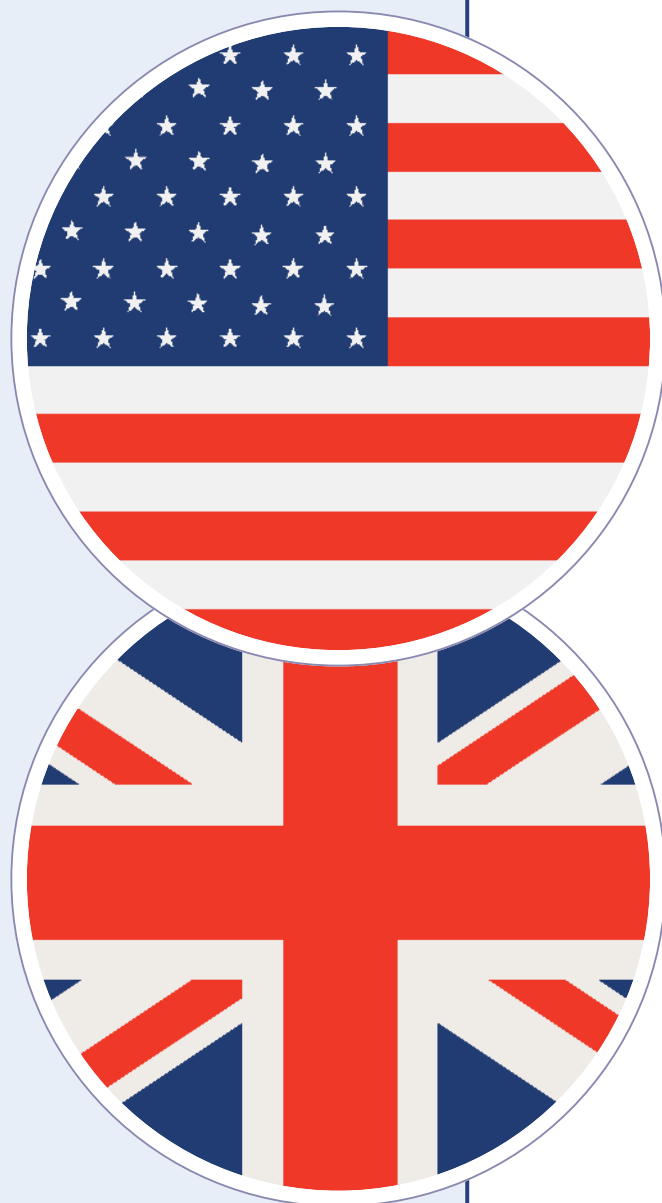


Englisch betrifft uns

# EBU on the Web 2020/3

Topical texts in  
English lessons

- *Comprehension*
- *Analysis*
- *Creative writing*
- *Background information*



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## The Topic

### *The British Monarchy Today*

In January 2020 Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle announced their plan to step back from their roles as senior members of the royal family. They said they would work in order to become financially independent and to balance their time between the United Kingdom and North America. Before marrying Prince Harry in 2018, the Duchess of Sussex was the American actress Meghan Markle. The royal couple has a baby son Archie. Harry said that he would like to pursue "a more peaceful life" with his wife and his son. The young family have now settled in Los Angeles. Their decision will have various consequences. They will no longer be entitled to a range of privileges granted exclusively to members of the royal family, e.g. they will not be allowed to travel around the globe on behalf of the Queen, they will no longer have an official office at Buckingham Palace. What is more, the couple will be treated as celebrities by the press and paparazzi, photographs of them are more likely to appear online without their consent. The Queen reacted quite positively to the Sussexes' move: "My family and I are entirely supportive of Harry and Meghan's desire to create a new life as a young family. [...] Although we would have preferred them to remain full-time working members of the Royal Family, we respect and understand their wish to live a more independent life as a family while remaining a valued part of my family."

## Ties to obligatory topics

Political institutions in Britain, the role of the British monarchy, analyzing argumentative texts

## Background information – further links

<https://www.royal.uk/>

The homepage of the British royal family including, e.g., the scripts of various speeches by the Queen.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c77jz3md4qwt/uk-royal-family>

The BBC website presents news, videos and background information about the British royal family.

