



AGE
9+

ABOUT THE BOOK

In the *Accidental Prime Minister*, Joe Perkins was trying to save his local park when he accidentally ended up becoming Prime Minister.

In this hilarious sequel, Joe is back. The people need someone to remind them about the good things in life—about how we can all come together to make the world a better place.

'Where there is grumpiness, may we bring giggles, where there is jelly, may we bring ice cream, and where there are chairs, may we bring whoopee cushions!'
Joe Perkins, First Kid Prime Minister

Joe Perkins, is back and ready to make politics fun again—as well as giving it some serious thought!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Before becoming a writer and illustrator, Tom spent nine years working as a political cartoonist for the *Western Morning News*, thinking up silly jokes about even sillier politicians. Then, in 2004 Tom took the plunge into writing and illustrating his own books. Since then he has written and illustrated picture books as well as working on animated TV shows for Disney and Cartoon Network. *The Accidental Prime Minister Returns* is the seventh book in his 'Accidental' series.

Tom lives in Devon and his hobbies include drinking tea, looking out of the window, and biscuits. His hates include spiders and running out of tea and biscuits.

Have a look at his website at <https://tommclaughlin.co.uk/> — and do some doodling!





As the author, Tom McLaughlin, says, this book is '*a great way to start a conversation. . . about politics and ideas. . . and about the value of staying true to yourself and the importance of learning to listen and understand the viewpoints of other people.*'

Here are some discussion ideas and activities to get you thinking about what politics is all about—and ways in which you can get involved yourself.

WHAT DID YOU THINK?

- How did you feel when reading this book? And how did you feel when you'd finished it?
- Which parts of the story did you find most memorable?
- Did you skip any parts? Which parts?
- Was there anything that took you by surprise?
- Were there any parts that didn't make sense to you?
- If you gave up on this book, can you say why?
- What were the funniest bits for you?
- Can you relate this story to things that are happening in politics and in the world today?
- What have you learned from reading this book? Has it changed or strengthened your thinking about what politics should be about?
- Are there things you'd like to find out more about?
- What single word (or two!) describes this book for you?



WHAT CHILDREN ARE SAYING ABOUT POLITICS

Children and young people are increasingly aware of the issues which affect our lives today, and they are speaking out and taking part in campaigns and petitions, especially about climate change and environmental issues.

In reports which are part of ongoing language research, the Children's Language Data team at Oxford University Press has analysed the children's writing submitted to the 2019 and 2020 **BBC Radio 2 500 Words competition**.

Children's concern for the environment covers a wide range of issues, with an increase in mentions of climate change, global warming, deforestation, and pollution. In their stories for the 2019 competition, there was a significant increase in their use of political vocabulary—especially the word 'Brexit', in contexts that show awareness of political and social upheaval and uncertainties, and details such as 'the Brexit deal.'

The 2019 report says that 'for the first time, Brexit inspired children to become problem-solvers and write about finding solutions to Brexit'.

What I might do is help Mrs. May sort out Brexit. No need to recall Parliament, I'll sort out a deal. I'll discover what the Irish Backstop actually is – job done! Everyone's happy.
(*The Impossible Task*, girl, 10)

London, for me, is full of uncertainly and fear due to one word. Brexit. 55 days to go. I'm being bullied at school and the teachers aren't doing anything about it. Kids are picking on me and teasing me because I'm not 'British' in their eyes. They've changed and keep on saying, "Go home to where you came from!"
(*60 Days To Go*, boy, 10)

And a touch of irony: *The prime minister, Boris Johnson, was tired of everyone talking about climate change, so he had a brilliant idea. No, not fix climate change, although that would've been better, but talk more about Brexit instead.* (*Brexit, Instagram and Cake*, girl, 10)

WHAT IS POLITICS?

Politics affects everything we do in life and affects everyone, of all ages.

It's all about the ways we relate to each other and make decisions about how to work together.

It's all about everyone having the right to their own opinions and at the same time listening to what others think.

It's all about all kinds of people coming together to make a difference.

How politics works in the UK

'What's an election?' she asked . . . 'Well, in a General Election everyone votes for which political party they agree with the most, and the leader of that party gets to be Prime Minister and runs the country.' (pp24 & 25)

'The power that the Government and its Prime Minister have is immense. It's like handing someone the keys to a space rocket. They are in charge of your hospitals, your schools, and all the money you give them through taxes.' (pp28 & 29)



Have a go at this fun quiz to see what you know about the way politics works in the United Kingdom.

For each question, decide if a, b, or c is the right answer.

