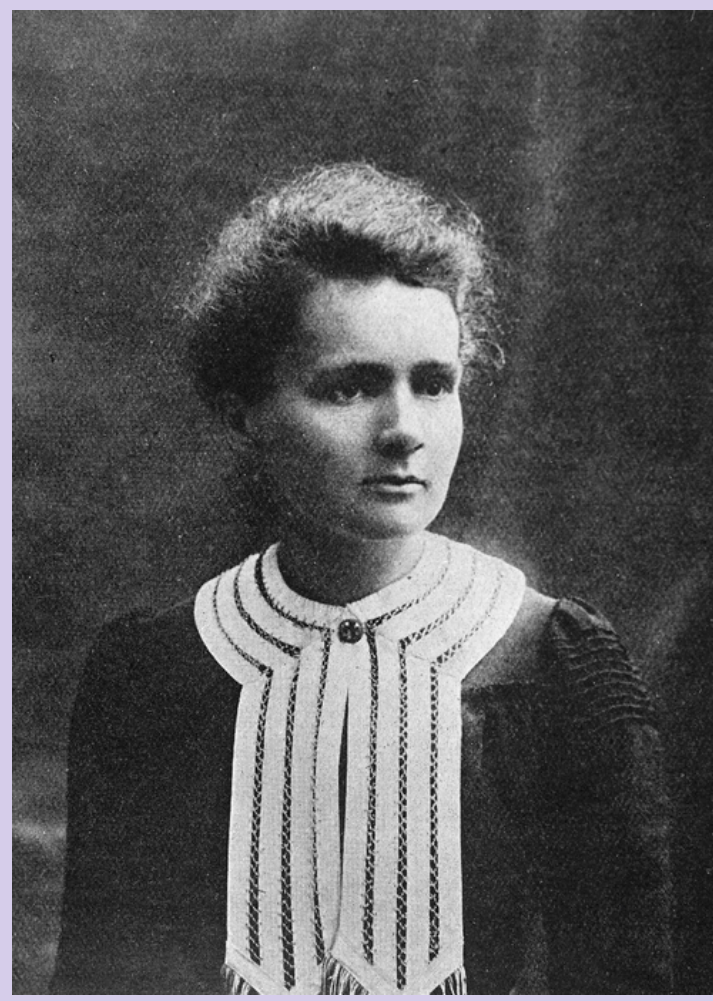


Marie Curie

November 7, 1867-
July 4, 1934



Headshot of Marie Curie Marie Curie at the Solvay Conference 1927

Early Life

Maria Salomea Skłodowska-Curie was born in Warsaw, Poland on November 7, 1867. Her father, a professor in math and physics, introduced her to these topics from a young age. She grew up very poor and lost her mother to Tuberculosis and her sister to Typhus, forcing her to work as a governess to save money for her education. As a child she showed talent for problem solving and the mathematical sciences and wanted to go to university but it was extremely unusual for women to do this at the time, especially for these subjects. In late 19th century Poland, women were forbidden from having a formal education so she had to find other ways to learn.

Education

Marie Curie was denied access from any Russian or Polish universities because she was a woman, so she attended secret underground classes called "flying university" in Warsaw. At 24, she moved to Paris to attend the Sorbonne, while barely being able to afford a place to stay and eat. She earned a degree in physics in 1893, in mathematics in 1894 and a PhD in 1903 after completing her thesis on radioactivity. She became the first woman to earn a PhD in France.

Contributions

Marie Curie was a pioneer of radioactive science, discovering 2 new elements, polonium and radium, using only math based chemical analysis. She was also the first to use advanced mathematics to calculate radiation accurately, allowing her to create the theory of radioactivity. Her data created new units of measurement in physics, paving the path for many other scientists.

Facing Adversity

Marie Curie faced a lot of adversity in her life. As a child, she grew very poor, having lost most of family to disease. She was denied an education and access to university in her home country as well as many universities in Paris. Even after she graduated top in her class for mathematical sciences, her peers and colleagues in the field still looked down on her for being a woman. Despite all this, Marie Curie is now widely recognized as one of the most important people in the history of math, physics and science.

Fun Facts

- She was the first person to win 2 Nobel Prizes ever (man or woman)!
- Marie Curie's notebooks are still radioactive today.
- She was the first woman to be entombed in the Pantheon in Paris.
- She started mobile x-ray units to help doctors in World War 1.



Marie Curie's Nobel Prize diploma