



The British Monarchy

On September 8, 2022, the 70 year, 214 day reign of Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain ended with her passing. She served as the monarch of Great Britain longer than any other Briton. Like the British monarchy itself, her history and impact as queen is long and complicated.

Princess Elizabeth rose to prominence at the height of World War Two, when she became the [first female member of the royal family to serve in the armed forces](#). She was third in the line of succession, but after her uncle King Edward VIII [abdicated](#) the throne and her father King George VI died, Elizabeth became queen at age 25 in 1952. After assuming the throne, Queen Elizabeth II became the head of state of 32 countries and territories across the globe. At the same time, however, [she oversaw the end of the British Empire during her reign](#). As of her death, she served as the head of state or constitutional monarch of [15 of the 56 countries that make up the British Commonwealth](#).



[The British monarchy was established by the British constitution](#).

Ultimately, Queen Elizabeth II had no real governing authority or power as her position was symbolic. For example, she appointed the prime minister, the head of the government. During her reign, she appointed 15 prime ministers, including [Harold Wilson](#) twice. A total of 16 prime ministers served under Queen Elizabeth II's reign, from the legendary [Winston Churchill](#) who served 1951-1955, to [Liz Truss](#), who was appointed just days before her death.



The passing of Queen Elizabeth II has been seen in different ways throughout the world. Throughout Great Britain and much (but not all!) of the United Kingdom and some of its [54 Commonwealth countries](#), her death has led to a [great sadness](#) and concern for the future of both the monarchy and the nation. Her 73 year old son, King Charles III, is [less popular than his mother](#) and is perceived by many to lack charisma. At the same time, many former British territories, from Ireland to Nigeria and places in between, have had a [somewhat subdued reaction](#) to the passing of the monarch. Many of these former British colonies did not leave without a bloody struggle, and [those tensions remain](#).

There has been speculation that King Charles III may be the last British monarch. The nation itself faces significant divisions among [Wales](#), [Northern Ireland](#), England, and Scotland, and we may see at least two of those members of the United Kingdom assume complete independence in the next 50 years. The big question, however, is the ultimate fate of the monarchy. Might we one day see a British Republic?

To Think and To Do: In 1957, Queen Elizabeth II, in her [first televised Christmas broadcast](#), stated *"I cannot lead you into battle. I do not give you laws or administer justice but I can do something else - I can give my heart and my devotion to these old islands and to all the peoples of our brotherhood of nations."* Just four days after her death, anti-royal protesters are [being arrested](#) in the United Kingdom while the hashtag 'Not My King' grows on social media. Based on your understanding of the role and purpose of a monarchy, is there value in continuing the constitutional monarchy as Britain's form of government? Explain your answer.

LEARN MORE:

- [The Royal Household](#), official website

