



0. THE KING'S SPEECH - Story Preface

1. ALBERT FREDERICK ARTHUR GEORGE

2. BERTIE and ELIZABETH

3. "WEDDING of the CENTURY"

4. BERTIE'S STAMMER

5. LIONEL LOGUE - SPEECH THERAPIST

6. OVERCOMING THE STAMMER

7. BERTIE BECOMES KING

8. THE KING'S SPEECH

This image depicts the official portrait of His Majesty, King George VI, on the 3rd of September, 1939. He gave a flawless performance of the radio address now known as "The King's Speech."

When Edward VIII abdicated, not only did he weaken the monarchy, he left behind a trail of chaos and misery. People throughout the British Empire worried whether the new King—who had never been groomed for the responsibility—could actually do the job.

It didn't help when Cosmo Lang, then the Archbishop of Canterbury, gave a radio address the day after the Duke of York became King George VI. For whatever reason, he mentioned the King's "occasional and momentary hesitation in his speech." People wondered: Was the King an epileptic, like his youngest brother John (the deceased, "lost prince")? Was he fit for duty?

Eighteen months after David (thereafter called the Duke of Windsor) left Britain to live the rest of his life in exile, his mother (Queen Mary) wrote to him:

I do not think you ever realised the shock which the attitude you took up caused your family and the whole nation. It seemed inconceivable to those who had made such sacrifices during the war [that is, WWI] that you, as their King, refused a lesser sacrifice. (Robert Rhodes James, quoting Queen Mary's letter, in *A Spirit Undaunted*, at page 114.)

Becoming Queen against her wishes, Elizabeth also reacted to her brother-in-law's decision to abandon his country:

I don't think we could ever imagine a more incredible tragedy, and the agony of it has been beyond words. And the melancholy fact remains still at the present moment, that he for whom we agonised is the one person it did not touch. (*A Spirit Undaunted*, page 115.)

Worse—far, far worse—days were still to come for Britain and King George VI (who continued to struggle with giving speeches, as depicted in [this 1938 video](#)).

As the gathering clouds of another great war hovered over Europe, Britain concluded a mutual assistance agreement with Poland. On the 1st of September, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, triggering the terms of the Anglo-Polish treaty. If Germany did not remove its occupying forces from Poland, Britain would declare war on Germany.

Despite all his efforts to appease Hitler, and avert war, Neville Chamberlain—then Britain's Prime Minister—knew he had failed. Hitler had looked Chamberlain in the eye, then lied to his face. There would be no "peace in our time." Germany would neither back down nor remove its troops from Poland. On the 3rd of September, 1939, Chamberlain announced that the two countries were at war.

That announcement would be followed by the King's speech. Singularly important, George VI had to address, and calm, a troubled people. Hundreds of thousands of children, uprooted from their families, were being evacuated to the countryside. It had only been twenty years since the first world war was over. What would happen to Britain now? Could the country withstand a Nazi onslaught?

Writing in his diary, the King expressed his personal thoughts. In its first entry, he said:

At the outbreak of war at midnight of Aug 4th-5th 1914, I was a midshipman, keeping the middle watch on the bridge of H.M.S. Collingwood somewhere in the North Sea. I was 18 years of age ... We were not prepared for what we found a modern war really was, & those of us who had been through the Great War never wanted another. Today we are at War again, & I am no longer a midshipman in the Royal Navy ... (Quoted in *A Spirit Undaunted*, at page 171.)

During the afternoon of September 3, 1939, Lionel Logue was summoned to Buckingham Palace. He was expecting the call. The King, wearing his admiral's uniform, would deliver his speech at precisely 6 o'clock that night.

As their rehearsal neared its end, the Queen came into the King's private study where the two men were finalizing their preparation. (The music which plays during this scene, in the film, is the 2nd movement of Beethoven's 7th Symphony.) Always an encouragement to her husband, Elizabeth knew this speech had to be perfect.

After working with Logue for the better part of a dozen years, the King knew what he had to do. Stepping up to the microphone, to deliver his speech in a standing position (as he always did), he said:

... For the second time in the lives of most of us we are at war ... I now call my people at home and my peoples across the seas, who will make our cause their own. I ask them to stand calm, firm, and united in this time of trial.

The task will be hard. There may be dark days ahead, and war can no longer be confined to the battlefield. But we can only do the right as we see the right, and reverently commit our cause to God. If one and all we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then, with God's help, we shall prevail.

May He bless and keep us all.

