
WELCOME TO

Government & Politics



at C.C.C.S.



A Level Politics Taster lesson:

How powerful are Prime Ministers?

A Level Politics

What will you study?

UK POLITICS

- Democracy and participation
- Political parties
- Voting systems
- Voting behaviour
- Constitution
- Parliament
- Prime Minister
- Supreme court & the EU

IDEOLOGY

Three compulsory ideologies:

- Liberalism
- Conservatism
- Socialism

One optional ideology:

- Our current class chose to study **feminism**.

Note: This option can change.

US POLITICS

- US Democracy and participation
- US constitution
- US Congress
- US President
- US Supreme Court

- This is a **comparative** paper. You will compare UK to USA.

A Level Politics

Today's FOCUS...

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What do you think you know about recent Prime Ministers?

Before we get started with today's session we are just going to do a quick **TRUE** or **FALSE** quiz about recent Prime Ministers...





1. Boris' first name is Alexander

→ TRUE!

→ Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson



2. Rishi is the second person of South Asian heritage to become Prime Minister.

→ FALSE!

→ He is the first person of South Asian heritage to become Prime Minister. He was the second to become Chancellor of the Exchequer.



3. Liz Truss was the shortest serving Prime Minister in history at 119 days!

- **FALSE!** Yes she is the shortest BUT it was 45 days!
- **George Canning** lasted for 119. He died in office in 1827.



4. Theresa was
the Third woman
to become Prime
Minister in
history.

→ FALSE!

→ She was the second. The First was
Margaret Thatcher and the Third was
Liz Truss.





5. Boris called a voter a 'bigoted woman' live on microphone by accident

→ FALSE!

→ This was Gordon Brown in 2010. He forgot that the mic was still attached to his suit jacket.



6. Rishi was born on the south coast and is MP for Southampton.


→ FALSE!

→ He was born on the south coast of England but he is actually an MP for Richmond in Yorkshire. He is a massive Southampton fan! Ouch!



7. Liz was the last person to be made Prime Minister by Queen Elizabeth II

- True!
- 15 Prime Ministers served under Queen Elizabeth II



8. Theresa said that
the naughtiest thing
she had ever done
was “running across
a cricket field”

→ FALSE!

→ She actually said “running through a
field of wheat!”



What do you know about the roles and powers of the Prime Minister?



**MAKE SURE YOU
ARE LISTENING!**

**AT THE END THERE
WILL BE A QUIZ!**

Fact one! Origin

- **Sir Robert Walpole**
- Became the *First Lord of the Treasury* in 1721
- King George I needed him to lead the country out of a financial collapse
- Walpole was successful and this established a new convention...



Fact two!

Convention

The position of Prime Minister isn't actually an official role that is written down in law or constitution.

It has evolved over the years and is just a **convention** (an unwritten rule)



Fact three! Not the Head of State!

- The PM is the Head of government
- The **King** is technically in charge of the country, the **Head of State**
- His power has decreased though and is in the hands of his government



Fact four!

Royal prerogative

The monarch (king or queen) used to have powers over foreign affairs, defence and national security. This royal prerogative is now in the hands of the PM and the government as her representatives.





Fact five! Leader of the Pack

- Not only is the PM in charge of Her Majesty's government, but he/she is also in charge of a party.
- They need their support in Parliament to get things done (e.g. new laws)
- The last **FIVE** PMs have been from the **Conservative party**.

Fact six!

Decides direction

It is clear with the recent COVID 19 crisis that the PM can decide the direction a country goes in. Often this would also need the support of his/her cabinet ministers.



Fact seven! Cabinet maker



One major power of a PM is to choose his/her team of ministers to help run the country. The top cabinet ministers are called **secretaries of state**.

Fact eight!

Keeping ministers and party on side

One major issue for a PM is to constantly keep ministers and MPs from your party on your side. If a PM loses support then it can undermine them.



Fact nine!

Represents UK

The PM will travel to represent the King and his government. This gives them a fair amount of power when it comes to making deals with other countries.

Rishi Sunak recently met **President Biden** when he visited Ireland.



Fact ten!

Held to account

A PM can be scrutinised (questioned) by the political system. Every week they answer questions at **PMQs (Prime Minister's Questions)**.

They also get questioned by a panel of MPs called the Liaison committee.



QUESTION TIME



SEVEN minutes: Go!

1. Who was first Prime Minister?
2. What is an unwritten rule called in British politics?
3. Who is our Head of State?
4. What are the powers called that are passed onto the Prime Minister?
5. Which party have the last 5 PMs come from?
6. What are the top cabinet members called?
7. Who did the PM recently meet in Ireland?
8. Where does the PM get questioned every Wednesday?



The PM is meant to be...

Primus inter pares

"First among equals"

However the reality is
that they have grown in
power and have become
more Presidential in style.



—

Just how **powerful**
have recent British
Prime Ministers
been?





Too early to
decide Rishi
Sunak's
**power
rating**

He has a
large
majority
but does
not have
the same
high ratings
as Boris
Johnson!
Time will
tell...

