council Chairs, 1812*

Gilt wood, velvet upholstery

RCIN 2629

Pair of council chairs of carved and gilded pin and beechwood, covered in red velvet with gold trimmings and fitted with a cushion and valance. Backs shaped like Roman chariots that are solid to ground and elaborately carved. Padded velvet armrests supported on the wings and heads of two carved sphinxes, who sit on either side of the chair.



The chairs are made in the fully developed Roman manner that George IV, as Prince of Wales, favoured for his mansion, Carlton House. They moved several times from Carlton House to St James's Palace and finally to Buckingham Palace, where they were again frequently moved from room to room with different coloured upholstery. Carlton House was demolished and its contents redistributed to help pay for the reconstruction of Buckingham Palace.



Dowbiggin & Co  
**Queen Victoria's Throne**  
1837  
Carved gilt wood, velvet  
RCIN 2608



Queen Victoria's throne is made of carved gilt wood, with crimson velvet upholstery and lacework. The top rail is carved with a crown, VR cipher and national emblems – rose, thistle and shamrock. The frame is elaborately decorated with foliage of oak leaves, acanthus scrolls and berried laurel – all symbols of royalty and high status.

The Queen's small stature made a throne of normal height an embarrassing difficulty for her. Her feet didn't reach the ground, so the legs of the throne were made short enough to make her comfortable, although no one since has been able to use it.

#### **EAST GALLERY**

Sir George Hayter (1792-1871)  
***The Coronation of Queen Victoria in Westminster Abbey, 28 June 1838***  
Signed and dated 1839  
Oil on canvas 255.3 x 381.0 cm  
RCIN 405409



The painting shows the moment in Queen Victoria's Coronation when, after the Crowning, 'the people with loud and repeated shouts, will cry 'God Save the Queen', and immediately the Peers and Peeresses present will put on their Coronets'. The Queen described it as 'a most beautiful and impressive moment'. She is seated on the Coronation Chair (King Edward's Chair) and wears the Imperial State Crown. In her right hand is the Sceptre with the Cross and in her left the Sceptre with the Dove.

Sir George Hayter had only a week to prepare for the event. He witnessed the ceremony from a box quite high up and sketched throughout the ceremony which lasted five hours. There was little rehearsal and was criticised by some as 'under-rehearsed' and even chaotic. Hayter drew and measured parts of the Abbey after the ceremony was over, and the high canopy over the royal ladies' box and one behind it are his imaginary creation.

The painting was completed in 1840 and the Queen was delighted with it. The Times newspaper pronounced it 'a very splendid picture'.



Terence Tenison Cuneo (1907-96)  
***The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II,  
 Westminster Abbey, 2 June 1953***  
 Signed and dated 1954  
 Oil on Canvas, 213.8 x 305.4 cm  
 RCIN 404470

Eight thousand people were present in Westminster Abbey for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. We look down from the point in the Abbey that gave the artist the best view to exploit the space.

The Queen has already been crowned with St Edward's Crown, seated in King Edward's chair, wearing the Imperial State Crown and is surrounded by the Archbishop of Canterbury and other leading clergy and peers. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, climbs the stairs to kneel before the Queen. He will kneel to make his Oath of Allegiance, as Prince William did to his father, King Charles III, at his coronation. Members of the nobility – placed in the transept on the left in their ermine and coronets - will follow, whereas Prince William alone took the Oath on their behalf.

Further to the left, on a specially erected balcony, stand members of the royal family, among them the Princess Royal and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, who has a grandmotherly hand on the shoulder of the four-year-old Duke of Cornwall – the little boy that became Prince of Wales and is now King Charles III.

The size of the chandelier hanging way above the congregation but carefully placed in relation to St Edward's Chair gives an illusion of the vast height, but also emphasises the importance of the isolated chair below in the ceremony. Beneath the chair, the Stone of Scone can be clearly seen. The lighting in the painting, both from hidden windows of the Abbey and specially installed arc lights heighten the drama of the vivid contrasts in colour in the scene.

