

# Our school trip to the Houses of Parliament

## Teachers' notes and classroom activity ideas

These teachers' notes provide you with adaptable ideas to bring the book 'Our school trip to the Houses of Parliament' to life in your classroom.

Based around a school trip, the story is a fun, accessible introduction to the UK Parliament for pupils aged 5-7 (Year 1-2 England & Wales, P2-3 Northern Ireland and Primary 2-3 Scotland). The story will enable your pupils to develop their understanding of the different parts of Parliament and some of the people who work there.

In these notes you will find activity ideas and photocopiable resources that you can adapt to meet the needs of the children in your class. You will also find ideas of how you could use the story as a springboard for bigger project ideas.



### Meet Chance the dog

Throughout the story pupils can find out more information from Chance the dog. But who is Chance and what does he have to do with the UK Parliament?

Chance the dog was the mascot of the London Fire Engine Establishment, the London Fire Brigade of its time. On the night of the 16th October 1834, a huge fire engulfed the old Palace of Westminster, badly damaging the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Reports show that Chance was there on that night, he is even mentioned by Charles Dickens!

After the fire, the Palace of Westminster was rebuilt to become the Houses of Parliament that we see today.

# Background information for teachers

Almost everywhere we look and in every choice we make the UK Parliament has played a role, from the laws that govern our day-to-day lives to the public services we use and the role of the UK in the global community.

## What is Parliament?

The UK Parliament consists of three parts: the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Monarch. In Parliament, Members of the House of Commons (MPs) and members of the House of Lords debate national and international issues and make new laws. It is also where ministers answer questions and explain what the Government is doing about pressing issues of the day.

## About the House of Commons

The House of Commons is the elected chamber of Parliament. There are 650 MPs in the House of Commons, each representing a different constituency in the UK. MPs debate the big political issues of the day and proposals for new laws. The Government is accountable to Parliament and the public. In the House of Commons, MPs can hold the Government to account in a number of ways. Prime Minister's Questions and Ministerial Questions offer the opportunity to question and challenge the Government's policies.

MPs represent their constituents (including those who didn't vote for them) and their party. They split their time between working in Parliament itself and working in their constituency.

## About the House of Lords

The House of Lords is the second chamber of the UK Parliament. It is independent of the elected House of Commons and share the task of making and shaping laws and checking and challenging the work of the Government.

There are over 800 members of the House of Lords. The majority of members (84%) are Life Peers and have been appointed based on their knowledge and experience. Many are experienced politicians but others have expertise in areas such as business, health, education, the arts and sport. The House of Lords Act 1999 ended the right of most hereditary Peers to sit and vote in the House and led to significant changes in its membership.

## Activities and photocopiable resources

The following short activities and photocopiable resources are designed to enable you to extend the story and explore pupils' comprehension.

### Activity 1: Read and respond

Read the story as a class or in small groups. Explain tricky words to pupils using the glossary. Using page 18 as a stimulus, ask pupils to retell the story in their own words to a partner.

**Extension:** Confident writers can use PCM 1 to write the story in their own words. Remind pupils to use capital letters to begin a sentence and full stops at the end.

### Activity 2: What questions would you ask?

The children in Oak Class ask lots of questions in the story to find out more information. In this activity, pupils can think about the questions they would like to ask about the UK Parliament. Using PCM 2, ask children to write in the speech bubbles the questions they would like to ask;

- before a trip to the Houses of Parliament
- their local MP (Member of Parliament)
- a member of the House of Lords

**Extension:** Pupils could role play asking their question to a partner.

### Activity 3: Book review

Using the simple book review template on PCM 3, ask pupils to record how they felt about the story and what they learned.

### Activity 4: Roll and retell

Use the dice templates on PCM 4 and 5 to help pupils retell different parts of the story and to prompt them to talk about their favourite parts.

### Take it further

A series of ideas for how you could use the story as a springboard for teaching about the UK Parliament across the curriculum.

