

Historical Hero: Eleanor Roosevelt

Eleanor Roosevelt was born in 1884 in New York City. She was a writer and a humanitarian. As a humanitarian, she worked to help the poor and disadvantaged. She spoke out for human rights, equality for all, and children's causes.



Eleanor speaking at the United Nations in July 1947

Life Before Becoming First Lady

When Eleanor was 15 years old, she went to London, England for her schooling. She was an orphan at the time. Both of her parents died when she was young. Her time as a student in London encouraged her to think independently and to be confident. She stayed in England from 1899 to 1902.

In 1905, after Eleanor returned to the United States, she married Franklin Roosevelt. He ran for many political offices. She would speak at campaign stops during his elections. She would hold public events for him. Even after he won elections, she would still speak in public for him.

Life as a First Lady

When Franklin Roosevelt became president in 1933, Eleanor became the first lady of the United States (FLOTUS). The spouse of the President of the United States becomes the first lady. It is an unpaid position that usually does not impact U.S. politics. First ladies would usually be behind the scenes. They would not speak publicly about political matters. Eleanor's life as a first lady changed that.

Eleanor's humanitarian work changed the way the United States thought about what a first lady could be. As a first lady, Eleanor would hold weekly press conferences. She would write articles in newspapers and hold a weekly radio show. She even publicly disagreed with President Roosevelt at times. As the first lady, she would sometimes appear in public in her husband's place.

Continuing Her Humanitarian Work

Eleanor continued to work to help others after her husband's death in 1945. She campaigned for the U.S. to join the United Nations. The United Nations is a group of countries from around the world who work for peace and security for all nations. She was the first U.S. delegate to the United Nations. She served from 1945 to 1953. She helped create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document details all the freedoms and rights every human being should have.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy made her the leader of a special group called the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. The goal of the group was to help women gain equal rights, such as rights in the workplace. She was the chair until her death in 1962. After Eleanor's death, the United Nations awarded her one of its first Human Rights Prizes in 1968.

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Directions: Complete the graphic organizer with information from the nonfiction text.

What is the topic of the text?

The topic of the text is Eleanor Roosevelt.

What are some key details from the text?

1. She stayed in England from 1899 to 1902.
2. When Franklin Roosevelt became president in 1933, Eleanor became the First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS).
3. She was the first US delegate to the United Nations.
4. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy made her the leader of a special group called the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women.
5. Eleanor continued to work to help others after her husband's death in 1945.

What is interesting to you about the text?

Student answers will vary.

What is the author's purpose for the text?

The author's purpose of the text is to inform readers about Eleanor's life accomplishments and her work to help others.

What is the main idea of the text?

Eleanor Roosevelt was a daring First Lady who was willing to speak up for others.