TASK

Power rating!



1. WEAK

2.

3.

4.

5. STRONG

We are going to rate each Prime Minister from Thatcher to Sunak!

TASK - Listen to the main facts about each Prime Minister. Once you have listened and discussed in your pairs/groups. **Shade in the amount of strong arms you think each leader is/was**

FINAL TASK - Which Prime Minister was the strongest? Which was the weakest?



Elections Won

- 1979
- 1983 **Landslide**
- 1987

Margaret Thatcher



- PM 1979-1990
- Had an **assertive** style of leadership
- She dismissed her opponents from her government and replaced them with her allies
- Had **tight control** over government spending
- **Limited the power** of the trade unions
- Led a **radical transformation** of the economy
- **Won** Falklands war 1982-3
- But - After **Poll tax** idea she faced a challenge to her leadership and resigned



Elections Won

- 1992

John Major

- PM 1990-1997
- Had an **collegiate** style of leadership
- **Won** first Gulf war
- His party and government were **split over the EU**
- Won the election in 1992 but only **by 2 seats**
- Was in charge during an **economic recession** and another economic mishap called black wednesday
- Party and government were involved in **scandals**
- **Lost majority** gained in 1992 election
- **Huge loss** to Blair and New Labour 1997

Tony Blair

- PM 1997-2007
- Transformed Labour to make it more **electable**
- There was only **small amount** of MPs (inc. Corbyn) who were against him in the party
- **Charismatic leader**
- Led a team of ministers **separate** from the Cabinet to make key decisions
- Brought in **huge changes** (e.g. power to Scotland and Wales, National minimum wage, closer links to Europe, Human Rights Act)
- Led an **active foreign policy** which led to the war in Iraq in 2003
- After Iraq and various scandals his **popularity waned** and he resigned

Elections Won

- 1997 **landslide**
- 2001
- 2005

Gordon Brown



Elections Won

• NONE

- PM 2007-2010
- Viewed as **indecisive and bossy**. Did not have a positive media image
- Was '**crowned**' as leader in 2007
- Was pressured into holding an election straight away - **never did!**
- **Party was split** between 'Blairites' and 'Brownites'
- **Invested heavily in banks** during the economic crash **BUT** was never credited for steadying the country
- Many blamed him for the crisis because he was previously Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Lost election



