

MARIE CURIE



M. Skłodowska Curie

Marie Curie was born Marie Skłodowska in Warsaw, Poland in 1867. Her father, a teacher of math and physics, introduced Marie to the subjects when she was a child. As a young woman, she left Warsaw, and eventually settled in Paris, France. There, she studied physics and math at the Sorbonne, a well-known university. It was at the Sorbonne that she met Pierre Curie, who worked there as a professor. The two scientists married in 1895.

The Curies worked together as researchers, sharing a lab. They worked long hours teaching to make a living, spending time in the lab whenever they could. Together, they discovered two new metals. These metals were special because they were *radioactive*. That means they give off energy. Marie named the first of the metals polonium, after her native Poland. They called the second metal radium. In 1903, the Curies won the Nobel Prize for these discoveries. They shared the prize with Henri Becquerel, a scientist who helped them discover radioactivity. Marie was the first woman ever to win a Nobel Prize.

In 1906, Pierre was crossing the road when he was struck by a horse-drawn carriage, and he passed away soon after. Marie was terribly sad, but she continued her work, continuing to make new discoveries.

Marie became the first female professor ever to teach at the Sorbonne. In 1911, she was awarded a second Nobel Prize, this time in chemistry. During World War I, she created x-ray machines that could travel in trucks. The machines were driven to battlefield hospitals to help treat wounded soldiers. Marie also helped create *radiation* treatment. Radiation means using something that's radioactive. It can help treat cancer as well as infection.

Marie helped create the Curie Institute in Paris, which exists to this day. It began as a cancer treatment center, and has also become an important center for cancer research.

VOCABULARY

Look at the text and define these key concepts:

Radioactive _____

Radiation _____

Marie was the first woman ever to do what?

There were very few female scientists when Marie began her career. What do you think this was like for her? Where would women scientists be today if not for her?

Though she lived in France most of her life, most people there treated Marie as an outsider. They did not think of her as a French citizen, but as a Polish person living in France. Was there ever a time when you didn't feel accepted? What was it like?