## BALLROOM EXHIBITION

Royal School of Needlework  
***King Charles III's Coronation  
 Anointing Screen 2023***  
 Wool, gold thread, silk, oak, gilded  
 bronze resin  
 RCIN 255055



The anointing screen was made to shield King Charles from view when he withdrew for the Anointing of the King, the most sacred and religiously significant part of the Coronation Service. Through the ritual, the monarch is considered to have been consecrated by God for the duties of a sovereign. At this moment, he wore a plain white gown symbolising purity and humility.

The screen is in three leaves, each leaf supported by oak poles taken from Windsor Park and surmounted by gilded eagles. The central image is in wool and embroidery and depicts a Tree of Life, each leaf representing one of the fifty-six Commonwealth countries. A representative of each country attended the Coronation.

The embroidery was inspired by the stained-glass window in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace, created for the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002. The tree depicted is also inhabited by birds and angels representing harmony and joy. The designer, Aiden Hart, said that the maroon, gold, blue and red colours of the embroidery were chosen to reflect the colours of the Cosmati mosaic pavement decorating the floor in front of the High Altar at Westminster Abbey, laid down in 1286 during the reign of Henry III.

White, Allom & Company

***Pair of Throne Chairs***

Used by King George VI & Queen Elizabeth, and King Charles III and Queen Camilla

1937-2023

Wood, velvet & silk thread embroidery

RCIN 2604



The chairs are in the form of X-frame armchairs in early sixteenth century style. The red velvet covers are much worn and decorated with gold fringing. The centre of the X frames are embroidered with the white rose of York, reflecting the title of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth prior to their accession.

Both were reapplied for King Charles III and Queen Camilla. One chair is embroidered with the royal coat of arms for King Charles III, the other with the coat of arms of his Consort.

The style replicates the style of chair made for the coronations of Charles II and James II in the seventeenth century.



Ede & Ravenscroft

**King Charles III's Robe of Estate**

Length 5.601 m Weight, over 6kg.

The Robe of Estate (Coronation Robe) is made of purple silk velvet, embroidered in gold and replaced the Robe of State for the King's departure from the Abbey. He retained it for his appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace and official photographs of the occasion. The Robe of Estate was worn by King Charles III's grandfather, King George VI in 1937 and has been conserved and prepared ahead of the Coronation.



Royal School of Needlework

**Queen Camilla's Robe of Estate (Coronation Robe)**

Velvet, ermine, silk embroidery

138 cm (Width) 400 cm (Length)

RCIN 255054

A purple velvet Robe of Estate of purple velvet with ermine trim the velvet embroidered with British flowers and for the first time, insects including bees, butterflies, a beetle and a caterpillar, terminating in a central CR cypher. Worn by The Queen following her crowning and for the final part of the Coronation Service, the return to Buckingham Palace including balcony appearances and the official photographs.

Bruce Oldfield

**Queen Camilla's Coronation Dress**

Peau de soie silk, embroidery

RCIN 255052

The skirt of the full-length gown is designed as a coat dress cut away to reveal an embroidered under skirt. The embroidery is in gold and silver thread and depicts bunting, flowers, the names of The Queen's family and depictions of her Jack Russell rescue dogs, Bluebell and Beth, with a central CR cypher.



**The Music Room**

Created during King George IV's expansion and decoration of Buckingham House into Buckingham Palace and designed by John Nash, the Music Room is one of the most spectacular and yet serene of the State Rooms. Here, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, who were both extremely musical, spent many happy hours playing and singing together.

The Music Room is where guests are presented before a dinner or banquet. It has also been the scene of many royal christenings, when the elegant silver gilt Lily Font is installed for the ceremony. King Charles III and Prince William were both christened here.

We hope that your students enjoy their visit to Buckingham Palace and will take home with them lasting memories, surprises, ideas and writing that will remain a source for their creativity for a long time to come.

### **A Brief History of Buckingham Palace**

George IV once lived just down the road at Carlton House, but on becoming King, he decided that he needed something much larger, much grander – a proper Palace to impress the public and big enough for entertaining on a stupendous scale. He acquired Buckingham House, then just a large mansion, and with his architect John Nash, set about adding a suite of State Rooms and decorating them in a fashion he deemed fit for a king. Sadly, he didn't live to enjoy his creation – he died in 1830 while it was still being completed. His successor William IV hated it and spent his six years as monarch elsewhere. When Queen Victoria became Queen, she lifted the dustsheets and recognized the merits of the building as an appropriate focus for the monarchy. Her coronation and then her wedding to her cousin Albert came first, after which the newly-weds moved in.

