

## Grundkurs Englisch 12/1

### 1. Schulaufgabe aus Englisch

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#### “A ‘United’ Kingdom: The Role of the Monarchy”

Why do we need a hereditary monarch? Most states manage with an appointed or elected President, and a President could open and dissolve parliament, sign its acts, welcome visiting Heads of State and perform all the other legal and ceremonial functions at present discharged by the Queen.

The truth is that if that was all the monarchy was for, we would not need a Royal Family. But the British system of government is built on the recognition that a state is more than a collection of individuals, a system of laws and an area of land. It is also a focus of the emotions of a people; it expresses our sense of nationhood, and it engages our pride, our patriotism and our loyalty. When British teams do well in international championships and when British athletes win Gold Medals at the Olympics, we all walk a bit taller. And that emotional involvement in our country, that national pride, is as much a part of the totality of Britain as our legal and political system. That pride and patriotism find their expression, their focus and their symbol in the person of the Sovereign, just as our disagreements about how to run schools and hospitals, how much to raise in taxes and how to spend it, find their focus and expression in the conflict between the political parties in Parliament. The two together balance each other neatly: Parliament portrays public life as a battlefield, the monarchy portrays it as a family circle.

It is difficult for an elected President to represent all the nation. At times, he will be almost unknown to most of the people. At others, he will be a party politician identified with one faction, and will have been regularly voted against by getting on for half the electorate. By contrast, a hereditary monarch will have been known to all the nation from birth, will be politically impartial, and will have spent all his or her life before

Coronation apprenticed to the job. Certainly it is hard to think of a less democratic system than hereditary monarchy; on the other hand, the office confers very little power, though much influence and status. Democracy has to be balanced against continuity.

The British system of government recognizes that there are not one but two roles to be performed by the Head of State: one is the formal, constitutional, ceremonial role of presiding over and authorizing the activities of the government; the other is the personal, emotional role of being Head of the Nation, the focus of the people's pride and loyalty and affection, the embodiment of their sense of nationhood. When these two roles are combined in a single institution, a single family and a single office, then people are simultaneously focusing these emotions on the constitutional state; they are confirming and supporting the legitimacy of the legal, political and economic system which regulates their daily lives.

Because of this, the monarchy is an important force for unity in Britain - perhaps the single most important force. We have been lucky enough to maintain that national unity for centuries, which makes it easy to take it for granted. But we only have to look at Yugoslavia [...] to see what can happen when national unity is broken when significant groups of people no longer feel any sense of belonging to the state under whose laws they live.

How long will the British monarchy last? It has been with us a thousand years, but it could be abolished tomorrow: it is Parliament, not the Queen, which is sovereign. The monarchy's roots are not in bygone centuries but in the hearts of the people, and in the end it is the will of the British people, and in the end it is the will of the British people that will determine its fate. Perhaps it is not that undemocratic after all.

### **I. Comprehension**

- a) Summarize the arguments the author mentions in support of monarchy and against an elected president.
- b) Explain why the author writes that the British monarchy is “not that undemocratic after all”.

### **II. Personal Comment**

Choose only one of the following topics and write about 90 - 120 words.

- a) Is monarchy still up to date and justifiable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- b) Would you like to marry into a royal family if you had the possibility?

### **III. Background Knowledge**

- a) Characterize the functions and the particularity of the President of the USA.
- b) “They stab it with their steely knives, but they just can’t kill the Beast.”  
Explain this passage from the song “Hotel California”, naming as well the figures of speech used.