

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



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Episode #322

A King in Waiting | The Life of Charles III

9th Dec, 2022

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about a man who has been preparing for his job since the age of three, a man who was only given this job 70 years later, a man who had to take the job the minute after his mother took her last [breath¹](#).

[00:00:39] I am talking, of course, about King Charles III, the King of the United Kingdom.

[00:00:45] This is actually going to be part one of a two-part series on King Charles.

¹ air taken in or inhaled

[00:00:51] In this episode, we'll talk about his life, and his long journey to the British [crown²](#).

[00:00:56] And in part two, we are going to go a little deeper, and ask ourselves the question of Who Is The Real King Charles?

[00:01:05] Who is Charles the man, what life experiences have shaped his character, and what will this mean for his [reign³](#)?

[00:01:13] OK then, let's get right into it and talk about the life of Charles III.

[00:01:21] You may know that royals [tend to⁴](#) have very long names, and in this respect, Charles is no disappointment.

[00:01:30] He was born Prince Charles Philip Arthur George Mountbatten-Windsor on the 14th of November, 1948, at Buckingham Palace, in London.

[00:01:41] His mother, as you probably know, was then Princess Elizabeth, and his father was Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.

² position of a monarch or king

³ period of being a king

⁴ usually do

[00:01:50] His grandfather was King George VI, and when his mother became Queen on February 6th of 1952, at the age of 3 Charles became the [heir apparent](#)⁵ to the British [throne](#)⁶, in other words, the [next in line](#)⁷.

[00:02:06] Unlike the children of Prince William today, Charles was kept relatively hidden, out of public view.

[00:02:14] There were pictures of him as a little baby, but his first “official [outing](#)⁸” was when Charles was just 4 years old and he sat between the Queen Mother and his auntie, Princess Margaret, at his mother’s [coronation](#)⁹ ceremony.

[00:02:30] He was in the public [spotlight](#)¹⁰, and...he would never really leave, he would spend the rest of his life in [the public eye](#)¹¹.

⁵ the next person to have this position undeniably

⁶ the power or rank of someone who is king or queen

⁷ the next person to have this position

⁸ public appearance

⁹ a ceremony at which she was made queen

¹⁰ centre of attention

¹¹ the state of being known or of interest to people, especially through the media

[00:02:38] Interestingly enough, the young Prince Charles was the first British [heir](#)¹² to actually go to school instead of having private tutors, as was [customary](#)¹³ for future Kings and Queens.

[00:02:51] But of course, he didn't go to any normal school, he went to exclusive private schools, first in west London, then just outside London.

[00:03:00] And then as a teenager, he changed to a [harsh](#)¹⁴ school in the far north of Scotland, the school where his father had gone; this school was called Gordonstoun, a place this [sensitive](#)¹⁵ young boy would later reveal he [loathed](#)¹⁶, he absolutely hated.

[00:03:18] He was also the first [heir](#) to get a university degree when he studied archaeology, anthropology and history at Cambridge.

[00:03:27] After graduating, as was [customary](#) for male members of the British royal family, Charles then served in the Royal Navy where he eventually became Commander of a ship called the HMS Bronington.

[00:03:40] The other [customary](#) duty for a male [heir](#) to the British [throne](#) was, of course, to find a wife, a woman who would become his queen.

¹² the next person to have this position

¹³ usual

¹⁴ strict, hard

¹⁵ easily damaged or upset

¹⁶ hated

[00:03:50] As you can probably imagine, Charles was considered quite the [eligible](#)¹⁷ [bachelor](#)¹⁸, a desirable single man, and had a [whole host of](#)¹⁹ potential wives to choose from in Britain's - and indeed Europe's - [aristocratic](#)²⁰ circles.

[00:04:06] This wasn't just about finding a suitable woman to become his wife and Queen, it was about finding the right "mate", in the more [primary](#)²¹ sense of the word - by this I mean the right mother for his children.

