

Who is really responsible for Brexit? The Queen

Suzanne Moore, the Guardian, April 16, 2019

5 Activate the Queen. She is the only person who can sort out this chaos. Politicians can't, and the "people" certainly can't because the will of the people is a floating buffet at which all stuff their faces, but still yearn for a proper dinner. So, for instance, a "people's vote" will either undermine democracy by ignoring the first people's vote or underscore democracy by having more of it.

Theresa May can't sort it out. I feel about her as my friend used to feel about her husband: "He has been dead for years; it's just that no one has told him."

10 What we need is a grownup to calm everything down. Who better than the Queen, hatted and handbagged up; dutiful, but with a dry wit, apparently? Everyone loves the Queen. I saw Michelle Obama at the O2¹ at the weekend, talking about how touched she was that the Queen wore the "itty-bitty little pin" that the Obamas gave her. Living the dream. Just not mine.

15 It has been suggested that the Queen could stop Brexit, and the very notion is intriguing – this longing for unquestionable authority is a sign of our inherent repression. But this longing is dangerous, my friends, and it is the opposite of democracy. The Queen is not personally accountable for Brexit, but she presides over an institution that symbolises and legitimises much of the inequality that led to it.

20 Our politics is broken, our systems of representation cannot cope with globalisation, migration or technology. People feel abandoned. Westminster is falling down. Board it up like a shop that no one goes to any more. Over and over, the mantras of austerity and neoliberalism are chanted by the left as the reasons for the leave vote. The right answer back by accusing the left of cultural Marxism. But what does the right believe in? Philistine capitalism – and life in a permanent sense of déjà vu about a war they never fought in. They also talk about vassal states and sovereignty.

25 What does being a sovereign power mean? In our case, it means having a monarchy that legitimates hereditary privilege, the Lords and owning half of Scotland. It means that power is an accident of birth, but God help anyone who disses the Queen. We not only enact our serfdom; we embrace it by accepting that the monarchy is above ordinary politics.

30 The younger generation of royals is still locked in a symbiotic relationship with the tabloids. They do a lot of charity work – including "difficult" causes, such as mental health. They showed more empathy at Grenfell Tower than May did, but any Dalek² would have done that, so the bar is low. What they can't do is embrace the actual, essential cause of the many causes they champion: deep inequality of wealth.

¹ The O2 : The O2 Arena is a multi-purpose indoor arena located in the centre of The O2 entertainment complex on the Greenwich Peninsula in southeast London.

² The Daleks : are a fictional extraterrestrial race of mutants principally portrayed in the British science fiction television programme Doctor Who.

35 Instead, the luckless Duchess of Sussex is now held hostage, breeding in captivity as
all royal women must. She has sinned by asking for privacy when the tabloids say
that, because the country paid for her wedding, it's our baby. By this logic, the
afterbirth should be brought out on a platter and inspected by all us loyal subjects.
40 But the serious question is this: how will any of our institutions ever be reformed and
how will we become a modern country while bowing to this feudal system?

The magic has worked if we still believe that the monarchy – embodied in a dutiful
and doughty³ old woman – is a superior system to boring old representative
democracy. Yet even sensible people fall for the circus of honours, touches of ermine
and empire, while young working-class men get their legs blown off to serve “Queen
45 and country”.

Constitutional reform makes most people's eyes glaze over, even though we can see
our chaos is bound up in systems that are no longer viable.

We must start from the bottom up: direct action and local democracy. And then work
from the top down: dismantle the archaic monarchy. The Queen cannot solve Brexit
50 because part of what Brexit is about – what is worth keeping? What has been lost?
Who has lost out? Who has gained? – is entangled with all she represents.

The vote to leave, to be in charge of our own affairs and to change the status quo,
has been read as reactionary, but can also be read as revolutionary. When the
Queen dies, let the whole monstrous shebang⁴ of monarchy go with her. Only then
55 can we be a sovereign country.

(752 words)

³ doughty : determined

⁴ Shebang : everything involved in what is under consideration —usually used in the
phrase *the whole shebang*

Reading comprehension (8 pts)

- 1) **What is the main purpose of the article? (2 pts)**

- 2) **According to the journalist, is the younger generation of royals really different from the previous one? (1pt)**

- 3) **What drastic constitutional reform does the author advocate? (1 pt)**

- 4) **What is the tone of the article? (2 pts)**

- 5) **Explain the following phrase. (1pt)**

Theresa May can't sort it out. I feel about her as my friend used to feel about her husband: **"He has been dead for years; it's just that no one has told him."** (lines 6-7)

- 6) **Explain the following phrase. (1pt)**

Constitutional reform makes **most people's eyes glaze over** (line 46)

Writing (12 points)

Write an essay of 300 (+/- 10%) words on the following subject

Has the monarchy become an outdated institution?

You do not need to focus solely on the UK. You are free to widen your discussion to include other monarchies in Europe and in other regions of the world.