1. **The Prime Minister is**
 - a. A clergyman
 - b. Head of the government
 - c. Someone who works for Amazon
2. **The Secretaries of State are in charge of**
 - a. Computers and stationery
 - b. Government departments, e.g. Department of Education
 - c. Taking the minutes of meetings
3. **The Cabinet is**
 - a. The place where all the government documents are filed
 - b. The place where dinner plates are kept
 - c. The Prime Minister and all the Secretaries of State
4. **Parliament is the place where**
 - a. HP Sauce is made
 - b. The Secretaries of State live
 - c. Politicians meet to decide laws and make decisions for the country
5. **A coalition government is**
 - a. Where two or more political parties join together to run the country
 - b. A government of coal miners
 - c. Where members of parliament share computers and hot desks
6. **A General Election is held**
 - a. At least every 10 years
 - b. At least every 5 years
 - c. Every 4 years
7. **The Prime Minister's official residence is**
 - a. 10 Downing Street
 - b. Buckingham Palace
 - c. 4 Privet Drive
8. **Big Ben is**
 - a. The leader of the Members of Parliament
 - b. The tallest Member of Parliament
 - c. The clock tower of the Houses of Parliament
9. **A Bill is**
 - a. A proposed new law
 - b. The cost of fixing Big Ben
 - c. Anyone in Parliament called William
10. **A summit meeting is**
 - a. A meeting of the Prime Minister with heads of state from other countries
 - b. A meeting of mathematicians
 - c. A meeting at the top of a mountain
11. **Political parties are**
 - a. Parties where politicians dance and have fun
 - b. Parties where people play games about politics
 - c. Groups of people who have the same political beliefs
12. **The Leader of the Opposition is**
 - a. The leader of the political party which came second in the election and puts forward arguments against those of the Government
 - b. The captain of a football team playing away
 - c. The challenger in a boxing match





Here's a research checklist for finding out more about the people and things in the quiz.

| Research checklist | Write short notes or a sentence here about what you find out for each of these |
|--|--|
| Parliament | |
| General Election | |
| Political parties: Find out about four of the main parties in the UK | |
| Members of Parliament | |
| How a bill becomes law | |
| Prime Minister | |
| Cabinet | |
| Leader of the Opposition | |
| Coalition government | |
| Secretaries of State | |
| Summit meeting | |
| Big Ben | |
| Downing Street | |



PLANNING AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN: WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE IN CHARGE?

'I want to make the world a better place, otherwise what's the point of being in politics?' (p201)

WRITE A MANIFESTO

Before a General Election, each political party publishes its **manifesto**. This is where they set out what they believe in and what they propose to do if they get elected to power—e.g. what laws they will introduce, or what changes they will make to taxes.

Joe's main proposal if he is elected Prime Minister is his Green Spaces initiative:

'My first priority is going to be building a park on every street corner, where kids can play, and grow flowers and vegetables.' (p200)

Joe also has some fun ideas like 'Hats for Cats' and jelly wrestling!

Theodore Flunk, the Opposition leader, says he would serve broccoli at every school meal, introduce triple maths lessons, and ban break times. (p63)

What would be your priority if you were **Prime Minister**?

It could be something to do with climate change, such as saving energy or action against pollution? Or something to make people's lives more fun?!

You might want to be a **school councillor**—what action would you propose to help in the running of the school?

Have a go at **writing your manifesto**, saying what you would do if you were elected—either as **Prime Minister**, or as a **member of your school council**.

Top tips

1. Make your manifesto clear and punchy
2. Keep it simple so people will remember it
3. Say who you are and what you believe in, e.g. 'green' issues, or fun!
4. Make a clear list of what you plan to do and the changes you would make.
5. What are the benefits of your plans?
6. Don't go on about your opponents—your manifesto is about you!





MAKE A MANIFESTO SPEECH

Once you've written your manifesto, you need to present it to everyone.

Here's how to write a speech about it—and then you could film yourself or get someone to make a film of you reading it aloud!

Joe was nervous about speaking when he first became Prime Minister, but he has learned some tricks of the trade and has become quite confident in making speeches.

...making sure his gaze fell on everyone who was there. It was a good way to settle everyone's nerves, he found. (p6)

Remember!

- Make sure you have the facts
- Prepare and practise what to say—you could use the planning sheet below
- Keep it simple—no more than 3 main points
- Take a deep breath before you start!
- Speak directly to your audience
- Believe in what you say!

| Getting your manifesto message across | |
|--|--|
| • Introduction: What do you want to tell people about? What is your priority? | |
| • Your first main point | |
| • Second main point | |
| • Third main point | |
| • Summary of what you've said and what you are proposing to do | |
| • Call to action: What are you asking people to do? | |

Artwork © Tom McLaughlin



MAKE A PLACARD!

