

THE KING'S SPEECH – HERO'S JOURNEY

ACT ONE

Sequence 1 – Bertie has a p-p-problem

The Duke of York, son of King George V, gives a speech at the Empire Games at Wembley and reveals the most embarrassing stutter (ORDINARY WORLD).

He suffers a series of quack cures (ORDINARY WORLD) from supposedly eminent physicians including smoking and filling his mouth with marbles.

Though diffident in speech, the second in line to the throne exhibits an explosive temper (ORDINARY WORLD).

Sequence 2 – Elizabeth takes a different tack

His wife, Elizabeth, visits the curious Harley St lodgings of Australian speech therapist Lionel Logue (MENTOR/ANTAGONIST) who is initially unaware who she is and demands that her husband, “Mr Johnson” comes to see him (CALL TO ADVENTURE).

She reveals the true identity of her husband and that it's not possible for him to come to Logue's rooms (REFUSAL OF THE CALL).

But Lionel insists there are no exceptions (CALL TO ADVENTURE) and Elizabeth agrees (CROSSES THRESHOLD).

Lionel wants to reveal his special new client to his wife and children (ORDINARY WORLD) but honours his ethical code.

With his own children, Bertie hardly stammers though when called upon to tell a story to his children, it returns slightly. It's clear that despite his royal status, he's a loving father (ORDINARY WORLD).

Elizabeth says Bertie's brother is dating a married American woman, Wallis Simpson (CALL TO ADVENTURE) but Bertie thinks he can't be serious about her because she is divorced. (REFUSAL).

Elizabeth reveals she's found a new therapist (CALL TO ADVENTURE), but Bertie isn't interested (REFUSAL). She convinces him to go (CROSSES THRESHOLD) because Logue is “rather different”.

Sequence 3 – Lionel and His Royal Bertie get acquainted

Elizabeth takes Bertie to Logue's rooms but the royals are forced to wait for a schoolboy to finish (TESTS, ALLIES & ENEMIES).

The disorientation continues when Lionel refuses to address the Duke by his formal title and chooses the name, Bertie, despite the fact that “Only my family uses that” (TESTS, ALLIES & ENEMIES).

Lionel has the temerity to question Bertie about his earliest memories (TESTS, ALLIES & ENEMIES) and again reveals his explosive temper (ORDINARY WORLD).

Lionel believes the stammer is psychological (CALL TO ADVENTURE) but Bertie is resistant to the line of questioning (REFUSAL).

Lionel bets that he can make Bertie read without a stammer (CALL TO ADVENTURE) and has him make a phonograph recording while listening to loud music that prevents him hearing his voice.

Bertie makes the recording but doesn't feel this is for him (REFUSAL) and leaves with the recording he has no intention of listening to.

Sequence 4 – Bertie's Dad not entirely supportive

Bertie's father, King George V, (ANTAGONIST) gives a rousing speech to the nation, further highlighting Bertie's unsuitability for the top job (ORDINARY WORLD).

The King gets Bertie to try to recite the speech but shows no patience (ORDINARY WORLD), only making his son's stammer worse and the psychological problems at the root of Bertie's stammer become apparent (ORDINARY WORLD).

Though the King doesn't act as a helpful MENTOR, he fulfils the archetypal function of the MEET WITH THE MENTOR stage of the Hero's Journey by forcing Bertie to reconsider his REFUSAL.

Sequence 5 – Bertie commits

Bertie listens to the phonograph and is astounded – like his wife – to hear that he has given the speech without stuttering. (CROSSES THE THRESHOLD).

ACT TWO

Sequence 6 – Bertie and Logue get down to work

Bertie and his wife insist that Logue just deal with the speech defect – no personal stuff – but the therapist gives no verbal assent, and they proceed to work on some tongue-twisters to strengthen his Royal Highness's mechanics. (TESTS, ALLIES & ENEMIES).

At a factory, Bertie gives a speech that is well short of fluent but the relaxing techniques he's learnt produce a vast improvement over the Empire Games debacle (TESTS, ALLIES & ENEMIES).

Sequence 7 – Death opens doors

The family comes to the death-bed of King George V, and Bertie's brother, David, soon faces a dilemma: he will have to choose between the throne, and the love of his life, the twice-married Wallis Simpson. (THE APPROACH).