### The Text

“Farewell, Harry and Meghan, you realised that being a royal is no way to live” (*The Guardian*)

8 March 2020

### The Link (URL)

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/08/farewell-meghan-harry-duke-duchess-sussex-royal-family>

### Annotations

**anachronism** – someone or something that seems to belong to the past, not the present

**asset** – something or someone that is useful because they help you succeed or deal with problems

**The Blitz** – the time during World War II when German planes dropped many bombs on British cities, especially London

**a boy made to walk behind his mother's coffin at 12** – reference to Lady Diana's funeral when her son Harry was 12 years old

**to bully someone into something** – to put pressure on someone in order to make them do what you want

**bunting** – small flags on strings, used to decorate buildings and streets on special occasions

**Casablanca** – allusion to one of the most popular films in the history of the cinema, made in 1942 with Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. Casablanca is a romantic story about a man called Rick who has a café in Casablanca, and who helps a husband and wife escape from the Nazis

**complicit** – *mitschuldig*

**contortion** – here: something difficult you have to do in order to achieve something

**to covet** – to have a very strong desire to have something that someone else has

**Dagenham** – a suburb of East London

**demigod** – someone who is so important and fascinating that they are treated like a god

**duke** – a man with the highest social rank outside the royal family; duchess: the wife of a duke

**duplicious** – duplicity: dishonest behaviour that is intended to deceive someone

**Edward VIII** – British king (1894–1972); he was forced to abdicate (=give up the throne) because he wanted to marry Wallis Simpson, an American woman who had been married before

**enchantment** – the quality of being very pleasant or attractive

**eternal** – continuing forever

**to fail** – to not do what is expected, needed, or wanted

**farewell** – the action of saying goodbye

**to hug** – to put your arms around someone and hold them tightly to show love or friendship

**humility** – the quality of not being too proud about yourself

**immaculate** – exactly correct or perfect in every detail

**inch** – a unit for measuring length, equal to 2.54 centimetres

**insatiable** – always wanting more and more of something

**ITV** – a group of British television companies that are paid for by advertising

**malicious** – very unkind and cruel, and deliberately behaving in a way that is likely to upset or hurt someone

**mockery** – when someone laughs at someone or something or shows that they think they are stupid

**Monarchy killed their mother** – Prince William's and Prince Harry's mother, Lady Diana, Princess of Wales, was killed in a car crash in Paris in 1997 when she was being chased by paparazzi

**muted** – muted sounds, voices etc. are quieter than usual

**ovation** – if a group of people give someone an ovation, they clap to show approval

**philanthropy** – the practice of giving money and help to people who are poor or in trouble

**pliant** – soft and moving easily in the way that you want

**projection** – here: expectations

**to have a reach** – to appeal to the public, to be popular

**resilience** – the ability to become strong, happy, or successful again after a difficult situation or event

**Royal Albert Hall** – a large 19th-century building in London where concerts take place

**spin** – a special point of view, emphasis, or interpretation presented for the purpose of influencing opinion

**to spoil** – here: *verwöhnen*

**‘stiff upper lip’** – the ability to stay calm and not show your feelings in a difficult or upsetting situation

**to supplant** – here: *verdrängen*

**surface** – the outside or top layer of something

**Sussex** – an area and former county on the south coast of England, divided since 1974 into East Sussex and West Sussex

**tiara** – a piece of jewellery like a small crown

**tier** – here: one of the several levels of the monarchy

**toddler** – a very young child who is just learning to walk

**unconscious** – a feeling or thought that is unconscious is one that you have without realizing it

**to whoop** – to shout loudly and happily

## Assignments

### Warming-up activity

1. In May 2018 the sixth in line to the British throne, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, married Meghan Markle, a US American actress of mixed descent. Discuss what you imagine Meghan's life as a Duchess to be like. In what ways might it be different from your life? What aspects do you think you would enjoy, what aspects would be a burden for you?

### Comprehension

2. According to the writer how do large parts of the British public feel on the whole about Meghan Markle?
3. How does the journalist herself feel about the royal family in general and about Meghan in particular?
4. How does the writer see the media in connection with Harry and Meghan?

### Analysis

5. Examine the language and style employed by Tanya Gold to make her position absolutely clear to the reader.

### Comment

6. Tanya Gold maintains that "being a modern-day royal is no way to live". To what extent would you agree with this statement?
7. The journalist states that "the psychological contortion required to pretend to embody a nation ... is emotional death". Do you share the writer's view?
8. A considerable number of German newspapers and magazines regularly publish articles on the British royal family which enjoy an avid readership. Why do you think is this the case? Maybe you could also consider the thought that, in spite of this interest in the monarchy, a clear majority of Germans are in favour of a republic such as we have here rather than the system of a constitutional monarchy.

### Mediation

9. Imagine you have just read the article and you are talking to an elderly family friend who is an ardent reader of all articles concerning the British royal family. You tell him/her about what you have read. Write down what the two of you say. Remember this will most likely be a relaxed and friendly conversation.