[00:04:20] As you know, monarchies are [hereditary](#)²² or run by bloodline, and as the king in waiting, Charles was expected to produce an [heir](#).

[00:04:31] After a decade or so of short-lived relationships with a range of potential matches, Charles finally decided it was time to settle down and find his princess.

[00:04:44] In 1980, when he was 31 years old, Charles began seeing a lady called Diana Spencer, who was 12 years his junior and just 19 years old at the time.

¹⁷ desirable or suitable

¹⁸ a man who wasn't married

¹⁹ very large number of

²⁰ of high social rank

²¹ first, main

²² run by bloodline

[00:04:56] Diana was herself from noble blood, the third child and youngest daughter of Edward John Spencer, Viscount Althorp. Indeed, she was actually a distant relative of Charles.

[00:05:10] Charles

[00:05:11] met Diana

[00:05:12] because he was initially involved with - or [courting](#)²³, as the Royals might say - Diana's older sister, Sarah.

[00:05:20] The pair continued to see each other, and the following year, in February 1981, there was an [almighty](#)²⁴ media [frenzy](#)²⁵ when their engagement was announced to the public.

[00:05:32] As you will probably know, this was not a fairytale marriage, it did not end well.

[00:05:38] Even in the early days of their relationship, for anyone looking closely enough, there were [seeds of doubt](#)²⁶.

²³ involved with her romantically

²⁴ huge, enormous

²⁵ a period of extreme activity, craze

²⁶ negative or worrying things

[00:05:45] In 1981, during an interview about their engagement on British television, the young couple were asked if they felt in love.

[00:05:54] Here's their response:

[00:05:56] I suppose in love

[00:05:58] of course

[00:06:00] whatever in love

[00:06:02] means

[00:06:02] it's your own interpretation

[00:06:04] obviously it means two very happy people

[00:06:05] Yes

[00:06:05] In case you missed that, when the reporter said “I suppose, in love”, Diana replied, “Of course,” but Charles [awkwardly²⁷](#) said, “Whatever ‘in love’ means.”

[00:06:19] A philosophical response, perhaps, a response of a deep thinker.

[00:06:24] Or, perhaps, the response of a man who is about to marry a woman he doesn't really love.

²⁷ in a worried or embarrassed way

[00:06:31] Despite this, they married later that year on July 29th, 1981, at St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and a record-breaking 750 million people [tuned in](#)²⁸ from around the world to watch the service on television.

[00:06:47] The next year their first son, Prince William, who is now the Duke of Cambridge, was born, and then Prince Harry arrived two years later.

[00:06:55] Diana had done her main duty, she had provided two heirs, but she was not the sort of lady to live in the shadows, to retreat into the background.

[00:07:06] She was particularly admired for her humanitarian work, and in one famous episode, in 1987, at the height of the HIV/AIDS panic, Diana publicly shook hands with someone who was HIV-positive in a bid to [destigmatise](#)²⁹ the disease.

[00:07:24] And she was hugely popular with the British public, far more so than Charles, and far more so than any other member of The Royal Family.

[00:07:34] Polling from 1997 showed that Diana had an approval rating of + 66, with Charles at minus 7 and the Royal Family at -15.

[00:07:46] And Prince, now King Charles, has never been particularly popular with the British public.

²⁸ turned on their TVs

²⁹ remove the negative or shameful feelings about it

[00:07:53] He has faced continued [criticism](#)³⁰ in the media over the years for what was [perceived](#)³¹ to be an extravagant lifestyle - even by royal standards.

[00:08:03] By the time he was [crowned](#)³² King, Charles reportedly had six homes, a large staff of servants, 11 secretaries, and a selection of expensive cars.

[00:08:14] In the past he even, it was [alleged](#)³³, had a servant specifically to [squeeze](#)³⁴ his toothpaste onto his toothbrush, and to [iron](#)³⁵ his shoelaces.

