

Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?

by Jean Fritz

pictures by Tomie dePaola





Before King George the Third was either king or the Third, he was just plain George, a bashful boy who blushed easily. His toes turned in when he walked, and his teachers nagged him about being lazy. Now, of course, as everyone knows, a king should not blush or turn in his toes or be lazy, but George didn't think much about being a king. His grandfather, George the Second, was king at the moment, and when he died, George's father, Frederick, would be king. And not until Frederick died would George have to worry about his turn.

So he went on blushing and turning in his toes. He daydreamed and sometimes drew pictures on the margins of his school papers. Once after a scolding he put tar on a teacher's seat so that when the teacher sat down, he had a hard time getting up.





Then suddenly on March 20, 1751, when George was 12 years old, his father died. And George, instead of being just plain George, was George, Prince of Wales. The next king. What was more, everyone expected George to start behaving like the next king. *Right now.*

"Take your elbows off the table, George," his mother would say. "Be a *king*!"

"Don't gobble your food, George. Do you want to look like your Uncle Cumberland?"

"Stand up straight, George. Kings don't slouch."

He was surrounded by private tutors, who from morning to night gave him arithmetic problems to solve, history lessons to learn, Latin passages to translate. They told him to turn out his toes, to speak up, to keep still, to be a man, to get to work. Sometimes George sulked under so much instruction. Once after a particularly hard Latin passage written by an old Roman named Caesar, George wrote on his paper: "Mr. Caesar, I wish you would go to the devil." But for the most part he tried to do what he was told. He paid particular attention to his favorite tutor, Lord Bute, who seemed to know all the rules for the king business. And since he was going to have to be king, George decided that when the time came, he would be a good one. He would be a father to his people.





Before England's King George III was king, he was just plain George—a bashful boy who blushed easily. But by the time he was twenty-two, George was a king, and he tried his hardest to be a good one. That meant marrying a princess, having sixteen kids, and being very careful with his country's money. He taxed the Americans so that England would have enough, but that was the end of *good* King George as far as the Americans were concerned.

- ★ “King George III made buttons, ate sauerkraut, and collected clocks but none of the above could blot the upstart American Revolution from his mind. Great fun and fascinating history.”

—*School Library Journal* (starred review)

“Fritz gives both a cozy, slightly comic view of the monarch and a view of the American Revolution that may help children understand that there is more than one approach to historical events.”

—*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

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