

Britain

The election system

Put each of the following words or phrases in its correct place in the passage below.

proportional representation	polling day	by-election
Member of Parliament	canvassing	eligible
call an election	secret ballot	deposit
House of Commons	constituents	campaigns
stand for election	constituencies	turn-out
General Election	polling stations	

Middleford. Election Result. No. of registered voters: 100,000

Mr G. Smith (Labour)	30,000 votes
Mrs R. Green (Conservative)	25,000 votes
Miss L. Jones (Independent)	10,000 votes
Mr W. Woods (Communist)	5,000 votes

A (a) _____ has just taken place all over the United Kingdom. These must take place every five years unless the Prime Minister decides to (b) _____ earlier. Above is the result in Middleford, one of the approximately 635 (c) _____ into which the country is divided for this purpose, (d) _____ was last Thursday, when the election (e) _____ and door-to-door (f) _____ stopped and the people of Middleford went to the (g) _____ to make their choice, in a (h) _____, from the four candidates (anyone over the age of 21 can (i) _____, on payment of a (j) _____ of £500, which is returned if he or she receives at least 5% of the votes cast). Voting is not compulsory and the number of people (k) _____ to vote in Middleford (everyone over 18) was 100,000, so the (l) _____ was 70%. Now Mr Smith will become the (m) _____ for Middleford, which means he will represent the people of Middleford in the (n) _____ in London. If he should die or be forced to give up his seat, the people of Middleford will have to vote again, in a (o) _____ to replace him. It is a very simple system and Mr Smith will try to represent all his (p) _____ fairly, whether they voted for him or not. However, the fact remains that most voters in Middleford voted for candidates (and parties) other than Mr Smith, and their votes are now lost. It is seats which are important in Parliament, not votes, and it is easy to see why the smaller parties would like a system of (q) _____ in which the number of votes they won was reflected in the number of seats they received in Parliament.

The House of Commons

1 Put each of the following words or phrases in its correct place in the passage below.

Cabinet	benches	Foreign Secretary
backbenchers	Budget	Shadow Cabinet
Prime Minister	Speaker	Home Secretary
ministers	front bench	Leader of the Opposition
debates	Opposition	Chancellor of the Exchequer

This is the House of Commons, where Members of Parliament take their seats on the green leather (a) _____ according to their party and position. One of them is chosen to be the (b) _____ who acts as a kind of chairman of the (c) _____ which take place in the House. In front of him on his right sit the MPs of the biggest party, which forms the government, and facing them sit the MPs of the parties who oppose them, the (d) _____. The leaders of these two groups sit at the front on each side. MPs without special positions in their parties sit behind their leaders at the back. They are called (e) _____. The leader of the government, the (f) _____, sits on the government (g) _____, of course, next to his or her (h) _____. The most important of these form the (i) _____. The minister responsible for relations with other countries is called the (j) _____. The one responsible for law and security is called the (k) _____. The one who deals with financial matters and prepares the annual (l) _____ speech on the economic state of the country is called the (m) _____. Opposite this group sits the (n) _____ (the main person in the largest party opposing the government) and the (o) _____, each member of which specializes in a particular area of government.

2 The picture below shows a view of the House of Commons from the Public Gallery. After completing the exercise above, match each of the following people or groups of people with a letter on the picture.

backbenchers
Cabinet
Opposition

Government
Prime Minister
Speaker

Leader of the Opposition
Shadow Cabinet