[00:08:26] Now, back to his relationship with his wife, as you know, the story of Charles and Diana didn't have a fairytale ending.

[00:08:34] The two were poorly [suited](#)³⁶ for one another.

[00:08:38] But there was someone who Charles believed was his perfect match, his soul mate.

[00:08:44] And her name was Camilla.

³⁰ negative judgement or expression of disapproval

³¹ considered, regarded

³² made, named by putting the crown on his head

³³ said, without proof

³⁴ press, extract by pressing

³⁵ press them with a heated iron in order to make them smooth

³⁶ right, appropriate

[00:08:47] Now, for this story, we need to go back in time slightly, to 1970, when Charles was 22 years old, 11 years before he married Diana.

[00:08:58] It was then that a young Charles met a lady by the name of Camilla Shand.

[00:09:05] Some say they met at a polo match, others that they were introduced by a mutual friend.

[00:09:12] However they met, the pair soon began [courting](#), they were in a romantic relationship.

[00:09:18] Charles adored Camilla. He felt that she treated him like a normal person, not as a king-in-waiting. They talked for hours on end, and it really was a relationship of equals.

[00:09:32] But the royal family, meaning the Queen and Prince Phillip, did not approve of Camilla. She wasn't [aristocratic](#) enough, and she was seen as an "experienced" woman - fine for Charles to continue to see and enjoy spending time with, but not [queen material](#)³⁷.

[00:09:52] They continued seeing one another until Charles joined the navy and they broke off the relationship.

³⁷ appropriate or suitable to be queen

[00:09:59] Then, [shock horror](#)³⁸, in July 1973, Camilla married another man, a man named Andrew Parker Bowles.

[00:10:08] Interestingly enough, he had also briefly [courted](#)³⁹ Charles's sister, Princess Anne.

[00:10:15] If you're seeing a pattern here, that everyone seems to be in a relationship with everyone, yes this is the case with the British [aristocracy](#)⁴⁰, and the European [aristocracy](#) more generally.

[00:10:27] Despite the fact that she was now married to another man, Charles and Camilla remained close friends and Charles even became godfather to one of Camilla's children.

[00:10:39] When Charles married Diana, Camilla even came to the wedding.

[00:10:44] And although the pair were now both married to different people, they continued their friendly relationship, with some people suggesting it was much more than a relationship between two old friends.

³⁸ used ironically to express that it was not surprising or upsetting

³⁹ been involved with her romantically

⁴⁰ class of people with high social rank

[00:10:57] Diana certainly wasn't happy about it, and was even more unhappy when according to a royal [biographer](#)⁴¹ called Andrew Morton, the young [bride](#)⁴² was opening her wedding presents and she found a necklace [intended for](#)⁴³ Camilla.

[00:11:13] By 1985 [rumours](#)⁴⁴ were spreading that Charles and Camilla were having an [affair](#)⁴⁵, but so too were reports that Diana had begun seeing other men.

[00:11:24] In 1989 the British newspaper The Telegraph reported that Diana had [confronted](#)⁴⁶ Camilla at a party, and then a few years later, in 1993, the Daily Mirror published a [leaked](#)⁴⁷ phone recording between Charles and Camilla.

[00:11:40] In the call, the pair talked about their romantic relationship and love for one another, confirming the [rumours](#) of an [affair](#).

[00:11:50] As you can imagine, much excitement [ensued](#)⁴⁸ in the media.

⁴¹ someone who wrote the story of her life

⁴² woman on her wedding day

⁴³ planned or meant for

⁴⁴ information not proven to be true, gossip

⁴⁵ sexual relation

⁴⁶ came face to face with

⁴⁷ that was made known or public

⁴⁸ happened as a result, followed

[00:11:55] “Charles Rocked by Camilla Tape Shock,” reported one [tabloid](#)⁴⁹ newspaper.

[00:12:00] “Charles Sex Talk Taped,” said another.