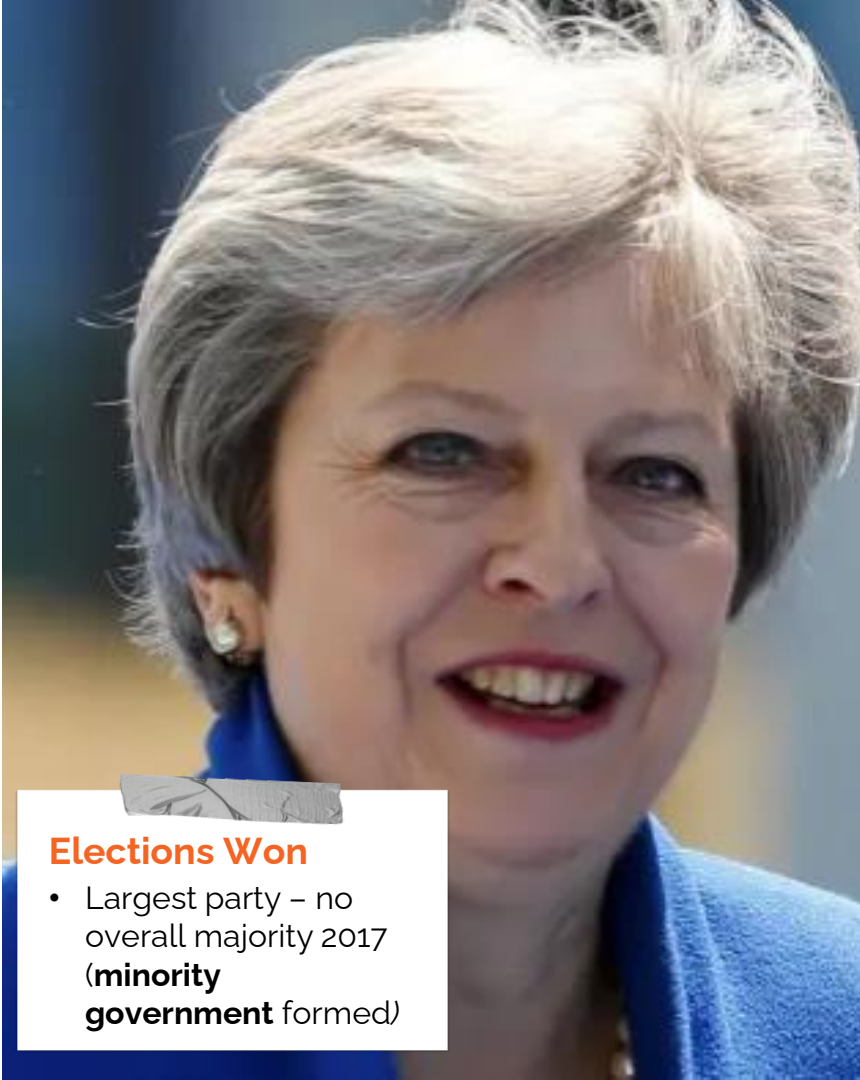
Elections Won

- Largest party – no overall majority 2010 (**Coalition** formed)
- 2015

David Cameron



- PM 2010-2016
- Would have liked to be more assertive
- He had to deal with a coalition government until 2015
- Kept 'enemies' in cabinet, but forged close relationship with Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home Secretary
- Led country out of recession
- Made huge cuts to government spending
- Passed same sex marriage law
- Parliament stopped him from using airstrikes in Syria
- Called an EU referendum because of UKIP threat. Campaigned to remain. LOST!



Theresa May



- PM 2016-2019
- Ruthless style. She sacked a lot of David Cameron's government.
- BUT had to include a mix of REMAIN and LEAVE ministers in her government.
- Did not consult her cabinet over the calling 2017 general election
- Campaigned poorly
- Led a minority government
- Without a majority or other MPs she couldn't get her EU deal through Parliament.
- There were multiple no confidence votes against her.
- She then resigned.

Elections Won

- Largest party – no overall majority 2017 (**minority government** formed)



Elections Won

- 2019 **landslide**
- but*
- 2022 - **Vote of no confidence by MPs**

Boris Johnson

- PM 2019-2022
- Won a huge majority in the 2019 election. Biggest since Tony Blair.
- An effective communicator and cunning political operator
- Failed to sack advisers and ministers when mistakes made
- Party supported him around Brexit and he promised to 'Get Brexit Done'. UK left the EU.
- Some say he dealt well with the pandemic well despite difficulties. Others say he was slow to react to the situation.
- Made a series of policy U- turns (e.g. Free school meals and Marcus Rashford)
- 'Partygate' eventually lost him support and the party was divided over his rule. Public opinion turned against him. He resigned.



Elections Won

- **NONE** – Did not experience an election: Only PM for 49 days!

Liz Truss

- PM 2022-22
- Inherited Boris Johnson's large majority
- Was elected by her party (57%) to become leader
- Promised in the leadership election to cut taxes
- The beginning of her time as Prime Minister was dominated by the death of the Queen
- With her Chancellor she launched her tax cutting economic policy (£45bn of tax cuts)
- This panicked the markets and the value of the pound plummeted
- Her own MPs and ministers called for her to resign
- She then went back on her policies and selected a different Chancellor
- She then resigned. 45 days in office and is the shortest PM ever.



Elections Won

- NONE – To date hasn't experienced an election

Rishi Sunak



- PM 2022-present
- He was the youngest person in the modern era to become PM
- Inherited Boris Johnson's huge majority in parliament
- He was elected leader of the Conservative party (and therefore PM) unopposed
- It can be argued that he has restored some calm within government and his party
- Opinion poll ratings are way below Boris Johnson's in 2019

TOO EARLY TO JUDGE!

Elastic band theory

A close-up photograph of two hands pulling on a thin, light-colored elastic band against a blue background. The hands are positioned on the left and right sides of the frame, with fingers gripping the band. The band is stretched taut, creating a diagonal line across the image. The background is a solid, vibrant blue.

This is the theory that Prime Ministers will try and stretch their power as far as they can...

...but events, elections and individuals will pull back on that power and limit their power.

Even the most powerful PMs will stretch their power too far.

TASK 2:

What **issues** matter to you?



**This really
matters to me!**



THIS SIDE OF THE ROOM!

**This does not
matter to me!**



THIS SIDE OF THE ROOM!



Mental health services
receive less funding than
physical health services



Young people can only
vote at the age of 18



The UK's Head of State is
an unelected monarch



The UK spends around
£14bn a year helping
poorer countries



The UK has just left the
European Union



Global warming is affecting
the environment



The House of Lords is
unelected



The NHS is under huge pressure this time of year



Tuition fees can be £9250 a
year at university



Knife crime has increased
in recent years

So...What do YOU care about?



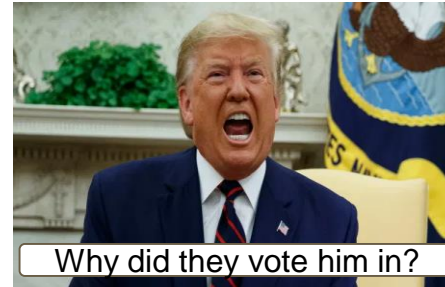
A Level Politics

What will you study?

Questions?
Come and see me or
email me @
ssu@cooperscoborn.co.uk

P Pearson • UK Politics (Unit 1) • UK Government (Unit 2)
Edexcel • Ideology (Unit 1 and 2) • Global Politics (Unit 3)

**A-Level Trip:
To Parliament**



A Level Politics

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Have you got any questions?



THANK YOU

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See you in September!