## Suggested Solutions

1. The pupils might consider the following aspects: most probably Meghan Markle will have to adhere to court etiquette and practices, which limit her scope; she will always be in the public eye, i.e. she cannot relax or simply do what she wants; everything she does will be praised or criticised; bodyguards will accompany her everywhere; she will be under great pressure from the media because there is competition among members of the popular press to beat the others to a new and exclusive story; the fact she is of mixed descent may lead racists to be particularly critical of her, maybe even discriminatory and hurtful.

Meghan will have a life of relative luxury, she will have servants and others to carry out menial tasks; she can travel to places other people can only dream of.

2. One group is wildly enthusiastic about her (and Harry). For them she embodies a modern philanthropic monarchy, someone to admire and appreciate. On the other hand there are the cynics who only see ulterior motives in what the Sussexes do; they are prepared to criticise every step they take.
3. The journalist sees a certain hypocrisy within the royal family ("I have always found Meghan's 'red-carpet philanthropy' absurd, but so is royal philanthropy. Does anyone really believe in the humility of a queen under a diamond crown?"), which is at the same time a form of professionalism. The royals try to live up to the expectations of the people and to present themselves as a national symbol. This, however, means that Meghan is not allowed to show any individuality or to develop her own understanding of her role or of the role of the royals in society ("But it's too late now. The family have failed the Sussexes."). The writer does, however, suggest that the Sussexes are aware of this contradiction and of the fact that they themselves cannot conform to general expectations, that they cannot "embody a nation".
4. The writer expresses a rather cynical and bitter condemnation of the media, in particular of the printed press. ("The drama is profitable.") She sees the media as responsible for Lady Diana's death as they make a profit out of the interest of the general public in the royal family. ("To some newspapers the royal family is meat to be consumed. They neither love or hate

the Sussexes. It is more cynical and self-interested than that, which is why there were pieces for and against them, on the same website, on the same day.") When Harry dares to express his suffering at the hands of the press, he is told to be grateful as his existence as a prince depends on the positive presentation at the hands of the media.

5. In general the writer employs a very emotional, strongly emphatic language and style.

### Choice of words

- *Emotional words*: unforgivable sin > in this context it is irony and thus direct criticism of the expectations of the British public and the media
- *Positively connotated words and phrases referring to Meghan*: She was an asset. She mirrored a younger, more diverse Britain.
- *Negatively connotated words and phrases referring both to Meghan and the royal family*: spoilt, absurd
- *Negatively connotated words and phrases referring only to the royal family*: the family have failed the Sussexes; royal philanthropy 'absurd'; monarchy is an anachronism; psychological contortions; emotional death; monarchy killed their mother; nonsense about fairytales; fake humility and eternal Blitz spirit; insatiable expectations; shabby and duplicitous splendour
- *Negatively connotated words and phrases referring to the role of the media*: cynical and self-interested; complicit; mockery, racism, victims (criticism of the media and the general public); we like our victims pliant (> irony, bitter criticism of the media); it was never going to be fair
- *A very personal conclusion*: "I wish them well."

### Stylistic devices

- **Anaphora**: *They tried. They talked about feelings.* > underlining the fruitless efforts made by the Sussexes to convey their emotions; (+ parallelism) *She wrote on bananas; she hugged; she talked about feelings*
- **Metaphor**: *To some newspapers the royal family is meat to be consumed* > underlines the cynicism and brutality of the press; *monarchy killed their mother* > simply being a member of the royal family was the reason for Diana's death; *an inch deep and a mile wide* > very shallow and superficial

- **Rhetorical questions:** repeated use of rhetorical questions to encourage the reader to reflect on the role of the royal family and on Meghan's role in particular, e.g. *Does anyone really believe ...?; Why would a boy made to walk ...?; Did Meghan know that ...?; Who knows if it is true?; If you have been a demigod, can you exist ...?*
- **Irony:** beginning of the text (*unforgivable sin*): criticism of the British public and maybe of the British media; You cannot do this if you are a royal: *we like our victims pliant*
- **Hyperbole:** *emotional death* > illustrates the extreme psychological burden on members of the royal family

#### Sentence structure

- several examples of short sentences to conclude a paragraph, which lends emphasis to these phrases

#### Personal pronouns

- the personal pronoun 'you' in the headline > Harry and Meghan are directly addressed, unusual form for a headline, attracts the reader's attention
- the personal pronoun they: *They tried. They talked about feelings.* > the pronoun arouses sympathy with Harry and Meghan

#### 6.-9. Individual answers