

## PROJECT: WOMEN IN HISTORY

Men have, for the most part, written the history of humanity, and that history has been about men. There are many reasons for this. First, for most of human history, women have been forbidden to and discouraged from learning how to read and write. Some societies have believed that women were not capable of it, while others believed that women were not fit for it. Still others believed that a woman's role was to care for the family and the home, not to read or write. Second, women have indeed been responsible for the home and the family, and that has consumed their time and resources.

History is utterly indebted to women, however; without them there would be no children, and no male children who would grow up to make history. However, throughout time, there has been a whole host of women who have risen to lead, to discover, and to change history. These are the women we will look at in this project.

### A Closer Look

Margaret Thatcher was Britain's first female prime minister. No woman since Queen Elizabeth I (who reigned 1558-1603) had held the sort of power in Britain that she did. She led in a time of serious political and economic turmoil and earned herself the nicknamed of "Iron Lady" due to her ability to make tough policies.



Library of Congress / LC-DIG-ppmso-03266 / Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Thatcher rose to power through involvement in local politics two years after graduating from college with a degree in chemistry. She lost re-election, gave birth to twins, decided to focus on the study of law, and, in 1959, won a seat in the House of Commons.

Once in Parliament, she had a meteoric rise to the top. Known for her tenacity and her persuasive speeches, she took over as leader of the Conservative Party in 1975 as opposition leader. When the Conservatives won a majority in the next election, Margaret Thatcher became prime minister of an embattled and near-destitute country.

England was facing economic turmoil and a nearly bankrupt government. Still trying to recover from the world wars, the government was spending far more money than it took in. Thatcher put harsh measures into place, taking on labor unions and privatizing public housing and transportation. In short, she significantly reduced the amount of money the government gave out, increased the amount coming in, and got the government out of the housing and transportation business.

Internationally, she faced Argentinian aggression against the U.K.-owned Falkland Islands and won. Vehemently opposed to communism, she met with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1984 and signed an agreement with Chinese leaders to return Hong Kong from British hands to China. Her closest and most supportive political friend internationally was U.S. President Ronald Reagan, and, together, they worked on a number of international issues.

In her second term, she was the target of a bombing at the Conservative conference. She escaped, and, true to her nickname, insisted that the conference continue.

Thatcher retired in 1990 amid troubles in her party and went on to become a member of the House of Lords, staying active in politics in Britain and around the world, especially when she could work with Ronald Reagan. She died in 2013, leaving a legacy of tough measures during tough times to bring a country back to being a world power. She is the longest-serving British prime minister of the 20th century.



## Directions

Create a slide presentation that explores the lives and influences of six significant women in history, including Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria, Indira Ghandi, Golda Meir, and Mother Teresa, and one of today, German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Include in your presentation:

- 1) a short biography
- 2) how each of these women rose to power and influence
- 3) the obstacles they faced as a result of their gender
- 4) and the historical impact they have made or are making. How has the world changed as a result of their leadership? What role did the issue of gender equality play?

Use the project essay on Margaret Thatcher as a guide of elements that could be included in each slide. Your presentation should be a minimum of 9 slides including:

- a title page (1)
- introduction (2)
- a slide for each subject (3-8)
- and a slide for references (9)