Another way of getting your message across is on a big placard to hold at events and on marches, for everyone to see.

You need to think of a snappy slogan which will attract attention and which everyone will remember.

What do you think of Joe's mum's slogan on her placard (p58)?

JOE PERKINS IS MY LITTLE SHNOOKUMS - LET HIM BE!

Maybe not quite what Joe wants to see!

In the speech which Ajay writes for Joe, there is the slogan

OPERATION BUILD, BUILD, BUILD!

which is a slogan used recently in UK politics.

However, Joe would probably want to say **WE WANT GREEN SPACES!**

—or perhaps **EAT JELLY IN YOUR UNDERCRACKERS!**

What will your placard be like? What will you say? Use the frame below to design it.

- **Keep it simple**—just one message, in just a few words. What do you want people to know or do? It's a good idea to check your slogan with friends to see if it's clear.
- You could add an image or symbol to fit your message
- Write the words in large letters and bold colours, with a strong outline.
- One eye-catching thing to do with your text is to highlight the most important words and emphasise those words by making the letters bold, underlining them, or using different type faces.

Frame for designing your placard:

HAVE A DEBATE!

Get together in a group and imagine you are members of Parliament having a debate discussing a proposed new law or something else of importance to the country.

You need to have:

- A **proposal** or proposition, e.g. 'We need more green spaces.'
- A **proposer** to make a speech with arguments to support this proposal
- An **opposer** to make a speech giving the arguments against this idea
- Someone to second the proposer, adding to their argument
- Someone to second the opposer, with more arguments against
- The rest of the group **asking questions**, to make sure everyone understands both points of view
- A **vote**—for and against the proposal

A good debate is not an argument: **it is about** looking at an issue or an idea from various points of view, and it means thinking carefully about the argument you make and listening carefully to the opposing arguments, so that you can make a suitable response.

Tips for debating

- Research your facts thoroughly—for both sides of the argument
- Make some notes to prepare your speech, but just refer to them, don't read them out like an essay
- Make your points clearly, with persuasive arguments
- Be confident in your speech and body language
- Listen carefully to the opposing arguments
- Don't make it personal or lose your temper and shout
- Be prepared to change your mind—you might realise they're right, and being honest about this will get others thinking carefully

People started to come together to listen to one another, even when they might disagree. (p203)

He knew that if he was going to lose he was glad that he had at least been honest. (p204)

You could also try some debate role play, **swapping over so that you get to express both sides**, and see if this changes or strengthens your original opinion.



What can you do now to get involved and make a difference?

'It's not going to be easy to pick ourselves up and battle against the likes of Theodore Flunk, but we have to keep going. I want to form a political party, with just kids, to give them their say. I want people to listen to us, and turn our passion into a movement.' (p211)

Even without forming a political party, you can make things happen!

There are lots of ways in which you can get to know more about politics and actually do something to make changes and improvements to things you care about.

Look at Alice in this story, who persists in making a stand and gets people to sign a petition and come on board with her campaign.

'Every child deserves a park to play in and I know that I have to do what I can to make it happen.' (p187)

Here are some suggestions for your **own personal political action**:

- Put yourself forward to be a member of your school council.
- **Stand for election in a youth parliament.** See the websites for the UK Youth Parliament <https://www.byc.org.uk/uk/uk-youth-parliament> and the Scottish Children's Parliament <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/>
- **Find out about local issues** and elections, and your local MP and councillors—write to them about local issues that matter to you.
- **Join an organisation** or interest group about the things that you care about.
- **Join in local campaigns**, e.g. saving a local library.
- **Watch news programmes** such as *Newsround* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround> and discuss news issues with your family and friends. (See also the section on The media)
- **Write to local media**—papers, TV, and radio—about concerns you have.
- **Organise petitions, and sign petitions**, when you want to raise awareness about something and get a debate or action happening.
- **Ask questions** and find things out.
- Remember that the **smallest action can help to make a difference**.
- **And when you get a vote, use it!**

So Joe did something that he'd never done before—he spoke up. (p15)

THINGS TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Being true to yourself

'All I need to do is just be honest and truthful about what I want to do for this country. . .' (p26)

'You work hard and be the best version of yourself that you can be. . . being true to yourself is the best chance you have of winning. . . if you pretend to be something you're not, and people vote for you, then you have to keep pretending you're that person forever.' (p192)

Joe starts off his election campaign feeling very clear about what he wants to do as Prime Minister. What happens to divert him off track from this, and why do you think he lets this happen?

What brings him back to his real beliefs and gives him confidence about what he should do?

What problems do you think there can sometimes be around staying true to yourself?