Britain and her Allies did prevail, after nearly six years of conflict, although the King *significantly* disagreed with the American Ambassador, Joseph P. Kennedy, during the war's early days. (By 1940, FDR also disagreed with Kennedy so much that the Ambassador had little choice but to resign.)

The weight of office, however, and the King's role in the war itself, took a very heavy toll on His Majesty's health. Still friends with his speech therapist—whom he called "My Dear Logue" in a December 16, 1951 letter—Albert (the name he used in his letter to Logue) had developed lung cancer, requiring major surgery.

In 1952, as he slept during the night of February 5th-6th—just days after his last public appearance—King George VI died. He was 56 years old.

Britain was stunned at the sudden loss of their much-loved King. Churchill, Prime Minister again, told the story—for the first time—how the King and Queen had narrowly escaped serious injury when their home (Buckingham Palace) was bombed in September of 1940. Sharing the fate of other London families, they had refused to live in a more secure location or to send their daughters elsewhere.

Elizabeth—known as "The Queen Mother" when her daughter became Queen Elizabeth II—survived her husband by fifty years. She agreed that the story of "The King's Speech" could be told, but only after her death. The memories, of her beloved Bertie—and all he'd been through to overcome his profound stammer—were still too painful for her.

The Queen Mother died, having never remarried, on March 30, 2002 at the age of 101. Lionel Logue, who died on 12 April 1953, survived the King—his very good friend—by just fourteen months.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-KING-S-SPEECH-The-King-s-Speech>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-KING-S-SPEECH-The-King-s-Speech>

Media Stream

Cosmo Lang - Archbishop of Canterbury

Cosmo Lang was Archbishop of Canterbury during Britain's 1936 abdication crisis. He was opposed to King Edward VIII marrying Wallis Simpson.

Two days after King Edward resigned the throne, Cosmo Lang broadcast a speech in which he criticized the former King. Not only that ... he also alluded to the new King's stammer. His comments, which caused an uproar, included these:

About the former King: ... From God he received a high and sacred trust. Yet by his own will he has ... surrendered the trust ... [because of] a craving for private happiness ... [which he sought] in a manner inconsistent with the Christian principles of marriage.

*About the new King: ... he has brought it [the stammer] into full control, and to those who hear it it need cause no sort of embarrassment, for it causes none to him who speaks. (William Shawcross, quoting Cosmo Lang, at page 386 of *The Queen Mother: The Official Biography*, hardcover edition.)*

Lang's comments caused a furor for both parts of his speech, prompting someone to write a retaliatory poem which made the rounds:

My Lord Archbishop what a scold you are!

And when your man is down how bold you are!

In Christian charity how scant you are!

Oh! Old Lang Swine, how full of Cantuar!

During preparations for the coronation, Cosmo Lang thought Lionel Logue should be replaced, even though he had worked for a decade to help his royal client improve his speaking ability:

As the Coronation approached, the King became increasingly nervous about how he would deal with the strain of it, and in particular whether his stammer would cripple his public responses in the Abbey and the live broadcast he would have to make from Buckingham Palace in the evening after the service.

*Cosmo Lang had the temerity to suggest a new voice coach, but Lord Dawson rejected this idea at once, saying that the King had full confidence in Lionel Logue. In fact, the King was also helped by a BBC sound engineer called Robert Wood, who spent many hours teaching him how best to use the microphone. (Shawcross, *The Queen Mother: The Official Biography*, page 398 of the hardcover edition.)*

Who was Cosmo Lang? How did he rise to become Archbishop of Canterbury? A brilliant student, he graduated from the University of Glasgow, where his brief bio reads as follows: William Cosmo Gordon Lang, Baron Lang of Lambeth (1864-1945) was a graduate of the University who became Archbishop of Canterbury. He was awarded an honorary DD in 1907.

Born in Fyvie, Lang was a pupil of Park School in Glasgow and matriculated to study at the University at the age of fourteen. He graduated MA in 1884 and went to Balliol College, Oxford, where he graduated with a first in History (1886) and was President of the Oxford Union (1883). Abandoning his earlier plans to become a barrister, he was ordained a priest in the Church of England in 1891.

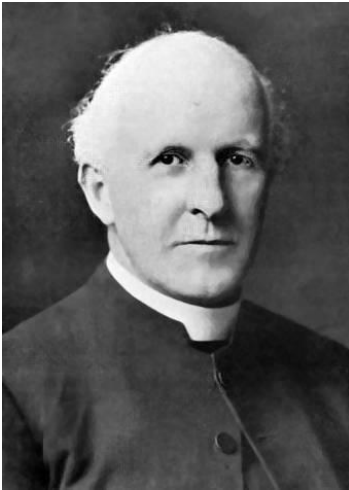
Lang was consecrated Bishop of Stepney in 1901, Archbishop of York in 1908 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1928. He retired in 1942, when he was created a baronet.

