



British Politics

Another lesson by Adam R. Mathews

What do you know of British Politics?

Who are the main parties and leaders, what are their policies and how are they elected?

This is the current composition of the House of Commons.

What percentage of the vote do you think some of the major parties received?

Party	Seats	Percentage of Vote
Conservative	331 (50.8%)	%
Labour	232 (35.7%)	%
Scottish National	56 (8.6%)	%
Liberal Democrat	8 (1.2%)	%
Democratic Unionist	8 (1.2%)	%
Sinn Féin	4 (0.6%)	%
Plaid Cymru	3 (0.5%)	%
Ulster Unionist	2 (0.3%)	%
UK Independence	1 (0.2%)	%
Green Party	1 (0.2%)	%

The British parliament is bicameral; there are two houses, the Commons and the Lords. Read these two passages and insert a word into the correct spaces, either **Lords** or **Commons**

The House of _____

The House of _____ is the upper house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Its main role is to scrutinise bills that have been approved by the House of _____. It regularly reviews and amends Bills from the _____. While it is unable to prevent Bills passing into law, except in certain limited circumstances, it can delay Bills and force the _____ to reconsider their decisions. In this capacity, the _____ acts as a check on the House of _____ that is independent from the electoral process

Adapted from Wikipedia.org

The House of _____

The House of _____ is the lower house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Although it does not formally elect the prime minister, the position of the parties in the House of _____ is of over-riding importance. By convention, the prime minister is answerable to, and must maintain the support of, the House of _____. The Sovereign appoints the person who has the support of this House, or who is most likely to command the support of the House—normally the leader of the largest party in the _____. Since 1963, by convention, the prime minister is always a member of the House of _____, rather than the House of _____

What do you know of the House of Lords? How are 'peers' selected? Which of the following sit in the house?

- Bishops of the Church of England (Lords Spiritual)
- Hereditary Peers
- Lords of Appeal in Ordinary (Law Lords)
- Life Peers
- Directly-elected Peers



British Political Quotes

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Here are some quotes by well-known British politicians past and present. As you read them, underline any words or phrases you are unfamiliar with. Can you infer their meanings from the context?

To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase, the U-turn, I have only one thing to say: You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning.

We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants ... As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood".

Some of the jam we thought was for tomorrow, we've already eaten.

Tax cuts should be for life, not just for Christmas.

Under this Government, Britain will not return to the boom and bust of the past.

If this exit poll is right, I will publicly eat my hat on your programme.

We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat; they do not exist.

We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

Mine is the first generation able to contemplate the possibility that we may live our entire lives without going to war or sending our children to war.

Can you match the above quotes with the relevant politicians?

- A George Osborne, current Chancellor of the Exchequer, October 2011
- B Tony Benn, then Minister of Technology, 1970
- C Winston Churchill, Prime Minister's Radio broadcast, June 1940
- D Margaret Thatcher's speech to the Conservative Party Conference, 10 October 1980
- E Gordon Brown, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, November 1999
- F Queen Victoria, speaking of the Boer War, 1899
- G MP for Wolverhampton Enoch Powell, address to the General Meeting of the local Conservative Political Centre, April 1968
- H Tony Blair, newly-elected Prime Minister, May 1997
- I Paddy Ashdown, former leader of the Liberal Democrats, on seeing the first official exit poll for the 2015 General Election



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Full Employment and Welfare Benefits Bill

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From the BBC, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32898443>



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Energy Bill

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The main elements of the Bill are a 50% voting threshold for union strike ballot turnouts, and a requirement that 40% of those entitled to vote must back action in essential public services - health, education, fire and transport. Time limits will also be introduced on a mandate following a ballot for industrial action. The government says the aim is to ensure that strikes are the result of "clear, positive and recent decisions" by union members as well as ensuring that disruption to essential public services has a democratic mandate. There will also be the introduction of "a transparent opt-in process for the political fund element of trade union subscriptions", along the lines of the Northern Ireland system.

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... and what is not in the Queen's Speech?

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