[00:12:05] With many [tabloid](#) newspapers printing detailed ‘[manuscripts](#)⁵⁰’ of the call, it became such big news that it became known simply as ‘Camillagate.’

[00:12:15] This [leak](#)⁵¹ caused a huge scandal for the Royal Family.

[00:12:20] By 1992, Charles and Diana had effectively separated and rarely appeared in public together.

[00:12:28] Although there were allegations that Diana had been [unfaithful](#)⁵², the public was almost [unanimously](#)⁵³ on Diana’s side, painting her as an innocent victim, a young beautiful girl who didn’t know what she was getting herself into.

⁴⁹ small-sized newspaper often concentrating on gossip

⁵⁰ texts

⁵¹ information made known or public

⁵² involved in sexual relations with another person

⁵³ with the agreement of everyone

[00:12:44] She would also break royal [protocol](#)⁵⁴, and do something that Royals were not meant to do, when she gave honest, [candid](#)⁵⁵ interviews about her marriage and mental health.

[00:12:55] British Royals, as you may know through the fact that the queen spent 70 years on the [throne](#) and practically never revealed anything about her own character, they are not meant to talk about their feelings.

[00:13:09] Diana felt differently.

[00:13:11] In 1995 she shocked the nation when she stated in an interview that “there were three of us in this marriage”, with the third person obviously meant to be Camilla.

[00:13:23] Not only this, but she also confessed that she had [self-harmed](#)⁵⁶ and suffered from [bulimia](#)⁵⁷, an eating disorder, and suggested that Prince Charles, as he was then, might not adapt too well to being King.

[00:13:39] This interview, which was watched by over 20 million people, was incredibly [controversial](#)⁵⁸ at the time.

⁵⁴ accepted way of behaving

⁵⁵ honest, straightforward

⁵⁶ purposely hurt herself

⁵⁷ an eating disorder

⁵⁸ causing disagreement and discussion

[00:13:46] Never before had a member of the Royal Family talked so openly about their private life, and after the interview was broadcast the Queen wrote to both Charles and Diana urging them to divorce and [put the whole issue to bed](#)⁵⁹, to end it.

[00:14:04] And then, after years of [rumour](#)⁶⁰ and [relentless](#)⁶¹ media [scrutiny](#)⁶², on the 28th of August 1996, Charles and Diana finally divorced.

[00:14:15] Despite divorcing the future King of England, Diana remained an incredibly popular and loved figure in Britain, still seen as a victim, and Charles a villain.

[00:14:27] Then, almost exactly a year after the divorce, on the 31st of August 1997, Diana was killed in a car crash in Paris.

[00:14:37] Just as the [tabloid](#) media had followed Diana's every move in Britain, that night in France her driver was speeding into a tunnel to avoid paparazzi photographers.

[00:14:49] As you can probably imagine, this was, without question, the biggest news in the country.

⁵⁹ solve the whole problem by ending it

⁶⁰ information not proven to be true, gossip

⁶¹ intense, non-stop

⁶² careful and detailed examination

[00:14:56] A week later, on September 6th, when Diana's funeral was held in London at Westminster Abbey, over 30 million people, half the population of the country, [tuned in](#) to watch.

[00:15:08] A further 2.5 billion people watched the event around the globe, making it one of the biggest television events in history.

[00:15:16] By this time, Charles and Camilla had actually [rekindled](#)⁶³ their old relationship. Camilla had divorced back in 1995, and it was semi-acceptable for the pair to be back together again.

[00:15:31] But clearly, it was too early to introduce her - Charles was still meant to be in [mourning](#)⁶⁴ for his ex-wife, even if his true love had always been elsewhere.

[00:15:43] It's said that in the [aftermath](#)⁶⁵, the Queen [disapproved](#)⁶⁶ so much of Charles' relationship with Camilla that she refused to attend his 50th birthday party because Camilla would be there.

[00:15:55] And it wasn't until 1999 that the two appeared in public together for the first time.

