

## Teacher's notes

## Princess Diana

by Cherry Gilchrist



## SUMMARY

**P** *Princess Diana* is the biography of Diana, Princess of Wales, who died at the age of 36 in 1997.

The author, Cherry Gilchrist, describes Diana's background and childhood and the events that led up to her marriage to the Prince of Wales in July 1981. She examines the 15 years of Diana's marriage - the birth of her two sons, her illnesses, her work for charities - and the growing problems in her relationship with Prince Charles that led to divorce in 1996. The book explains how the 'fairy-tale romance' went wrong and how Diana eventually freed herself from the royal family and started to lead an independent life.

In the final chapter the author relates the tumultuous events of 1997, Diana's new romance with Dodi Fayed, her shocking death in a car accident and the royal funeral that was watched by millions of television viewers around the world. We learn of the contribution that Diana made to Britain and the world and the lessons which her life can teach us all.

## ABOUT CHERRY GILCHRIST

Cherry Gilchrist was born in 1949 and now lives in Bristol, England. She is an expert on social history and has written educational books on English life in the First World War and in the 1930s. She has also written original stories for children and is well known for retelling traditional stories and legends. *The Streets of London* is another title in the Penguin Readers series which Cherry has written.

In addition to having an interest in social history, Cherry Gilchrist writes and lectures on myths, symbolism and ancient wisdom. She has written several books on alchemy and astrology, including *Planetary Symbolism in Astrology* and *The Elements of Alchemy*; this last work has been translated into four languages. Her first love, however, is Russian art and culture and she runs a business arranging exhibitions and sales of Russian traditional arts and crafts.

When she is not writing, Cherry loves to travel: she has a home in Russia and she has visited many parts of Asia and the Middle East. Her husband is a financial writer and she has two grown-up children.

## BACKGROUND AND THEMES

During the 1980s and 1990s, Diana, Princess of Wales was one of the world's most glamorous and famous figures. Her photograph was printed on thousands of magazine covers and pictures of her could be seen on countless television programmes. Millions of people around the world knew of Diana, but few people actually knew the real person behind the media image. It is this real person rather than the public persona that Cherry Gilchrist examines. In *Princess Diana* she pulls aside the curtains of royal mystery and mystique surrounding Diana and looks at the inner person, her feelings, attitudes and anxieties. She shows how Diana's background and upbringing influenced her and how her personality was formed from the many painful experiences she had to endure as the child of a broken marriage. The effect of childhood experience on the adult is an important feature of the text.

One of the major themes that the book examines is the question of how a princess in the modern world should behave. Diana's open and informal style is contrasted with the more rigid traditions of the British royal family. Cherry Gilchrist illustrates the growing conflict between Diana's desire for freedom and a more relaxed approach to life with her husband's conservative sense of what was 'suitable' for a princess.

This theme has a universal application. In many countries, people in public positions have to balance their desire to behave normally with the commonly held belief that people in authority should be very dignified and respectable and rather distant from ordinary life, and that it is degrading for public figures to act too frivolously or informally. Similarly, the author describes the intrusion of the press into Diana's private life and raises the question of the extent to which the public is entitled to know about the personal lives of celebrities. Do public figures have the right to a private life, or is everything they do open to public inspection? This is an issue which has remained at the forefront of public debate since Diana's death.

The author is frank about Diana's disastrous marriage. She describes her illnesses and suicide attempts, the

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affairs, and the ultimate bitterness between Diana and Charles. Many little-known facts are exposed and the important role of Camilla Parker-Bowles as Prince Charles's lover and companion is explained. A key theme is the part her two sons and her charity work played in helping Diana to form a new role for herself after her divorce in 1996. Finally, the tragic events of Diana's death are recounted.

In *Princess Diana* Cherry Gilchrist shows how easily marriages can be built on illusions and the terrible cost that has to be paid when these illusions are shattered. But it is an optimistic tale, for we learn how Diana's love and kindness and her dedication to her children and charities helped to save her from disaster and bring her even greater respect and fame in death than she had in life. In her conclusion the author looks at the importance that helping others and being open can have in achieving a fulfilling life, however short that life might be.

## Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. Supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book can be found on the photocopiable *Student's Activities* pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/groupwork questions, can also be used by students working in a self-access centre.

## ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Write these words on the board:

history Prince of Wales Buckingham Palace  
traditions Queen Victoria duty heir

Ask students to look up any new words in their dictionaries. Then ask them to 'brainstorm' (write down anything they know about) any of these topics and words. Then ask students to work in groups and compare notes. Have a whole-class feedback session and write on the board any interesting ideas or useful items of vocabulary raised by the class as they talk.

## ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

## Chapters 1 - 2

Put students into groups of about four or five people. Explain to the groups that they are going to help Charles. It is 1981 and Prince Charles has told the students that he is thinking about marrying Diana Spencer. He wants their advice. The students make a list of the good and bad things about marrying Diana. Discuss students' ideas as a whole class.

## Chapters 3 - 4

Divide the class into two groups for a role-play/discussion. Group A are 'Charles's people' and Group B are 'Diana's people'.

Tell them that they are going to decide how to treat the two boys, William and Harry. They must think about education, places to go on days out, clothes, etc. and must have reasons for thinking as they do (using the information in chapter 4). The two groups then have a discussion.

## Chapters 5 - 6

Ask students to look at the photo of Diana in front of the Taj Mahal (page 27). Ask them to tell you their feelings. Do they feel it is a sad picture? Why?

Explain to the students that the Taj Mahal was built by an emperor (Shah Jehan). He built it to show his love for his dead wife. Does this make the students feel differently about this photograph?

## ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

- Put students into pairs. Ask one student in each pair to look through the book at the photographs of Diana, choose a photograph and describe it to their partner. The partner must find the photograph.
- Ask the class to look again at the last few paragraphs on page 37. Read out this quotation: 'When she died, we all remembered that life can be very short. Every one of us has to do our best with the time that we have.'

Ask the class to make a list of what they think is 'doing the best with the time we have'. Help them with suggestions: 'helping other people', 'giving love and happiness', 'having a happy family life and having children' etc. Write the ideas on the board. Students put the ideas in the order of importance for them.

## Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following words. Some of them are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the *Longman Active Study Dictionary*.)

- appearance** (n) if you make an appearance somewhere it means that you go there and can be seen by others
- charity** (n) money or presents that are given to people who need help
- fairy-tale** (n) a story for children in which unreal things happen
- funeral** (n) a meeting at church for somebody who has died
- future** (adj) happening in the time after now
- hug** (v) to put your arms around someone in a friendly way and hold them
- popular** (adj) liked by a lot of people
- public** (n) all the ordinary people in a place
- public** (adj) there for anyone to use
- recording** (n) words or music that is put onto a machine
- royal** (adj) belonging to a king or queen
- separated** (adj) not living with your husband/wife any more



## Student's activities

### Photocopiable

Students can do these activities alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

### Activities before reading the book

- Read the introduction to the book and answer these questions.
  - What did Diana become 'Queen' of?
  - What was Diana's last name before she got married?
  - How did Diana help people?
  - What happened in August 1997?
  - Who was 'Dodi'?
  - How old was Diana when she died?
  - Where does Cherry Gilchrist live?
- Talk about this question with a friend or write about it. Do you know of any other princesses (in real life or in stories)? Are they like Diana? Must a princess be beautiful? Must she be from a royal family? What do you think?

### Activities while reading the book

#### CHAPTERS 1 - 2

##### Chapter 1

- Match the names with the descriptions:
  - Johnnie Spencer
  - Charles Spencer
  - Frances Spencer
  - Sarah and Jane Spencer
  - Peter Shand Kydd
  - Raine Spencer
  - Diana's brother
  - Diana's stepfather
  - Diana's sisters
  - Diana's father
  - Diana's stepmother
  - Diana's mother
- What happened in:
  - 1961
  - 1964
  - 1970
  - 1975
  - 1977
  - 1978
- Why didn't Diana like horse riding?
- Where did Diana's love of charity work begin?
- Discuss with a friend or write down your ideas: Compare Diana's life as a child with your life as a child. What is the same? What is different? Think about your mother and father, the house you live/d in, the school you go/went to, your brothers and sisters.

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### Chapter 2

- Are these statements true or false?
  - Diana was the first English girl to marry a Prince of Wales for 500 years.
  - Charles first saw Diana in July 1980.
  - Diana's sister was married to Queen Elizabeth's secretary.
  - Diana and Charles got 1000 wedding presents.
  - Diana liked going to Buckingham Palace.
  - Before the wedding, Diana was very nervous about Charles's old girlfriend, Camilla.
  - Diana went to her wedding with her brother.
  - Charles and Diana went to Spain for their wedding holiday.
  - The Royal Family believes it must not talk about its problems.
  - Queen Elizabeth didn't want to make the Royal Family more modern.
- Why wasn't Charles interested in Diana when he first met her?
- What frightened Diana before she married Prince Charles?
- How many people were on the streets to wave at her?
- Talk about this question with a friend or write down your ideas. What do you think of sending children away to school? Do you think it is bad? Is it better for children to stay at home and go to day school? Why do you think parents send their children away to school?

#### CHAPTERS 3 - 4

##### Chapter 3

- Here are two statements from the book about Diana before her marriage:
 

'She was too shy to speak in public.'

'Her clothes were nothing special.'

