

The life of marie curie, the hero of science and a feminist icon

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Marie Curie, although born into a humble background in Poland as the youngest of five children in a low-income family, went on to revolutionize scientific research and discoveries through her work as a pioneer in the field of radioactivity and the treatment of cancer, thus moving forward the capabilities of modern medicine, winning the Nobel Prize and justly earning the title of a hero.

Curie wasn't born into greatness, but despite the prejudices of the era and her unfortunate circumstances she lived in working against her, she managed to achieve heroic status with her own hands. She loved learning from a young age, and after her mother passed away and her father was therefore unable to help her through financial means, she decided to work as a governess, working and researching in her spare time. In 1891 she moved to France as her sister found her an opportunity to get accommodation there, and she became a student at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Women didn't have the right to go to university in her home country, Poland, so she was able to follow her dream in France, studying physics and mathematics. This is an example of how she was persistent and passionate in her drive for knowledge, therefore inspiring those who find themselves in similar unfortunate positions to follow their dreams.

In 1894 she married Pierre Curie, a fellow scientist, whom she married, and the couple went on to research the theory of radioactivity, a theory which Marie Curie discovered, by observing rays given off by the chemical uranium at the School of Chemistry and Physics in Paris. After discovering that a chemical named pitchblende was more radioactive than uranium, they discovered an extremely radioactive element named Polonium through <https://assignbuster.com/the-life-of-marie-curie-the-hero-of-science-and-a-feminist-icon/>

extracting it from the pitchblende. They named the element after Curie's homeland of Poland. They then realized that there was another element contained in pitchblende, which they discovered and isolated, called radium.

In 1903 Curie won the Nobel Prize for physics along with her husband Pierre and another scientist, Henri Becquerel, for her discoveries. Her husband died a few years later in an accident, she went on to take his position as a professor, thus becoming the first female professor at the University of Sorbonne, which is why many feminists cite her as an exemplary pioneer of women's rights. She faced many difficulties in this time as many people stereotyped her as she was a female who had come from Eastern Europe, an area which was historically looked down on, to suddenly 'steal' a position that would normally have been given to a male from Western Europe. However, the fact that she became a professor despite this shows that she is resilient, which is a quality observed in many heroes. Despite the grief she suffered after her husband's death, she carried out further research and collected her second Nobel Prize in 1911.

Curie's research prompted the University of Sorbonne to build laboratories which investigated radioactivity and treating cancer. As is well known, the radiation which Curie discovered is one of the main treatments for cancer nowadays, and many cancer patients are treated with radium isotopes and radioactive elements. Without her research, modern medicine would not be in the state it is today, and as this research eventually saved many lives of cancer patients, one could suggest that Curie is a hero in this respect.

Throughout World War I she developed medical technology which helped Allied soldiers on the front line, for example X-rays, and was named Director of the Red Cross Radiological Service. She also worked near the front line treating injured soldiers.

Curie died in 1934 of a disease called aplastic pernicious anemia, developed due to her having been directly exposed to harmful radioactive chemicals throughout her scientific research. Although the effects of these chemicals were not known at the time, one could argue that Curie was extremely selfless, a quality seen in heroes, as she dedicated and sacrificed her life so that scientific research could advance and so that cancer patients today could be cured. Today many people are inspired by her work and her values; a charity in the United Kingdom which helps cancer patients is named after her.

To conclude, I chose to research the life of Marie Curie as along with her carrying out essential scientific research which saved many people's lives, she can be seen as a feminist icon due to her unprecedented achievements, becoming the first female professor at her university, which is why she can be seen as a hero.