

# British Institutions



# THE MONARCH

is the official head of state; has mostly representative functions

# THE GOVERNMENT

## The Prime Minister

is the head of the government; is the leader of the party with the majority of seats in the House of Commons

*chooses*

## The Cabinet

About 20 ministers; determines government policies

*chooses*

## Non-Cabinet Ministers

# PARLIAMENT

## The House of Commons

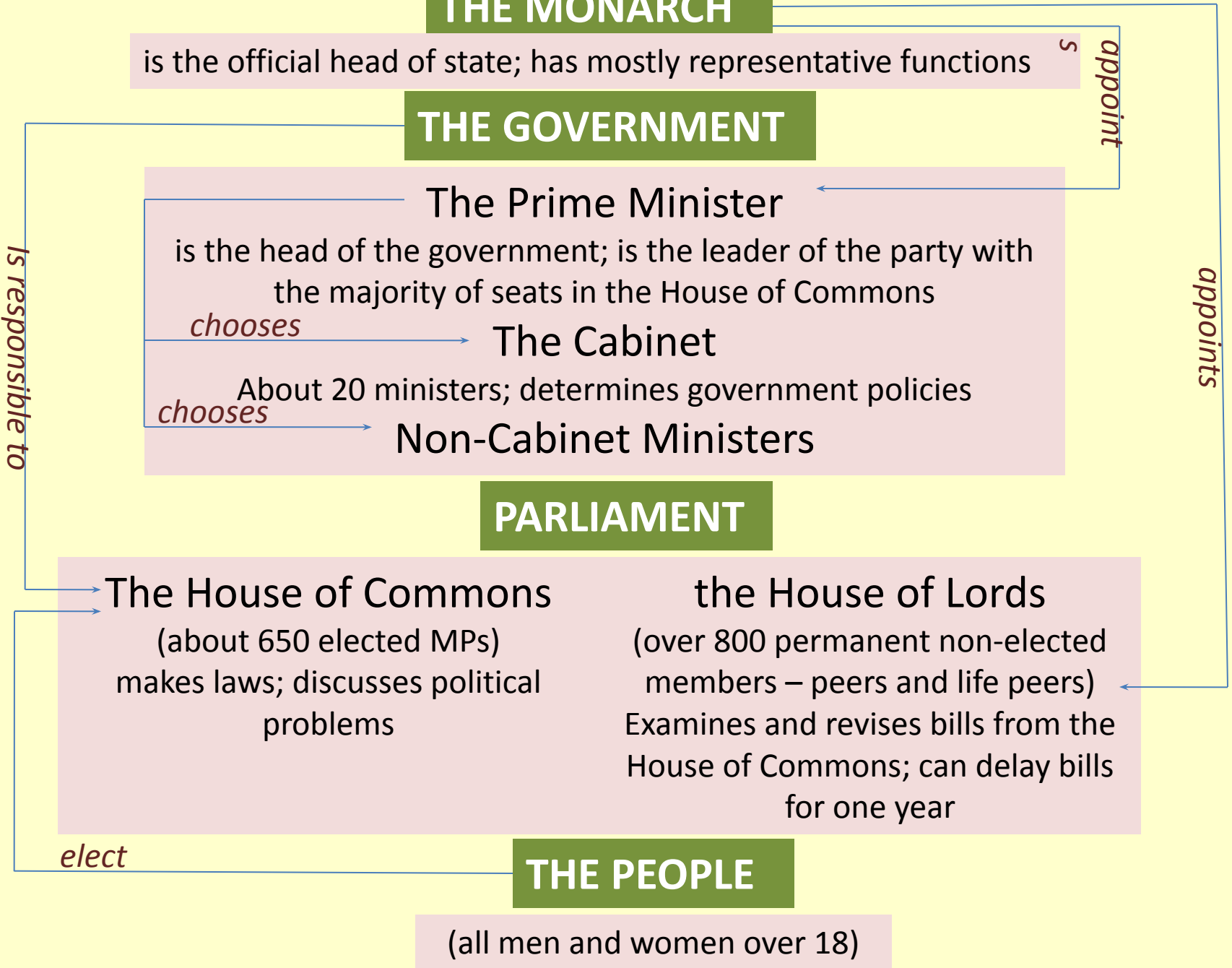
(about 650 elected MPs)  
makes laws; discusses political problems

## the House of Lords

(over 800 permanent non-elected members – peers and life peers)  
Examines and revises bills from the House of Commons; can delay bills for one year

# THE PEOPLE

(all men and women over 18)



# How Much Do You Know?

- What political system does the United Kingdom belong to?
- Where are its laws made?
- What are the two chambers of the British Parliament?
- What functions do the members of the House of Commons perform?
- What are the functions of the House of Lords?
- Which of the two chambers of the British Parliament is elected by the people?