The King's death lowers Bertie's defences (THE APPROACH) and he reveals that his father's last words were apparently that he "had more guts than the rest of his brothers put together" – a compliment he hadn't bothered to express to his son.

Logue introduces the technique of singing to help overcome stammering and Bertie uses it to reveal how he feared his father, was teased by his brother and starved by his nanny. He also says that Lionel is the first ordinary person he's ever spoken to and that he's never had a real friend (THE APPROACH).

Sequence 8 – Bertie pushed to breaking point

David assumes the role of King if not the responsibilities and is not the slightest bit worried about Hitler's empire-building across the Channel. He declares his intention

to marry Mrs Simpson despite the constitutional implications of which his brother Bertie seems far more aware.

Aware of Bertie's speech lessons, David accuses his brother of aspiring to the throne himself, teases him about his stutter, and Bertie is unable to get out a single word in response (ORDEAL).

Logue probes Bertie on why David makes his stammer so much and it prompts a vulgar fluency from the second-in-line to the throne (ORDEAL).

Walking in Regent's Park, Bertie reveals the looming constitutional crisis and Lionel suggests that he would make a better king than his brother. Bertie is outraged at the treasonous (or perhaps frightening) suggestion but Lionel persists and Bertie declares their relationship is over. (ORDEAL).

Prime Minister Baldwin tells Bertie that if David marries Mrs Simpson the government will resign, and the prospect of Bertie having to assume the throne becomes a distinct and scary possibility (ORDEAL).

Lionel talks to his wife in non-specific terms about a "client who's afraid of his shadow" but feels he might have overstepped the mark. However, Bertie refuses to receive him (ORDEAL).

David chooses Mrs Simpson over the throne and tells the nation that their new king is King George VI, or, as we know him, Bertie (ORDEAL).

Bertie goes to the Privy Council but when he tries to deliver his Accession Speech, he locks up completely (ORDEAL).

Bertie's children now treat him with greater formality, heightening his sense of isolation (ORDEAL).

Overcome with the burdens of his new office, Bertie breaks down and cries in his wife's arms. (ORDEAL).

Sequence 9 – Bertie returns to the fold

Bertie and Elizabeth go to Logue's home and Lionel reassures him that he'll help him through the crisis of the coronation ceremony. Logue's wife's discomfort at entertaining royalty creates light relief (REWARD).

Over protests, Bertie insists that Lionel must be seated in the King's Box during the ceremony. When it's pointed out that the box is reserved for family members, Bertie says that's why it's appropriate (REWARD).

Sequence 10 – Logue unmasked

Logue's proximity to the King triggers inquiries that reveal he has no qualifications (THE ROAD BACK) and Bertie accuses him of fraud but his outrage is really fear that he'll make an ass of himself as King.

Lionel provokes him by sitting in the chair of Edward the Confessor but when Bertie orders him to get up, the therapist refuses on the grounds that Bertie has just told him he doesn't really deserve to be king. (THE ROAD BACK).

This prompts Bertie to declare that he should be obeyed because “I have a voice”. Logue agrees, and declares him the bravest man he knows.

The King and his family watch the newsreel of the ceremony and it all goes off splendidly, but Bertie is more concerned by the footage of Hitler, who appears to be in no need of Logue’s speech therapy (THE ROAD BACK).

Baldwin tenders his resignation over his misjudgement about Hitler and Chamberlain, the new Prime Minister, announces to the nation that they are at war with Germany. (THE ROAD BACK)

ACT THREE

Sequence 11 – The King’s Speech

Logue arrives at Buckingham Palace to help an anxious Bertie prepare for his own broadcast to the nation. He doubts he has the capacity for his role but Lionel coaches him through his fears, and encourages the King to say the speech not to the nation but to him, as a friend.

Bertie delivers his speech, with the occasional pause, but also with the confidence and the conviction of a man who is no longer in fear of his father nor in the shadow of his brother, but as if he truly believes he deserves to be addressing his people (RESURRECTION).

Sequence 12 – The King’s friend

The speech is received with universal acclaim and Bertie thanks his speech therapist: “my friend” (RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR). Lionel acknowledges his client’s growth by thanking, “your majesty” (RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR).

Credits tell us that “Lionel and Bertie remained friends for the rest of their lives” (RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR).