



# Johnny English



## Summary

**Chapter 1:** Like most James Bond films, the comedy-action story *Johnny English* starts with a murder. England's best Secret Service agent is killed in action, so the country's next best agents go to his funeral. Agent Johnny English is in charge of security at the funeral, but of course, he fails to do his job and protect the agents from harm. Suddenly, a bomb blows up inside the coffin, killing England's top agents and leaving only the country's worst agent, Johnny English, alive. Having nobody else to rely on, the Secret Service assigns English the job of protecting the Queen's crown at a special ceremony at the Tower of London.

**Chapter 2:** Pascal Sauvage is a successful French businessman. Among the many companies that he owns is one that operates prisons. He is a friend of the British Prime Minister, but he has secret plans to become King of England and transform the country into a giant prison. He pretends to like the English, but in reality he despises them. While he is upstairs giving a speech at the special ceremony, his men are downstairs stealing the crown from underneath the Prime Minister's nose. Sauvage laughs secretly at the security – or lack of – that was organised – or 'disorganised' – by none other than Johnny English.

**Chapter 3:** English and his assistant, a young man named Bough, try to figure out how the crown was stolen. They find a large hole in the ground under the Tower of England, and they fall into it. They get to the end of the tunnel and see Klein and Vendetta putting the crown into a coffin in a nearby garage. English follows the coffin for a while, but then he makes a mistake and follows another coffin to a funeral, where he jumps on top of the coffin and demands that it be opened. Eventually, he realises that the coffin doesn't contain the Queen's crown – it actually

contains a dead person. In the end, he has no choice but to wait for Agent Bough to rescue him from the awkward situation.

**Chapter 4:** English and Bough set out to recapture the Queen's crown. They parachute onto Sauvage's company headquarters, where they uncover the truth about the theft, but unfortunately, nobody will believe them, especially not their boss, Pegasus, who decides to take the clueless pair off the case.

**Chapter 5:** Meanwhile Sauvage's men force the Queen to abdicate, and Sauvage is invited by the Prime Minister to be the next King of England. Of course, Sauvage accepts the Prime Minister's offer. Back at English's flat, Interpol agent Lorna Campbell asks English to work with her in trying to recapture the crown and prevent Sauvage from becoming the King of England.

**Chapter 6:** English and Campbell follow Sauvage to his house in Brittany in northern France, where they overhear Sauvage describing his plans for England once he is king – to make it into a giant prison. Unfortunately, thanks to another of English's mishaps, Sauvage also overhears their plans to capture him. They soon find themselves locked in a small room, but just as they are trying to find a way to escape, they are rescued by Bough. They hurry back to England, where they try to stop Sauvage from carrying out his plans. After another series of mistakes, English ends up pushing Sauvage out of the way as the Archbishop is putting the crown on his head – and it ends up on English's head instead! The crowd starts to chant, 'The King! The King!' at English. Three days later, after giving the crown back to the Queen, Campbell tells English that she loves him, and he puts his arm round her. England is safe, thanks to – or perhaps despite – English's help.

## About the film

The book *Johnny English* is based on the film of the same name, which stars Rowan Atkinson as a clueless Secret Service agent named Johnny English, John Malkovich as a super-villain named Pascal Sauvage and Natalie Imbruglia as a mysterious woman named Lorna Campbell. The film was directed by Peter Howitt, whose other works include the romantic drama *Sliding Doors*. *Johnny English* is a 'spoof' – a funny imitation – of the James Bond films, in which the handsome and dangerous James Bond, Agent 007, saves the world from evil men and women using a combination of physical strength, quick thinking, clever gadgets and endless charm. Johnny English likes



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to think of himself as James Bond, but in reality he is an incompetent idiot who only succeeds through dumb luck (although, in the end, he manages to display courage).

The idea behind *Johnny English* began with a series of television advertisements for a UK bank in the 1990s. Later, the idea was reworked and developed into a full-length screenplay. In the advertisements, a witless secret service agent, played by Atkinson, regularly failed in his assignments by making stupid – and hilarious – mistakes. The advertisements became very popular with the public.

Rowan Atkinson's rubbery face is best known from his Mr Bean character, who has been seen on television and in films around the world. Johnny English shares some of Mr Bean's characteristics – although he is much less of an idiot than Mr Bean. John Malkovich's French character, Pascal Sauvage, wants to take over the world. Malkovich has lived in the south of France for many years and therefore has the ability to speak fluent French.

### Background and themes

**A realistic setting:** The story is set in London, with the action taking place at several well-known locations, including: the Tower of London, where the crown jewels are kept; Westminster Abbey, where coronations take place; Buckingham Palace, the Queen's central London home; and 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's official home and office. There are car chases through the streets of the capital and parachute drops onto city skyscrapers.

**The Royal Family:** Elizabeth II is the current Queen of England. Her coronation was in 1953. Her heir is her oldest son, Prince Charles, followed by his oldest son, Prince William. Charles will inherit the crown when his mother dies, and he will become King Charles III. Their family, the Windsors, have ruled since 1917, when they took over from Queen Victoria's family, the Hanovers. All the royal families of Europe are connected, and indeed it would be possible for a Frenchman to become King of England, as in this story, if the entire Windsor family abdicated.

**The lure of titles:** The monarchy in England doesn't have any real power, contrary to Pascal Sauvage's hopes. The Queen is a figurehead and only acts on the advice of her Prime Minister. She never makes political statements, and her job is to serve her country at ceremonies throughout the year. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the most

important bishop in the Church of England, although the Queen is actually head of the Church. The Archbishop always carries out the coronations at Westminster Abbey.

