

September 2022

# Reflection for schools on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

We hope the reflection and ideas below might be useful for schools as they seek to mark the death of Queen Elizabeth II and help children process this loss and change for our country and the world.

## Introduction

The death of a long-serving monarch raises many reactions. Since her coronation in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II has served as head of state for the United Kingdom and as leader of the British Commonwealth through decades of immense change. She had a clear sense of service and was especially open in later years to explaining her clear Christian faith. Whatever one's thoughts about the place of the monarchy in a democratic country, Elizabeth herself was seen as an immense source of stability and continuity in changing times, a significant representative of our country and values on the world stage – and she will be sorely missed by many.

So how do we deal with this in schools?

- By explaining Elizabeth's significance as a national figure in history.
- By acknowledging the broad range of feelings that many people will experience as the country undergoes a time of mourning, whilst looking forward to the future.
- By celebrating her personal values and achievements.

Schools may wish to stage special assemblies to mark the occasion of her state funeral. This may well be an occasion to share with the wider school community, but it should be noted that children may be disturbed by powerful expressions of grief on the part of adults – so school leadership teams will need to be mindful first of their pupils' needs at this time.

The following reflection is designed to be used for a whole-school assembly, providing a focus for prayers and thoughts at such a time. Your school may decide afterwards to give the pupils a short playtime and then allow time in class where children can either sit quietly to read or if they want, they can write, draw or create their own response to events surrounding the Queen's life and death. These could be gathered in for possible display in the school later.

## Preparation

For the assembly, it will help the children to focus on this reflection by having a table at a level where all can see it easily. Perhaps this could then be left as a place where written or drawn pupil responses could be later placed after completing further reflective responses in class.

Suggestions for this focus include:

- A portrait of Queen Elizabeth II.
- A map of the world and a globe.
- A variety of pictures from Queen Elizabeth's life.
- Newspapers showing relevant headlines.
- Flowers.

Images from the Queen's life could also be shown on PowerPoint slides as children enter the room, with appropriate solemn instrumental music.

If showing a YouTube clip, be sure to have it loaded and ready to show with appropriate sound quality.

## Development

After greeting everyone present, explain that you are gathering today to mark a very important moment for both the country and millions of people around the whole world – the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It is something we will all remember for the rest of our lives. Elizabeth Windsor became Queen in 1953, a very long time ago, and has been our country's longest-serving monarch ever.

Her state funeral will be seen on TV and on the internet all around the world, and it will be a very sad moment for many people, because, for most of us except the very elderly, Elizabeth has always been there as 'The Queen', our head of state, the person officially in charge of the country. And now she is gone. It will be a sad moment for her own family too. We are all here at the end of a very long life story, so there will be lots of words said and words written about her life as people recount their own personal memories of the Queen. Perhaps some of your family and friends have already begun sharing their own memories with you at home.

*(If you have a personal memory to share, do it here.)*

When someone dies, it's normal to have all sorts of feelings, or maybe, to feel rather puzzled at feeling nothing at all. It's just the same whether the person who dies is someone like the Queen, or someone much closer to us, like a friend or a member of our family. When it happens, the most important thing to do is to talk about our feelings and find a good way to express them. We might put it into words or pictures. We might want to put it into action, such as placing flowers or mementoes at a special place. Everyone will have their own way. It is all right to feel sad at times like this. Jesus was deeply upset when one of his close friends died, so there is nothing wrong with shedding tears.

*(If your school has decided on this, explain that after this assembly, there will a playtime – and then time in class where children can, if they want, write, draw or create their own response to events surrounding the Queen's life and death, to be gathered for possible display later.)*

So what can we say about her? We can remember how Elizabeth was our Queen for a very long time and saw our country change in all sorts of ways. As a young woman, she served as a driver in our armed forces at the end of World War II. After becoming Queen, she represented our country at hundreds of important meetings around the world, saw 15 British prime ministers lead our country and quietly did her best to make peace in difficult times.

Elizabeth was a Christian who believed the words of Jesus Christ, when he said ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’ (Matthew 5:9). There was one time when the Queen did her very best to make peace – when she visited the Republic of Ireland in 2011. In a garden of remembrance, she laid special flowers to remember those people who had been killed fighting British soldiers long ago. The history of Britain and Ireland has sometimes been very sad. For many Irish people, seeing her place those flowers was very special. It was a powerful way of saying ‘Sorry’ for all the sad things that happened between our countries in the past, and it was much appreciated. Elizabeth’s own uncle, Lord Mountbatten, had also been killed in the same quarrel, so laying those flowers was not easy – but she did it, because making peace was the right thing to do. And she went out of her way to learn a little Irish as well!

*(Show the first few seconds of [this speech](#), made at a meal at Dublin Castle with the then Irish president, Mary McAleese, who is sitting beside the Queen – and watch the president’s reaction!)*

It might not seem much to us, but little gestures like that can mean a lot. Around the world, many people will remember moments like that, when Queen Elizabeth made a difference to their lives. So as we remember and celebrate her life, which like everybody else’s was a mixture of the good and the difficult, let’s be glad for the good things and give our thanks.

At her father’s funeral, Elizabeth would have heard these words said:

‘God be in my head, and in my understanding;  
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;  
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;  
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;  
God be at mine end, and at my departing.’

Let’s now be quiet ourselves.

## Prayer

Father God, thank you for the life of Queen Elizabeth. Thank you for the lives of all those people who have done their best to serve others in so many ways. As our country gets used to the fact that she is no longer with us, help us to remember the good she did, the way she did her best to serve you and to remember her well in ways that do her credit. Amen