Learning to listen and to understand the viewpoints of others

' . . . the most important thing any politician or Prime Minister can ever do, and that's listen.' (p199)

Do you think we always listen enough to what people are saying to us?

Why do you think listening is important?

Can you think of times when you haven't listened properly and things went a bit wrong?

'Power is a funny thing'

'Power is a funny thing because it can do strange things to normal people. For some it makes them a better person. . . But for others power has the opposite effect – it makes them sneaky and spiteful.' (p38)

Find out about some powerful people in history—e.g. Winston Churchill or Henry the Eighth—and look at how their power affected them, and whether they used it wisely or not.

Being in charge

' . . . I have big dreams and I want to carry on making them a reality. . .' (p33)

At the beginning of this book, Joe has been Prime Minister for two years. How do you think he has found the job and what has he achieved?

It was an extraordinarily exciting glimpse into the life of the most important person in the country, though privately it also made many of them thank their lucky stars it wasn't them in charge. (p7)

Why would people think this about being in charge? What might you like about being Prime Minister— and what might you not like?



THE MEDIA

Newspapers, TV, radio, and social media all enable us to access information and keep up to date about politics.

However, why do you think we need to think carefully about what we see and hear in the news?

What examples are there in this story of good things and bad things about the media?

'Whatever I do they twist and turn it. . .' (p55)

' . . . you have to get in there first and spin the story yourself. . .' (p69)

When Joe does a press event in a lion cage, he is nearly attacked by a lion, but Jim Jones, his publicity adviser, spins the story round to make it look as if Joe saved someone from the lion.

Have a go at **spinning a story** yourself!

Imagine you are a reporter at an event where Joe is joining in a park clean-up, helping to clear away rubbish and litter.

Write two versions describing this event—one saying good things about Joe, and the other saying mean things or making him look foolish.

Have you noticed yourself how different newspapers can treat the same story in different ways?

'Everything we do is on our phone.' (p71) *'We can use all this data to help us win votes.'* (p72)

What information about us can be found on our phone? As well as helping to win votes, how else is this information used to influence people?

Find out about **algorithms**!

WHICH ENDING?

This book has two different endings! Which one will you vote for?!

What are your reasons for your choice?

JOE LOSES!

or

IT'S A DRAW!

Can't decide, check out Joe's campaign trailer here:

<https://youtu.be/c8Nuc3NccOw>

'I let myself believe that winning was all that mattered. . .' (p184)

Why do you think Joe didn't win the election?



CHARACTERS—WHO'S WHO?!

Here are the main characters in this story, each saying something about themselves.

However, the descriptions are next to the wrong people—can you sort them out so that the characters are matched to the right quote?

| Characters | What they say about themselves |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Joe Perkins | A. <i>I'm the Leader of the Opposition, and I want to be Prime Minister—though if I am, I don't actually want to do any work. I look like a human Toblerone and can be a mean bully.</i> |
| 2. Ajay | B. <i>Joe is my little prince. I may mix up chilli con carne with custard, but I help to sort Joe out when he's down.</i> |
| 3. Jenkins | C. <i>I'm a zookeeper, though not a particularly good one.</i> |
| 4. Alice | D. <i>I'm Joe's personal assistant and adviser. My first name is Aubrey, and I'd like to run a top hat a bow tie shop. I'm allergic to cats, including big ones!</i> |
| 5. Violetta Crump | E. <i>They call me the Rottweiler. I want power and money, and I help people to win elections.</i> |
| 6. Jim Jones | F. <i>I'm Joe's best friend and his multimedia strategist and PR manager. I love gadgets and computer games and taekwondo, and I have amazing ideas which don't always work out.</i> |
| 7. Sebastian Flunk | G. <i>I'm deputy Prime Minister. I've been wanting to be Prime Minister for years and will use any trickery to achieve this.</i> |
| 8. Johnson | H. <i>I'm the tea lady.</i> |
| 9. Charlie James | I. <i>I'm Theodore Flunk's assistant, and I drive his campaign bus in the election.</i> |
| 10. Joe's Mum | J. <i>I'm passionate about green spaces, and I believe that whether I win or lose, it doesn't mean I'm going to stop trying.</i> |
| 11. Betty | K. <i>I'm a political broadcaster, and during the election campaign I travel in a heli-telly-studio—which gives me a very green complexion!</i> |
| 12. Gareth | L. <i>I became Prime Minister by accident and have grown to love the job. When I'm low I find that eating jelly in my underpants can help to comfort me.</i> |



TOM'S WRITING TIPS

Here are two tips from Tom McLaughlin, the author of this book, to help with your own writing— whether it's a manifesto speech, a story you want to write, or maybe a third ending for *The Accidental Prime Minister Returns!*

1. *Don't be scared of a blank piece of paper—it's the best thing in the world. At some point everything started out as a blank piece of paper—from your favourite book to the computer I'm typing on, they all started out as nothing and became something.*
2. *Writing is about you: they are your thoughts, the things you have to say, and those can never be wrong.*

A FEW FUN QUESTIONS!