⁶³ revived, renewed

⁶⁴ period of showing sadness because of her death

⁶⁵ period after the event

⁶⁶ was against, felt it was bad

[00:16:02] By 2000, the Queen had accepted Camilla, and a few years later, in 2004, Charles and Camilla announced their engagement, almost 35 years after they had first met.

[00:16:16] The pair married the next year, in April of 2005.

[00:16:20] And though she was eventually accepted into the Royal Family, public opinion of Camilla has not really improved.

[00:16:28] There was an [extensive⁶⁷](#) public relations campaign launched to improve her image, but it was discovered that even seven years later it had not improved by a single percentage point.

[00:16:40] To many in Britain, she would always be, and still is, the woman who stole Charles away from Diana.

[00:16:48] Now, back to the [protagonist⁶⁸](#) of this story, who, as you may have realised, was in fact often a [supporting character⁶⁹](#) in his own story, in the shadow of his first wife, and in the bigger shadow of his mother.

⁶⁷ large

⁶⁸ the main character

⁶⁹ character who was not the main focus

[00:17:02] Charles was now happily married, with two adult sons, and a healthy and [energetic⁷⁰](#) mother, meaning he had no immediate [prospects⁷¹](#) of becoming king.

[00:17:13] So, he moved into a new phase of his life.

[00:17:17] One of preparation for what was to come.

[00:17:20] In the 2000s Charles began to throw himself into public service.

[00:17:26] In 2008, The Daily Telegraph described him as the "hardest-working member of the royal family" and reported that he had carried out 560 official engagements in 2008, 499 in 2010, and over 600 in 2011.

[00:17:45] It's a common criticism of the Royal family that they don't have a job, or they don't "do anything", but Charles' busy schedule suggests that he can't really be accused of this.

[00:17:58] He took a particular interest in environmental affairs, and much of his time was spent representing the monarchy abroad, going to funerals and official events in the place of his [ageing⁷²](#) mother.

⁷⁰ involving a lot of activity

⁷¹ hopes, possibility

⁷² growing old

[00:18:10] As the 2010s went on, with the Queen celebrating her 90th birthday, there was more and more [speculation](#)⁷³ as to when exactly [the inevitable](#)⁷⁴ would happen.

When would Charles become king, and what type of King would he be.

[00:18:26] Or whether he would be king at all, with some questioning whether he would decide to skip being king altogether and pass the [crown](#) directly on to his son, William.

[00:18:38] Then, on the 8th of September, 2022, it happened.

[00:18:43] His mother, Queen Elizabeth died.

[00:18:46] After decades of waiting, Charles' time had finally come.

[00:18:51] He was the longest-serving [heir apparent](#) in the history of the British monarchy, and at the age of 73, is the oldest person to [ascend](#)⁷⁵ the British [throne](#).

[00:19:03] He was the next in line for a [staggering](#)⁷⁶ 70 years, he spent his entire adult life waiting.

[00:19:10] He became the third British king called Charles.

[00:19:13] If you know your British history, you'll remember that it's not a particularly lucky name.

⁷³ talk or prediction

⁷⁴ something that was certain to happen

⁷⁵ make his way up to

⁷⁶ surprising, shocking

[00:19:19] The first King Charles lost his head. His son, Charles II, had to fight to win back the [throne](#), avoiding murder [plots](#)⁷⁷ and political chaos and developed a [reputation](#)⁷⁸ for [excess](#)⁷⁹ and [indulgence](#)⁸⁰.

[00:19:34] So, the question remains, what kind of king will King Charles III be?

[00:19:40] Your guess is as good as mine, but one thing is for sure, he has certainly had enough time to think about it.

[00:19:50] Ok then, that's it for today's episode on Charles III, the Prince who spent almost his entire life waiting to become King.

[00:19:58] As a reminder, this episode is going to be followed by another one where we'll go deeper into the [psyche](#)⁸¹ and character of this man, and ask ourselves the question of Who Is The Real King Charles III?