But once married and with a growing family, it became evident that the Palace was no longer big enough. She made her feelings clear in a letter to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. She wrote:

*'Sir Robert is acquainted with the state of the Palace, and the total want of accommodation for our growing little family, which is fast growing up... most parts of the Palace are in a sad state, and will ere long require a further outlay to render them decent... A room, capable of containing a larger number of those persons whom the Queen has to invite in the course of the season to balls, concerts, etc. than any of the present apartments can at once hold, is much wanted...'*

So the decision was made to extend the Palace with an addition to the West Wing. The architect Edward Blore and the designer Ludwig Grüner were engaged to build and decorate a new Ballroom, and to refurbish the Great Staircase with the addition of kitchens below. Marble Arch, which had been George IV's grand entrance, was moved to a new place at Hyde Park Corner where it still stands. A whole new East Wing was added in its place with rooms for the family and creating the internal courtyard and the façade with its famous balcony.

The result is the Palace as it's known and loved the world over today, and which your students will experience and write about on their visit.

All images of paintings and works of art below can be found digitally at: [www.rct.uk](http://www.rct.uk)



## FOLLOW UPS

- 1. Choose your favourite piece of writing from your visit to Buckingham Palace and bring to publication state – edit it carefully, set out attractively and illustrate it if you like.**
2. When you were at the Palace, you wrote a post card to someone about little Prince Charles at his mother, Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation. Write that 'someone's' reply.
3. King Charles decided against having a State Banquet to celebrate the Coronation. But you could give one for him. Find some photos of State Banquets and **design your own lay-out and seating plan. Who would you invite to be there with him? What would you serve at the meal? Who would wait at table – or would you have self-service?**
4. Look carefully at the paintings of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II's Coronations and find a photo of King Charles's Coronation taken at about the same moment. **What are the differences and what are the same? Which version do you like best? What would you have kept from the older ceremonies for King Charles's. What would you leave out? And what would you put in, that isn't there?**
5. As Prince of Wales, King Charles spoke often at occasions where bio-diversity and global warming were discussed. These are two concerns that occupied him a great deal and he argued for changes in ways of living that would help stop the destruction of the world as we know it. He cares about religious understanding and tolerance and often met with people of faiths other than his own to try and bring this about. He set up organisations such as the Prince's Trust as a way of giving all young people, but particularly those from a disadvantaged background, better prospects for their lives. **As the new Prince of Wales, Prince William will take on much of this work. What advice would you give to the Prince about how to carry on this important responsibility?**
6. **What would you suggest that your school does to carry on these responsibilities?** Can you set these in motion? And what about you? Can you do anything to help save the planet? It may be in a small way, but if everyone did it...?
7. Write a letter to a friend and tell them about the possession most dear to you. One day you are going to leave it to them to take care of and hand down to posterity. Why is it important to you and why should it be saved and treasured for ever?
8. **Design a chair just for you or for a member of your family.** Make careful measurements and choose upholstery and design features for comfort and practicality. Once you have designed your chair, draw your ideal setting for it.
9. **Do you remember which insects are embroidered on Queen Camilla's gown?** Have a look on line for clips of some or all of them moving. What do they look like, colours, shapes, textures? What are they doing? How do they move? What are their surroundings? Are they endangered? Write a story or a poem about them and illustrate it with your own drawings or photographs.
10. **Make a class film, radio play, animation or flip book** about an adventure that happens in Buckingham Palace. Who are the characters? You have met quite a lot during your visit. What bits of the décor and furniture will you include – will they be central to your story? You can include things that weren't in the Palace but were in the Coronation if you like. Will it be action, mystery, ghost story, romance or comedy? Whatever it is, have fun making every aspect of it!

## eLearning interactive resources



### The Coronation 2023

The Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III took place on 6 May 2023 at Westminster Abbey. The ceremony saw His Majesty The King crowned alongside Her Majesty The Queen Consort.

To help your school celebrate this important moment in history, a number of linked resources and activities have been created for you that can be accessed [here](#).

### School Resources for the Coronation 2023

Discover a selection of school resources to celebrate the Coronation in 2023.