Click on the image for a better view.

Photo of Cosmo Gordon Lang, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Cosmo-Lang-Archbishop-of-Canterbury>



Lionel Logue - At the End of His Life

Image online, courtesy the U.K. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Lionel-Logue-At-the-End-of-His-Life>



Duke and Duchess of Windsor

Photo online, courtesy U.K. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Duke-and-Duchess-of-Windsor>



Lionel Logue - Later in Life

Photo online, courtesy the Logue family.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Lionel-Logue-Later-in-Life>



Joseph P. Kennedy - Relationship with George VI

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

Quoted passages, as noted above.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Joseph-P.-Kennedy-Relationship-with-George-VI>

George VI Grows in Stature at Home and Abroad

Clip from "[Bertie & Elizabeth - The Story of King George VI & Queen Elizabeth](#)," a 2002 television 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

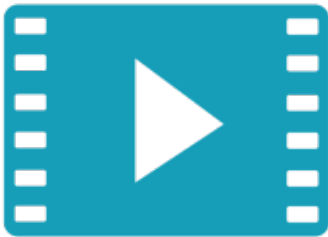
Production Co:

Carlton Television and Whitehall Films

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

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/George-VI-Grows-in-Stature-at-Home-and-Abroad>





George VI - King's Speech, September 3, 1939

Audio of the King's Speech, online courtesy U.K. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/George-VI-King-s-Speech-September-3-1939>

George VI - War Leader

Clip from "[Bertie & Elizabeth - The Story of King George VI & Queen Elizabeth](#)," a 2002 television 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/George-VI-War-Leader>



George VI - The Strain of War

Clip from "Bertie & Elizabeth - The Story of King George VI & Queen Elizabeth," a 2002 television 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/George-VI-The-Strain-of-War>

Bertie and Elizabeth - After the War

Clip from "Bertie & Elizabeth - The Story of King George VI & Queen Elizabeth," a 2002 television 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

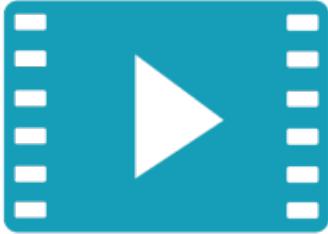
Production Co:

Carlton Television and Whitehall Films

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

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bertie-and-Elizabeth-After-the-War>





George VI - Last Public Appearance

Historic footage of King George VI, and members of his family, online courtesy the APTS Archive channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/George-VI-Last-Public-Appearance>

Death of King George VI

Clip from "[Bertie & Elizabeth - The Story of King George VI & Queen Elizabeth](#)," a 2002 television 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/Death-of-King-George-VI>



Death of George VI - When Elizabeth Became Queen

Historic footage regarding the death of King George VI, online courtesy the U.K. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Death-of-George-VI-When-Elizabeth-Became-Queen>



The King's Speech - Trailer

Trailer online, courtesy The Weinstein Company and Yahoo.com.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/The-King-s-Speech-Trailer0>

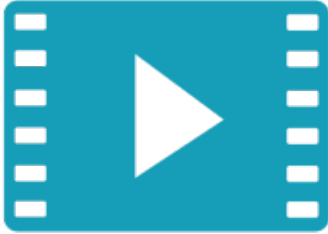


Lionel Logue - Queen Elizabeth's Letter of Thanks

Video online, courtesy [Quercus Books](#) via YouTube.

View this asset at:

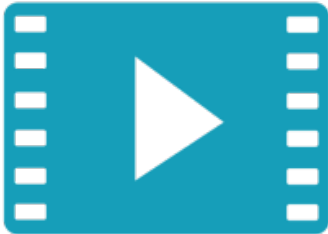
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Lionel-Logue-Queen-Elizabeth-s-Letter-of-Thanks>



George VI - Letter to Lionel Logue

Video of the "[60 Minutes](#)" segment online, courtesy CBS News via YouTube. Copyright, CBS and "60 Minutes," all rights reserved.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/George-VI-Letter-to-Lionel-Logue>



Death of Elizabeth, the Queen Mother

Clip of the Queen Mother, lying in state, online courtesy the BBC via YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Death-of-Elizabeth-the-Queen-Mother>