 Explain how these two things changed after her marriage.
- Who are Bruce Oldfield, Zandra Rhodes and Catherine Walker?
- Ask students to look up *tradition* in their dictionaries. How did Diana change a royal tradition when she went to Australia, New Zealand and Canada in 1983?
- What happened on:
  - 21 June 1982?
  - 15 September 1984?
- Why didn't Diana agree with Charles about how William and Harry should study?

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- 6 Discuss this question with a friend or write a paragraph.  
What was Prince Charles talking about when he said 'it was not the right thing for a princess to do'? Do you agree with Prince Charles about this? Do you think princesses should be formal?

### Chapter 4

- How did Diana try to hurt herself?
- Compare Princess Diana and Camilla Parker-Bowles. Write a paragraph. Think about the following things: age, family, interests and feelings about Charles.
- Match these events with the dates.
  - Charles went to Balmoral alone for a month.
  - The Palace told the world that Diana was 'in the best of health'.
  - Diana fell down some stairs when her first baby was on the way.
  - Prince William had a serious accident at school.
  - Diana fell down in public in Canada.
  - Diana went to see a doctor for help with her eating illness.
  - January 1982
  - November 1982
  - 1986
  - 1987
  - 1988
  - 1991
- Discuss this question with a friend or write down your ideas:  
What caused Diana's illness?

### CHAPTERS 5 - 6

#### Chapter 5

- 1992 was a terrible year for Diana and the Royal Family. The following things happened. Fill in the gaps.
  - Her ..... died.
  - There was a fire at .....
  - Prince Andrew and ..... split up.
  - Andrew Morton's ..... came out.
  - Recordings of Diana and ..... came out in the newspapers.
- Why was Diana alone at Christmas 1992?
- Diana had many famous friends. Fill in the gaps in the names.
  - ..... John
  - George .....
  - Luciano .....

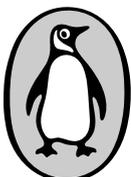
- ..... McCartney
  - Liza .....
- How did Diana help her sons to understand some of the country's problems?
  - How did Diana act with sick people and people without homes? Give an example.

#### Chapter 6

- Where did Diana go to see the problems with landmines?
- Where did Diana spend her birthday?
- What was Diana talking about when she said 'It was the best holiday for years.'?
- Put these events into the correct order:
  - Some of the paparazzi followed them in cars and on fast bikes.
  - The car hit a wall.
  - They sent another car off from the front of the hotel.
  - Dodi bought Diana an expensive ring.
  - The crash killed Dodi and the driver.
  - They arrived at the Ritz and had dinner.
  - Diana died in hospital.
  - Diana's car drove very fast.
  - Some of the paparazzi saw them leave.
  - They left the hotel by the back door.
- Who flew to Paris to bring Diana's body home?
- Write the names of five people who went to Diana's funeral.

### Activities after reading the book

- Imagine that Diana wrote a letter to her two sons before she died. In this letter she tells them about the good things and the bad things in her life. She explains why she married Prince Charles and why they separated. She talks about her way of living and helping people. She gives the boys advice about the future. Write the letter.
- Make a 'timeline' of Diana's life. Divide your paper into two parts. On the left side write the most important dates in Diana's life. Next to them, on the right side, write what happened on that date.



Diana, Princess of Wales (born Diana Frances Spencer; 1 July 1961 – 31 August 1997), was a member of the British royal family. She was the first wife of Charles, Prince of Wales—the heir apparent to the British throne—and was the mother of Prince William and Prince Harry. Diana's activism and glamour made her an international icon and earned her an enduring popularity as well as an unprecedented public scrutiny, exacerbated by her tumultuous private life. Princess Diana was the mother of HRH Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and HRH Prince Harry. She tragically lost her life in a car crash in Paris in 1997, at age 36. Diana didn't just accept the world around her for the way it was and she used her role in the public eye to help causes that many others overlooked. She also believed in the power of young people to change the world and that young people should be supported to make sure they reach their full potential. Princess Diana was Princess of Wales while married to Prince Charles. One of the most adored members of the British royal family, she died in a 1997 car crash. Actually, a fulfilling job is better for me. I am a free spirit - unfortunately for some. I think the biggest disease this world suffers from in this day and age is the disease of people feeling unloved, and I know that I can give love for a minute, for half an hour, for a day, for a month, but I can give -. I'm very happy to do that and I want to do that. Princess Diana. Diana, Princess of Wales, was one of the most adored members of the British Royal family, who died an untimely death. Check this biography to find in-depth details about her life, childhood, profile & timeline. It is not every other day that a "People's Princess" is born. She may have left for the heavenly abode quite early than anticipated, but she continues to reign in the minds and hearts of millions across the globe. Diana, Princess of Wales, was one of the most eminent royal bloods of the 20th century.