1. *The shrill sounds of the ice-cream van siren blasted out "We are the Champions" at full volume. . . (p49)*
What song would you choose as the theme tune for your General Election campaign bus?
2. *'Seven hundred thousand it is – if you can win me this election.'* (p134) Flunk offers this money to Ajay, who then imagines the games, milkshakes, and cheese strings he could buy with it. What would you do with £700,000?!
3. *Unlike politics and people, jelly had never let him down. Neither had underpants, to be honest.* (p183)
To cheer himself up, Tom likes eating jelly, wearing only his underpants. What do you like doing to help yourself feel better?
4. Did you notice something special about all the chapter headings in this book? If not, your parents might know!

MORE TO READ

MORE BOOKS BY TOM McLAUGHLIN

| | | | |
|--|--|-----|---------------|
| | <i>The Accidental Prime Minister</i> | OUP | 9780192737748 |
| | <i>The Accidental President</i> | OUP | 9780192758989 |
| | <i>The Accidental Rock Star</i> | OUP | 9780192759009 |
| | <i>Attack of the Smart Speakers</i> | OUP | 9780192766922 |
| | <i>The Accidental Secret Agent</i> | OUP | 9780192744395 |
| | <i>The Accidental Billionaire</i> | OUP | 9780192749567 |
| | <i>The Accidental Father Christmas</i> | OUP | 9780192758965 |

POLITICS – FICTION

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| Tim Allman & Nick Shepherd | <i>Max Takes a Stand</i> | OUP | 9780192775139 |
| Elaine Wickson | <i>Super Stan</i> | OUP | 9780192759085 |
| Joe Wilson | <i>The Island That Didn't Exist</i> | OUP | 9780192775092 |

POLITICS – NON-FICTION

| | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Andrea Beaty & David Roberts | <i>Sofia Valdez, Future Prez</i> | Abrams | 9781419737046 |
| Deborah Chancellor, Elif Balta Parks | <i>The Class Vote (British Values) Picture book</i> | Franklin Watts | 9781445155951 |
| Gabi Garcia & Charity Russell | <i>I Can Do Hard Things: Mindful Affirmations for Kids</i> | Skinned Knee | 9780998958088 |
| Adam Hibbert | <i>How to Be Prime Minister</i> | OUP | 9780199107971 |
| Eleanor Levenson & Marek Jagucki | <i>The Election Picture book</i> | Fisherton Press | 9780993077302 |
| Amanda Li | <i>Rise Up: Ordinary Kids with Extraordinary Stories</i> | Buster Books | 9781780555782 |
| Lonely Planet Kids | <i>You Rule! Create Your Own Country</i> | Lonely Planet | 9781743607831 |
| Michael Rosen, Annemarie Young | <i>What is Politics? Why Should We Care?</i> | Wayland | 9781526309075 |
| Michael Rosen | <i>What is Right and Wrong?</i> | Wayland | 9781526304940 |
| Louie Stowell, Alex Frith, Rosie Hore, Kellan Stove | <i>Politics for Beginners</i> | Usborne | 9781474922524 |



SOME USEFUL LINKS

<https://phm.org.uk/vital-voters>

The digital project **Vital Voters** is a way for under 18s to experience for themselves what a powerful force for change democracy can be. Find out about the past, present, and future of democracy in Britain through a variety of content, including animations and short films from the People's History Museum.

<https://www.byc.org.uk/uk/uk-youth-parliament>

UK Youth Parliament provides opportunities for 11–18 year olds to use their elected voice to bring about social change through meaningful representation and campaigning.

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk>

Established in 1996, Children's Parliament has grown to become Scotland's centre of excellence for children's participation and engagement.

<https://learning.parliament.uk/resources/?age-range-suitability=age-7-to-11&theme=elections-and-voting#main>

UK Parliament free teaching resources

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6999499.stm

BBC News: Guide to Parliament (NB, this page was published in 2007, but it holds a clear description of how Parliament should work)

<https://www.theschoolrun.com/talking-to-children-about-politics>

For parents, introducing children to politics

and

http://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2015/feb/21/why-stories-arent-just-for-bedtime-tom-mclaughlin?CMP=share_btn_tw

Author Tom McLaughlin: 'stories are around us all the time'