- What about the government of Britain? Can you name its functions?
- Who can become Prime Minister?
- Who is the British government responsible to?
- What branch of power does each of them represent?
  - the Monarch
  - the Government
  - Parliament

**Do You Know?**



Britain is administered from the Palace of Westminster in London. This is also known as the Houses of Parliament. Parliament is the most important authority in Britain. It represents the legislative branch of power. Parliament first met in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.





Parliament is made up of two chambers - the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

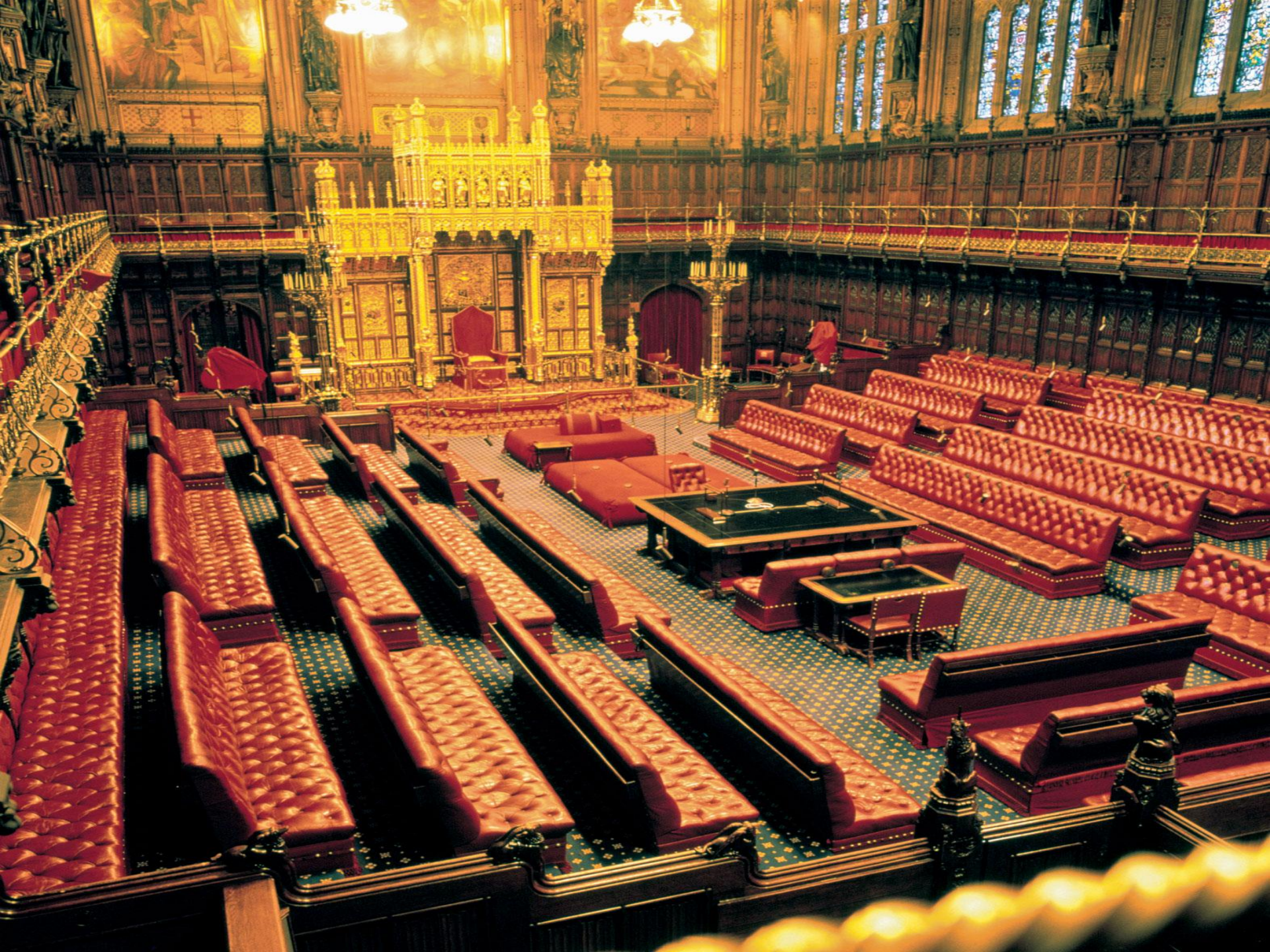




The members of the House of Lords are not elected: they qualify to sit in the House because they are bishops of the Church of England, aristocrats who have inherited their seats from their fathers, people with titles.









The House of Lords comprises about 800 peers. The house is presided over by the Lord Chancellor. The House of Lords has no real power but acts as an advisory council for the House of Commons. As well as having legislative functions, the Lords is the highest court of appeal.





