



Learn English with the Crown

0'00

Hello everyone! It's Hannah here from Virtually Fluent and today we are going to be talking about the latest season of the Netflix original The Crown. For the transcript of today's video as well as a listening comprehension quiz to test everything that I say today, you can click on the link in the description below, create a free account on our website and access these resources as well as lots of other amazing free resources too and it's no strings attached.

0'40

So shortly before Christmas of 2020, while most of the world was in lockdown or certainly living with very strict regulations, the long-awaited season four of the Netflix original series The Crown was finally released. I do not have a problem with sitting and binge-watching TV series so it did not take me long to get through all ten episodes of The Crown, although I was left slightly disappointed towards the end of the season.

1'12

So I'd seen all of the adverts online, I follow all their social media accounts, I've seen all the trailers, watched behind-the-scenes clips from the season, so my expectations were pretty high for season four. And Emma Corrin was finally coming to portray the wonderful Princess Diana, who is generally quite loved by the people here in the UK, she was the sort of "modern Royal" in the UK and I

was quite eager to see all of the costumes that she would be wearing and she had a lot of popularity back in the day at the beginning of her marriage to Prince Charles, I was really excited to see more of these scenes in the new season.

1'52

Now, when this finally came to our screens at the beginning of December there was quite a backlash in the UK. So I'm a huge fan of The Crown, I've watched all of the seasons before and I really love the story. I think a lot of people were maybe a little bit disappointed about the way that the Royal Family or British history was portrayed but, of course, this is not a documentary, it is a period drama so, of course, specific scenes are scripted to be more enjoyable for the viewer. Maybe a few people didn't quite get that in the season.

2'30

Despite this slight underwhelming feeling about this season, it still was really good and The Crown does have one amazing thing going for it - that's that it's such a great season (a great series) to watch to help your listening comprehension skills in English.

2'49

So most of the characters, not all, but most of the characters speak with Upper Received Pronunciation (URP). Basically, this is a really posh accent or some people call it the Queen's English. Nowadays, this is only spoken by about 2% of the British population so don't get too accustomed to it and expect to hear it all around you if you do visit the UK. But it's a very clear accent, generally a little bit slower than other regional accents. So it's a great season to watch to practise your listening skills. Remember I always advise when you're watching a TV series in English, watch (obviously) with English audio and English subtitles, not your own native language.

3'38

So, I've recommended this series to a lot of my private students and a lot of them have taken up watching this and they are so surprised by how much they understand in English. So it's a real confidence booster for your English.

3'56

So, let's talk a little bit about this accent, this Upper Received Pronunciation accent because it's not as popular nowadays, it's height was back in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It's also often known as the BBC accent because the BBC newsreader at night used to read the news with this accent too. And back in these times, the educators around and even the director general of the BBC himself wanted to push this accent, it's the "correct and proper" way of speaking English, but nowadays a lot more regional accents can be heard in the UK, particularly from The Midlands and Northern England, so you won't hear URP quite so much.

4'44

I, myself, have a received pronunciation accent and this is slightly different to upper received pronunciation. We're going to look at some of those characteristics now. So, what I want to do is watch a couple of clips of the actors speaking as the Queen with upper received pronunciation from the trailers in The Crown. So, let's have a look at some of these.

5'10

Two women running the shop, that's the last thing this country needs. Perhaps that's precisely what this country needs.

Joblessness, recession, crisis, it's a dangerous game to make enemies left, right and centre.

5'24

I think the most important thing about upper received pronunciation is that the speech is so much more dramatic. The tone in the voice goes up and down a lot more and also towards the end of a sentence, you'll often hear this ... a creak in the sound at the end of a sentence. So you can hear that creak at the end, these are little characteristics of this accent.

5'52

Now the biggest changes really are that the vowels often change and we kind of reduce all of the words, we try to clip the ends or make long vowels become short vowels, so let's have a look at a few examples.

6'08

I would typically say thank you. You can hear the /æ/ in thank you is very far forward and it's quite a sharp loud sound. In upper received pronunciation this changes from an /æ/ to an /ɛ/ - thank rather than thank. And with you, you can see my lips move very far forward, it's a very small sound (you), there's not much space in the sound. In upper received pronunciation, everything goes to the back, the tongue moves to the back so it's you, it's a long sound and it's also quite dark as well. So instead of thank you, in upper received pronunciation, this could be thank you.

6'56

Let's look at another typical word, which is sorry. Now, when I say sorry you can very clearly hear two syllables and that last syllable is very long - sorry. Now often words that end in Y, LY are clipped in upper received pronunciation. It would be sorry. You can hear that /ɛ/ sound at the end, it's not an important syllable in the word in upper received pronunciation.

7'25

Another typical vowel change is that the /ɜː/ becomes an /ɑː/ in upper received pronunciation. Let's take the example word bird. My chin is sticking out, it's an /ɜː/ sound, quite a difficult vowel in English. In upper received pronunciation, it would be bird. So everything, again, is further back, more space and it's almost an /ɑː/ sound - bird.

7'53

Another typical characteristic of upper received pronunciation is that when we have two vowel sounds together which are diphthongs, they are often squished down to just one vowel sound to a monophthong instead. For example, go. You can hear two vowel sounds - go. So, this /əʊ/, which is quite dark is very similar to the /ɛ/ sound in thank you- go. Almost one vowel sound really. So don't go would be don't go.

8'34

Another diphthong that becomes a monophthong is the /aʊ/ sound. For example, how, now. Now this almost changes to an /ɒ/ sound. Again, it's very far back in the mouth and quite dark - how, now.

8'58

And the final example I want to look at is basically cutting two syllables down into one syllable. For example, flower or fire become flower and fire.

9'10

So, you can see there are lots of very specific characteristics to the upper received pronunciation but, as I said, a very very small percentage of the population actually speak like this.

9'26

You can see that some of these characteristics that we've just spoken about could be heard in the clips that I showed you earlier from The Crown trailers. For example, perhaps that's precisely what the country needs. Perhaps becomes perhaps, remember the /æ/ to /ɛ/, the same as that's becomes that's. Precisely, remember that LY is cut short, precisely. Perhaps that's precisely. And you can also hear the intonation going up and down.

10'00

So, hopefully now you can recognise upper received pronunciation if you ever hear it. If you get the time, I definitely recommend watching a couple of the episodes from the Netflix original series The Crown. As I said, it's a great series for practising your listening skills in English, it's a fairly easy storyline to follow so it's not too complex and you also get to learn a little bit about British history and culture too.

10'26

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