

Downton Abbey: Upstairs, Downstairs (Over and Over) [B2]

La serie presenta uno spaccato piuttosto veritiero della divisione in classi sociali che caratterizzava l'Inghilterra d'inizio XX secolo. Le cose sono davvero cambiate?

Downton Abbey is a vivid portrayal of class dynamics in 20th-century Britain. The Crawleys and their servants reflect a rigid hierarchy, rooted in tradition — a far cry from today's society. In the series there are clear divisions between the classes. The landed gentry and aristocracy live upstairs, enjoying privilege and power. The servants live and work downstairs, the contrast underscoring the social order. The upper class consider it their duty to uphold tradition, while the servants are essential but often invisible pillars supporting their way of life. Downton Abbey's representation of class structure is generally accurate and continues to fascinate the public today

CLASS DIVISIONS

The social landscape of modern Britain has evolved significantly. With social reforms, access to education and the expansion of the middle classes, distinctions seem more subtle and complex, but nevertheless persist.

According to a poll from December 2024, around 57 per cent of Britons feel that class divisions are still “very important” or “quite important” in their daily lives. They cite their income, a private education and their job as the main indicators of class, rather than titles or old family names. Other reasons may include where they live (north or south), their accent, their family wealth, their social circle and the contacts they have. Social mobility seems possible with education and hard work; however, children from wealthier families are more likely to attend a top university or get a well-paid job. It is not getting easier, either. The poll found that 45 per cent of people believe it is harder to move up to a higher class today compared to ten years ago.

BROKEN SYSTEM

Downton Abbey shows us a time when class was clearly visible. The characters are shown to **struggle** with the system themselves. Right from the start, Matthew Crawley stands to inherit the estate, **despite** being a middle-class cousin, while Sybil Crawley marries the socialist **driver** Tom Branson. Some critics say that the show normalised a "**rotten** system". While the rigid barriers have softened, it is clear that class is still an issue in Britain today. If you want to know more about this topic, read the article Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale.

Glossary

- **rooted** = radicata
- **underscoring** = sottolineare
- **duty** = obbligo, dovere
- **uphold** = mantenere
- **poll** = sondaggio
- **driver** = autista
- **a far cry** = ben lontana
- **landed gentry** = nobiltà terriera
- **accurate** = accurata, precisa
- **income** = reddito
- **struggle** = lottare
- **despite** = nonostante
- **rotten** = corrotto, marcio