

Lady Diana Spencer: The People's Princess [B2]

Nella sua breve vita, la principessa del Galles ha conquistato il mondo con la sua empatia e la sua visione innovativa della monarchia

Lady Diana Spencer was born on 1 July 1961, into a privileged family with **close ties** to the British monarchy. She had an unhappy childhood, as she was witness to violent scenes between her parents. After leaving school, she took several low-paid jobs, including working as a **nursery** teacher, before she secretly started dating Prince Charles in 1980. Charles was **heir** to the British throne and **twelve years her senior**.

WEDDING OF THE CENTURY

On 29 July 1981, Diana married Charles at St. Paul's Cathedral in what became known as the "Wedding of the Century", watched by hundreds of millions on TV around the world. Charles and Diana, now the Princess of Wales, quickly had two sons, William and Harry. On the couple's numerous royal tours around the world, the young princess was **greeted** with adulation by a public attracted by her open personality, charisma and innocent **charm**. The world's press also loved her, **coining** expressions such as "Dianamania" or "Di-amond Princess". In Britain especially, her ability to connect with everyone brought her widespread affection.

MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN

Shortly after Harry's birth in September 1984, however, the marriage began to break down, **due to** incompatibility and the age difference. Both started extramarital relationships, Charles with his **former** girlfriend, Camilla Parker Bowles. Diana had a five-year affair with her equestrian instructor, cavalry officer James Hewitt. The situation reached the press in 1987, **opening the floodgates** to hundreds of stories, some of them **lurid**, which badly damaged the royal family. The couple separated in December 1992 and divorced in August 1996.

GROWING POPULARITY

During the years before the divorce, Diana's fame and popularity only continued to grow. Lady Di became a global icon, the most photographed woman in history, but also **pitilessly hounded** by the press. Her celebrity **grew out of** her looks, her transformation into a fashion icon, and her much-publicised charitable work in previously unpopular fields, which changed the image of the royal family forever. Diana's early charity work had centred on children and the **elderly**. **Broadening** her interests beyond typical royal concerns, she slowly started breaking conventions. She concentrated on improving social attitudes to **AIDS** patients (shocking the public by actually touching them,) and publicised the danger of abandoned **landmines**, famously crossing a cleared minefield in Angola in 1997.

Everyone needs to be valued. Everyone has the potential to give something back.

FATAL ACCIDENT

In summer 1997, Diana began a relationship with Dodi Fayed, the son of Mohamed Al-Fayed, the Egyptian owner of London luxury store Harrods. Paparazzi followed her everywhere. On Saturday, 30 August, the couple had dinner in Paris in the Ritz hotel. After midnight, they left for Dodi's apartment. The paparazzi **gave chase**. At 12.25am, the couple's car entered the Pont de l'Alma tunnel at a dangerously high speed. The driver lost control, hitting a concrete pillar and then a wall. He and Dodi died instantly. Diana died in hospital soon afterwards.

MOURNING

A few hours later, Britain awoke, shocked, to the tragic news. Flowers, **candles**, cards and messages quickly appeared in **their** thousands outside Kensington Palace, Diana's home. In a **startling**, completely unexpected reaction, which took the royal family totally by surprise, millions of people **mourned** Diana's death as if they had lost a **relative**. While some considered this a ridiculous overreaction, there is no doubt that Diana died a

much-loved figure. Prime Minister Tony Blair famously called her the “people’s princess.” The funeral service took place in Westminster Abbey on 6 September 1997. In a powerful, moving image, Diana’s two sons walked behind her coffin as it was carried to the Abbey. Tens of thousands lined the streets to pay their respects on one of the most sombre days in Britain’s collective history. Diana’s life was brief but she died an icon of her age.

A MIXED LEGACY

Diana, Princess of Wales (as she was titled during her marriage) left behind a mixed legacy. Her charismatic presence redefined the monarchy’s relationship with the public, making it seem more human and relatable — she was considered by many to be “a breath of fresh air.” The public affection and fascination she provoked helped make the monarchy seem more relevant in a fast-changing world. She remains one of the most popular members of the royal family and continues to influence the younger generation of royals. On the other hand, she was accused by some critics of being self-indulgent, cynically manipulating the media for her own purposes, and damaging the monarchy by removing some of the mystique necessary to its survival with her unconventional behaviour. It is impossible to deny, however, that her brave, highly surprising choice of charitable work did widen and modernise the areas in which the royal family were able to make valuable contributions. According to one important charity head, “Her overall effect on charity is probably more significant than any other person’s in the 20th century.” Diana was a force for change even in death. Her tragic end revived the old culture of public sentiment, long absent from public life, making the public expression of grief acceptable once again. Britain’s famous ‘stiff upper lip’, signifying stoicism, has never been the same again.

A FASHION ICON

In her early royal years, Diana dressed in a conservative style, which rarely attracted attention. But then, as she and Charles drifted apart, and

especially after their separation, her style underwent a dramatic evolution, which was even described as “legendary”! The hemlines were shorter, the heels higher, and sophisticated power suits began to appear. The changes, as she said goodbye to strict royal constraints, reflected her growing self-confidence. Her fashions became trends, as millions of women copied her styles. According to some experts, she used fashion and style to endorse her charitable causes and express herself — through her famous 'statement-making gowns'. Designer David Sassoon produced seventy outfits for her between 1981 and 1997. Her favourite designers included Versace, Armani, Chanel, Dior and Gucci. Her famous outfits included the ‘revenge dress’ worn after Charles’ admission of adultery. In 2012, Time magazine included Diana on its ‘All-Time 100 Fashion Icons’ list.

Glossary

- **candles** = candele
- **statement-making gowns** = abiti che lanciano un messaggio
- **pitilessly** = senza pietà
- **grew out of** = nascere da, derivare da
- **relatable** = con cui ci si può identificare
- **behaviour** = comportamento
- **drifted apart** = allontanarsi
- **twelve years her senior** = dodici anni più grande di lei
- **due to** = a causa di
- **former** = precedente, ex
- **coffin** = bara
- **greeted** = ricevere, salutare
- **gave chase** = inseguire, dare la caccia
- **lined the streets** = riempire le strade
- **stiff upper lip** = atteggiamento imperturbabile
- **lurid** = scandalose
- **nursery** = asilo nido
- **elderly** = anziani
- **AIDS** = sindrome da immunodeficienza acquisita
- **landmines** = mine antiuomo
- **startling** = sorprendente
- **relative** = parente
- **outfits** = vestiti, look
- **mourned** = piangere, portare il lutto
- **moving** = commovente, toccante
- **hemlines** = orli (della gonna)
- **power suits** = tailleur eleganti
- **endorse** = appoggiare
- **close ties** = stretti legami
- **Broadening** = ampliare
- **deny** = negare
- **overall** = generale
- **heels** = tacchi

- **opening the floodgates** = spalancare le porte, dare il via
- **hounded** = perseguitare, dare la caccia
- **breath** = ventata
- **removing** = eliminare
- **underwent** = attraversare
- **constraints** = restrizioni, limitazioni
- **heir** = erede
- **charm** = fascino
- **coining** = coniare