

How The Crown has changed the world's view of the Royals

Scandal is never far away from the Royals – as evidenced by this weekend's television interview with Prince Andrew over his friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. But as far as the Queen herself goes, the 93-year-old is now arguably the most popular member of the Royal Family. She has been described as an "ultimate feminist", been the subject of endless lists titled things like '25 Reasons Why We Love the Queen' and seen her outfits, hats and even her brooches eagerly dissected by a new generation.

So what brought about this change? In part it's a simple matter of longevity. In the 67 years since she has been on the throne Queen Elizabeth has weathered deaths, divorces and national tragedies. Her very existence offers many people a sense of stability – a belief that as long as the Queen is alive then nothing too terrible can happen.

The other factor is *The Crown*. Netflix's glossy series about the life and times of the British monarchy released its third series yesterday, and it's arguably the best so far, as an embattled Elizabeth, now played by Olivia Colman, wrestles with middle age and the pressures of duty versus reality.

"Most of us have only known a world in which Queen Elizabeth sits on the throne. I think we all hoped that *The Crown* would peel back the layers on the onion a bit where she is concerned," says Heather Cocks, US journalist.

That notion of the Queen as a steady rock at the centre of an increasingly turbulent world is a recurring theme in the new season as we watch Elizabeth deal with a new prime minister and a national tragedy in the form of the Aberfan mining disaster, as well the growing pains of her two oldest children, Charles and Anne, and her sister Margaret's (Helena Bonham Carter) increasing discontent. Throughout it all Colman gives us a portrait of a woman placing duty first, determined that no one will ever know what she really feels. But how true is it?

As always, it's impossible to say. But what is clear is that *The Crown* will continue to inform our own sense both of the Queen and of other members of the Royal Family, making us feel as though we know them intimately, when in reality we know them barely at all.

"There's no doubt that *The Crown* has changed our perceptions of the monarchy," says historian and royal expert Robert Lacey, a historical consultant on the series. He also argues that one of the show's key aspects is the way in which it allows us to reconsider both our past and how we feel about the nation.

"There is a great element of cruelty in the British press coverage of members of the Royal Family," says Lacey. "The Queen is spared it but it's absolutely clear that Meghan has been knocked sideways by its sharp edge. What the show does brilliantly is remind us that these are people."

Yet, while the show has humanised the Royal Family, has it also irrevocably changed the way we view them in less beneficial ways? After all, it used to be said that they were above celebrity; now they appear simply to inhabit their own strata of it.

The show seems to have caused our perception of the Royals to shift – even as contemporary events are capable of reversing that.

Adapted from *bbc.com*, by Sarah Hughes, 17 November 2019

Question 1: According to Sarah Hughes, how did *The Crown* shift the royal family's image for the British people? (80 words, ± 10%) Answer the question in your own words.