[00:20:11] As always, I would love to know what you thought about this episode.

[00:20:15] What do you think of Charles III?

[00:20:17] How do you think he will do as King?

⁷⁷ secret plans

⁷⁸ the opinion people have about him

⁷⁹ actions of going beyond the accepted limits

⁸⁰ the attitude of enjoying comfort and pleasures too much

⁸¹ thoughts and feelings

[00:20:20] Would you have preferred him to pass the [crown](#) directly to his son?

[00:20:24] I would love to know, so let's get this discussion started.

[00:20:27] You can head right into our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:20:35] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:20:40] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

| Word | Definition |
|----------------|---|
| Breath | air taken in or inhaled |
| Crown | position of a monarch or king |
| Reign | period of being a king |
| Tend to | usually do |
| Heir apparent | the next person to have this position undeniably |
| Throne | the power or rank of someone who is king or queen |
| Next in line | the next person to have this position |
| Outing | public appearance |
| Coronation | a ceremony at which she was made queen |
| Spotlight | centre of attention |
| The public eye | the state of being known or of interest to people, especially through the media |
| Heir | the next person to have this position |

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Customary | usual |
| Harsh | strict, hard |
| Sensitive | easily damaged or upset |
| Loathed | hated |
| Eligible | desirable or suitable |
| Bachelor | a man who wasn't married |
| Whole host of | very large number of |
| Aristocratic | of high social rank |
| Primary | first, main |
| Hereditary | run by bloodline |
| Courting | involved with her romantically |
| Almighty | huge, enormous |
| Frenzy | a period of extreme activity, craze |
| Seeds of doubt | negative or worrying things |
| Awkwardly | in a worried or embarrassed way |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Tuned in | turned on their TVs |
| Destigmatise | remove the negative or shameful feelings about it |
| Criticism | negative judgement or expression of disapproval |
| Perceived | considered, regarded |
| Crowned | made, named by putting the crown on his head |
| Alleged | said, without proof |
| Squeeze | press, extract by pressing |
| Iron | press them with a heated iron in order to make them smooth |
| Suited | right, appropriate |
| Queen material | appropriate or suitable to be queen |
| Shock horror | used ironically to express that it was not surprising or upsetting |
| Courted | been involved with her romantically |
| Aristocracy | class of people with high social rank |
| Biographer | someone who wrote the story of her life |
| Bride | woman on her wedding day |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Intended for | planned or meant for |
| Rumours | information not proven to be true, gossip |
| Affair | sexual relation |
| Confronted | came face to face with |
| Leaked | that was made known or public |
| Ensued | happened as a result, followed |
| Tabloid | small-sized newspaper often concentrating on gossip |
| Manuscripts | texts |
| Leak | information made known or public |
| Unfaithful | involved in sexual relations with another person |
| Unanimously | with the agreement of everyone |
| Protocol | accepted way of behaving |
| Candid | honest, straightforward |
| Self-harmed | purposely hurt herself |
| Bulimia | an eating disorder |

Controversial causing disagreement and discussion

Put the whole issue to bed solve the whole problem by ending it

Rumour information not proven to be true, gossip

Relentless intense, non-stop

Scrutiny careful and detailed examination

Rekindled revived, renewed

Mourning period of showing sadness because of her death

Aftermath period after the event

Disapproved was against, felt it was bad

Extensive large

Protagonist the main character

Supporting character character who was not the main focus

Energetic involving a lot of activity

Prospects hopes, possibility

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Ageing | growing old |
| Speculation | talk or prediction |
| The inevitable | something that was certain to happen |
| Ascend | make his way up to |
| Staggering | surprising, shocking |
| Plots | secret plans |
| Reputation | the opinion people have about him |
| Excess | actions of going beyond the accepted limits |
| Indulgence | the attitude of enjoying comfort and pleasures too much |
| Psyche | thoughts and feelings |

We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com