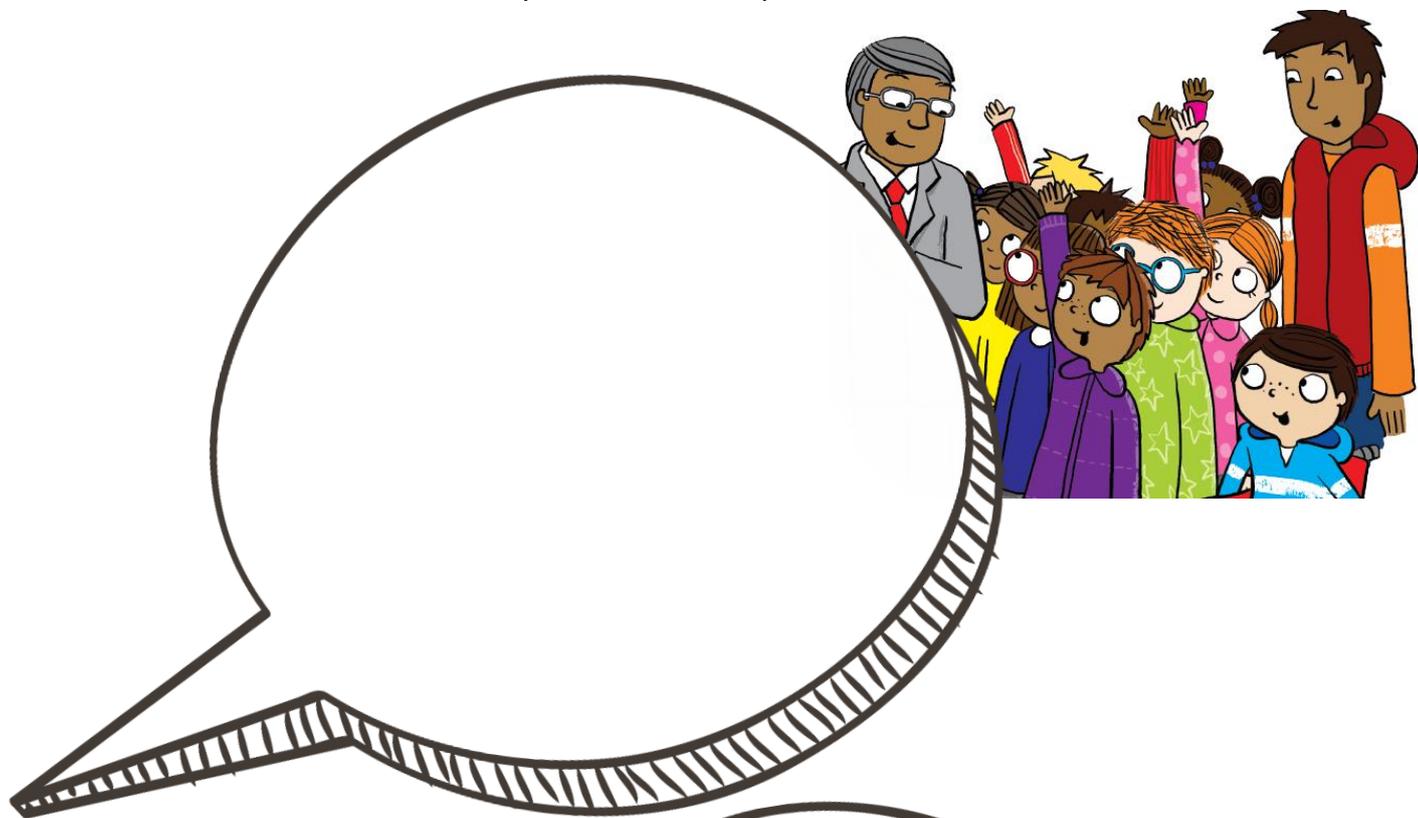
## Retell the story in your own words



## What questions would you ask?

The children in Oak Class asked lots of questions on their school trip.  
What questions would you ask if you visited the Houses of Parliament?

Write your ideas in the speech bubbles.



## Book review

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Book title** \_\_\_\_\_



How many stars would you give this book?

