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No recording of the Duke of York's 1925 closing speech at Wembley Stadium is known to have survived. This image depicts him delivering a speech at a different time and on a different occasion. He was uncomfortable giving such talks in public.

In 1925, King George asked his second son to address a large crowd at Wembley Stadium. The Duke would close the second season of the Empire Exhibition—a hugely popular event which had attracted millions of people.

The year before, the Prince of Wales—known as “David” to his family and friends—had opened the Exhibition. An accomplished speaker, David had delighted the crowd. (The link takes you to the BBC's radio archive and the actual 1924 speech.)

When it came to giving a speech, however, Bertie was no match for his king-in-waiting brother. The Duke of York was terrified about delivering even a short talk.

He had good reason to be worried, since his stammer—although greatly improved when he was near his wife—was still a problem for him. It was also a problem for Elizabeth:

*Her husband's impediment and the effect that it had on him were having an effect on the Duchess, too; according to one contemporary account, whenever he rose from the table to respond to a toast, she would grip the edge of the table until her knuckles were white for fear he would stutter and be unable to get a word out. (The King's Speech, by Mark Logue and Peter Conradi, page 60.)*

It wasn't just the crowd at the huge Wembley stadium who would hear the Duke of York's speech. Millions of people around the world would also listen in, since the BBC (then a three-year-old company) planned to broadcast Bertie's words. And ... for the first time ... the King's son would deliver a public address in his father's presence. All of these factors made him even more nervous.

Rehearsing didn't help. Bertie didn't like the huge microphones which were used at the time. Despite his best efforts, the speech went badly:

*Although he managed through sheer determination to struggle his way to the end, his performance was marked by some embarrassing moments when his jaw muscles moved frantically but no sound came out. The King tried to put a positive spin on it: "Bertie got through his speech all right, but there were some long pauses," he wrote to the Duke's young brother, Prince George, the following day. (Logue, quoting King George V in The King's Speech, at page 61.)*

People in the Wembley crowd, and those who heard the talk on their radios, felt sorrow for the struggling speaker. Those were not the feelings which the Duke of York meant to engender.

Although he “got through his speech,” Bertie was humiliated. His despair was understandable since he'd already worked—to no avail—with nine different speech therapists.

But ... there was someone in the Wembley audience who felt more than pity for the King's son. Lionel Logue, an Australian who had recently moved to London with his wife and children, heard the Duke's struggling efforts. As it happened, Logue was a speech therapist who'd already helped shell-shocked soldiers recover from World-War-One-caused speech difficulties.

Logue told his son, Laurie:

*He's too old for me to manage a complete cure. But I could very nearly do it. I am sure of that. (The King's Speech, page 62.)*

Logue would soon get his chance.

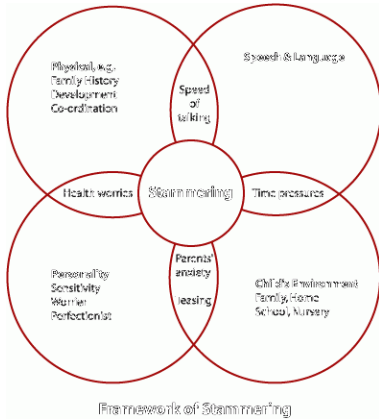
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BERTIE-S-STAMMER-The-King-s-Speech>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BERTIE-S-STAMMER-The-King-s-Speech>

## Media Stream



### Stammering - Chart of Causes

Chart online, courtesy [The Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Stammering-Chart-of-Causes>

### Duke of York - Disastrous Speech at Wembley

Clip from "[Bertie & Elizabeth - The Story of King George VI & Queen Elizabeth](#)," a 2002 television production. Copyright, Carlton Television and Whitehall Films, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the production. Online, courtesy PBS and YouTube.

**Director:**

Giles Foster

**Writer:**

Nigel Williams

**Starring:**

**James Wilby** - Bertie/Duke of York/George VI

**Juliet Aubrey** - Elizabeth

**Alan Bates** - George V

**Eileen Atkins** - Queen Mary

**Charles Edwards** - Edward VIII

**Production Co:**

Carlton Television and Whitehall Films

Also aired, [on PBS](#), in 2002 and 2005 (WGBH)

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Duke-of-York-Disastrous-Speech-at-Wembley>