**The real world of spies:** Johnny English works for MI7, although the actual Secret Service agencies in the United Kingdom are MI5 (counter-intelligence) and MI6 (intelligence and spies). His character is a popular English comic type: an idiot who saves his country by mistake. His plans always go wrong, but the results always come out right in the end. Like James Bond, English has clever spy gadgets to help him at difficult moments – although he always misuses them to disastrous effects.

### Discussion activities

#### Chapters 1–2, pages 1–6

##### Before reading

- Discuss:** Put students into small groups and then write the following question on the board: 'What do Secret Service agents do?' Get them to make a list. When they have finished, the groups should stand at the front of the classroom and present their list to the rest of the class. Write down the things the pairs come up with as they present them and keep track of which pair was able to come up with the longest list.
- Discuss:** Write the following words on the board and discuss their meanings as a class: *box, bottle, church, coffin, coronation, crown, dead, drink, gunman, knife, mistake, noise, prison, secret, security, smoke, tower* and *vendetta*. Divide the class into two teams. Give each student on each team a letter (A, B, C, etc.). Student A from the first team should give a meaning of one of the words without saying the word. Student A from the second team should guess which word the other student is referring to. Award one point for giving the correct meaning and one point for guessing the correct word. For the next round, Student B from the second team should give a definition of another word, and then Student B from the first team should guess the word (and so on). After all the words have been defined and guessed correctly, total up the points for each team. The team with the most points wins.
- Research:** Ask students to bring information about James Bond to class. Put a large piece of paper on the wall and get students to attach their information to the piece of paper to make a wall display.
- Discuss:** Ask students if they have ever seen a James Bond film (e.g., *A View to a Kill, Diamonds Are Forever, Dr No, From Russia with Love, Goldfinger, Live and Let Die, Octopussy, The Spy Who Loved Me, The World Is Not Enough, You Only Live Twice*). Ask *Did you like the film? Why or why not? Do you remember the story in the film?* Get students to recount as many of the stories as possible, and write notes on the board to record what each of the stories is about.



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### After reading

- 5 **Role play:** Put students into small groups and get them to role play the scene at the end of Chapter 2 in which English pushes the button to open the security doors only to reveal that the Queen's crown has been stolen. Students should pretend that they are all guests at the party. What do they say when English opens the doors? What do they do? How do they feel? How do they show their feelings? They should role play their reactions to the missing crown.

### Chapters 3–4, pages 7–15

#### Before reading

- 6 **Guess:** Ask students to predict what will happen to English, Bough and the other characters in Chapters 3 and 4.
- 7 **Pair work:** Put students into pairs and get them to make a list of all the mistakes that English makes in the first four chapters of the book. When they have finished, the pairs should stand at the front of the classroom and take turns presenting their list to the rest of the class. Write down the mistakes as the pairs present them and keep track of which pair was able to come up with the longest list.
- 8 **Research:** Put students into small groups and get them to look for information about MI5 and MI6 (the United Kingdom's main intelligence agencies) in the library, on the Internet, etc. Then get them to make a brochure to encourage people to apply for jobs at the agencies. When they have finished, the groups should stand at the front of the classroom and present their brochure to the rest of the class.
- 9 **Research:** Put students into pairs and get them to look up the word *incompetent* in a dictionary or on the Internet. Make the exercise into a competition – the first pair of students to find the definition wins. They should stand up and read the definition out loud to the rest of the class. Finally, they should use the word in a sentence as an example.

#### After reading

- 10 **Check:** Check if the predictions that students made in activity 6 were right or wrong.
- 11 **Discuss:** Put students into small groups and get them to discuss the following questions:  
*Do you think a secret agent needs to be smart? Why or why not?*  
*Do you think Johnny English is smart? Why or why not?*  
*Do you think he will return the crown and stop Sauvage from becoming the King of England? Why or why not?*
- 12 **Artwork:** Put students into pairs and get them to draw a picture of one of the characters in Chapter 3 or 4. Note that each student should draw his or her own picture. When they have finished, the pairs should take turns looking at each other's picture. Then each student should guess which character his or her partner's picture illustrates.

### Chapters 5–6, pages 15–25

#### Before reading

- 13 **Discuss:** Ask students to think about why Chapter 5 is called *I'm going to be King of England!*. *Who do you think says this in the chapter? Why do you think this? Do you like the title of the chapter? Why or why not? Does it make you want to read the chapter? Why or why not?*
- 14 **Discuss:** *Would you like to be a spy? Why or why not?* Write these questions on the board and get students to discuss them in pairs. When they have finished, some of the pairs should stand at the front of the class and share their answers with their classmates.

#### After reading

- 15 **Artwork:** Get students to draw a picture to describe a scene in Chapter 5 or 6. When they have finished, they should stand at the front of the classroom and describe their picture to the rest of the class. The class should draw the picture as it is being described and then compare the pictures.
- 16 **Pair work:** Put students into pairs and get them to take turns describing Johnny English from the point of view of a) Bough, b) Lorna, c) Pegasus, and d) Sauvage.
- 17 **Write:** Put students into small groups and get them to look through the book and write down twenty questions regarding the characters, story, setting, etc. (e.g. *What word is written on the side of the coffin that Klein and Vendetta put the crown in? Where is Brittany?*) Note that the questions should be able to be answered with one word or phrase. When the groups have finished writing down their questions, they should match up with another group and ask the students their questions. Then they should answer the other group's questions. The group that gets the most questions right wins the round and moves on to the next round. They should compete against another group (and so on). The group that makes it to the end wins the competition.
- 18 **Write:** Put students into small groups and get them to write notes for a different ending to the story. The notes should be brief summaries, not long and detailed. When they have finished, the groups should stand at the front of the classroom and describe their new ending to their classmates. Finally, take a vote to see which ending the class likes best.

#### Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to [www.penguinreaders.com](http://www.penguinreaders.com).