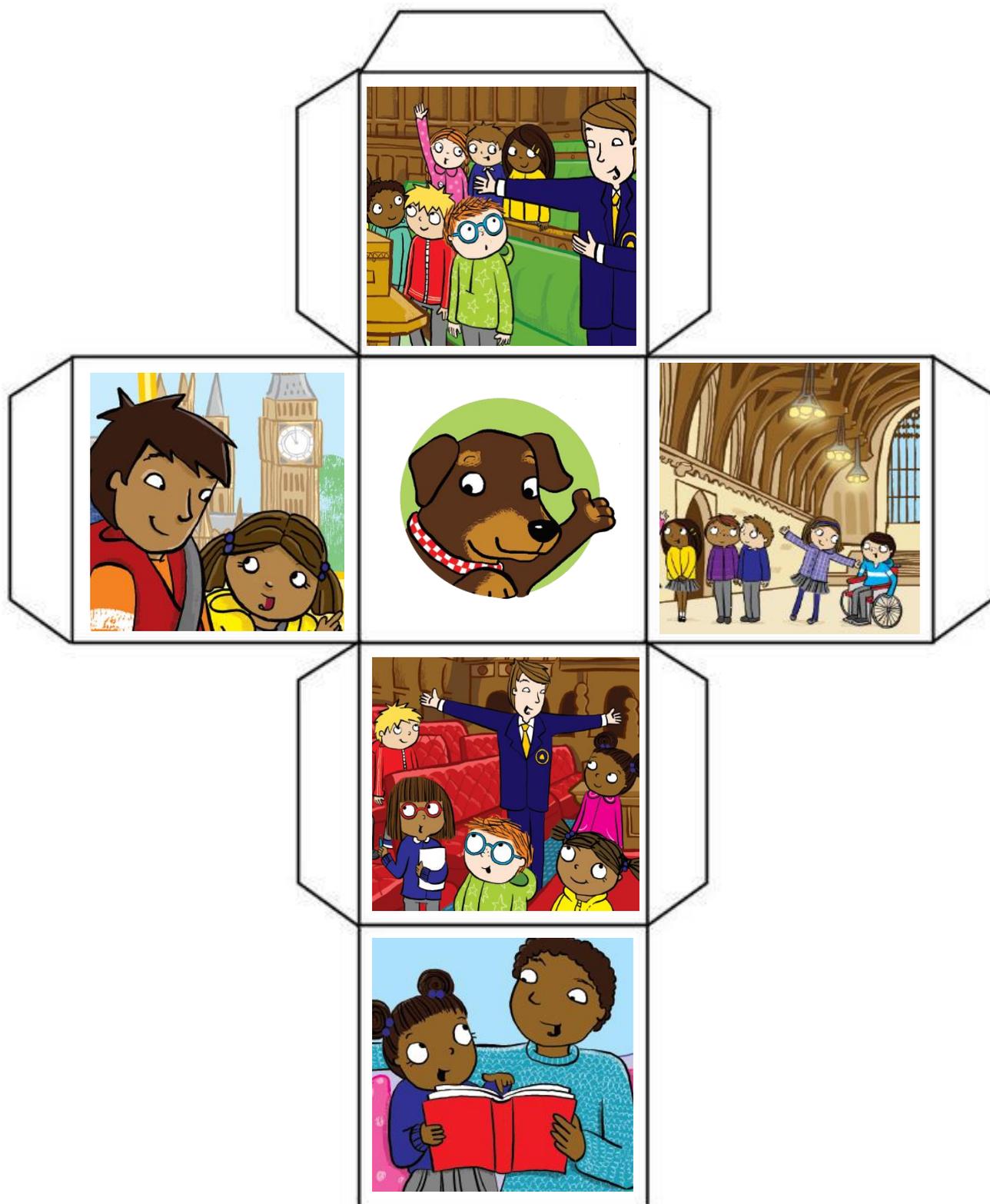


What was your favourite part of the story?

What new words did you learn?

Draw your favourite part of the book.

# Roll and retell



## Roll and retell

Where did the story take place?

What did you find out about the House of Commons?

Who were the main characters?

What did you find out about the House of Lords?

Talk about someone the children met on their school trip.

What was your favourite part of the story?

# Take it further

## Mini debate

- Provide pupils with a dilemma. Examples could include:
  - the head teacher needs help to decide what new playground equipment to buy
  - where the class should go on the next school trip or
  - whether there should be extra playtimes in the summer term
- Pupils could take turns to debate for and against different options.
- End the debate by voting for the preferred option.

## Write to your MP

- As a class, write a letter to your local MP inviting them to visit your school.
- Pupils could prepare questions to ask the MP about their job.
- Visit [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) to find out who your local MP is.

## Create a guide to the UK Parliament

- Explain to pupils that lots of people visit the UK Parliament every year, and lots of schools visit on trips.
- Pupils could create a poster or guide to the Houses of Parliament and share their learning with a younger class.