**Chancellor's Woolsack**





The House of Commons consists of Members of Parliament (MPs) who are elected by the adult suffrage of the British people in general elections which are held at least every five years. The country is divided into 650 constituencies each of which elects one Member of Parliament. The Commons has 650 Members of Parliament. The party which wins the most seats forms the Government and its leader becomes the Prime Minister.



The functions of Commons are legislation and security of government activities. The House is presided over by the Speaker.







The present sovereign is  
Queen Elizabeth II who  
was crowned in  
Westminster Abbey in  
1953.





# Westminster Abbey





Formally the monarch has a number of roles. The monarch is expected to be politically neutral, and should not make political decisions.





Nevertheless, the monarch still performs some important executive and legislative duties including opening and dissolving Parliament, signing bills passed by both Houses, and fulfilling international duties as head of state.

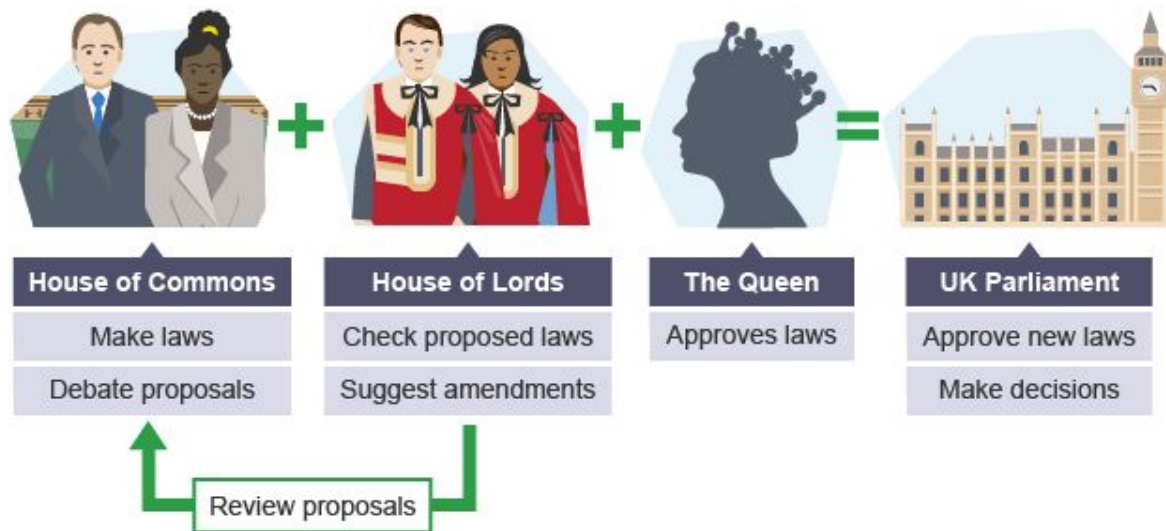








The Queen, who is the Head of State, opens and closes Parliament. All new laws are discussed by Members of Parliament in the Commons, then debated in the Lords, and finally signed by the Queen. All three are part of Parliament in Britain.



The party which wins the most seats in the General Election forms the government in Britain. The leader of the winning party becomes a Prime Minister.



**Winston  
Churchill**



**David  
Cameron**



**Theresa May**





**In 1979 Margaret Thatcher beat the Labour Party and took the office as Prime Minister, Britain's first woman Prime Minister.**

**On November 22, 1990, the "Iron Lady" resigned.**

The Prime Minister, chooses a committee of ministers called the Cabinet. This is made up of a selection of senior Members of Parliament from the House of Commons and some members of the House of Lords. Each member of the Cabinet is a minister responsible for a government department. The Cabinet meets at the Prime Minister's house- 10 Downing Street.



The Cabinet works as a team and all ministers must always agree in public because they are collectively responsible for the decisions they make. If a minister cannot agree with all the others, he usually resigns from the Cabinet.



Cabinet meetings are held in private and the details must remain secret for at least 30 years. They are responsible to Parliament and must answer questions from backbenchers from the House of Commons. Even the Prime Minister must answer questions every Tuesday and Thursday in the Commons - this is called Prime Minister's Question Time.

Non-cabinet ministers who are not members of the Cabinet, the senior group which takes major policy decisions, but they are collectively responsible for government decisions and individually responsible for their own departments.

The Queen gives a weekly audience to the Prime Minister at which she has a right and a duty to express her views on Government matters. This usually takes place on Wednesdays at 6.30 pm. No written record is made of such meetings; neither The Queen nor the Prime Minister talk about what is discussed between them, as communications between The Queen and the Prime Minister always remain confidential. If either The Queen or the Prime Minister are not available to meet, then they will speak by telephone.



**Britain does not have a written constitution, but a set of laws.**

