

WOMEN OF VALOR



*I was the first
woman to serve
as Prime Minister
of the United
Kingdom!*

MARGARET THATCHER

Meet Margaret Thatcher

Through hard work and determination, Margaret Thatcher rose from humble beginnings to become the first woman to lead a major Western democracy, and one of the world's most influential politicians. She was the only British Prime Minister in the 20th century to serve three consecutive terms.

As leader of the **Conservative Party**, Margaret Thatcher reshaped the British economy and foreign policy at a time when many people believed Great Britain was in decline. She reduced the power of trade unions, privatized numerous government-run industries, lowered taxes, and cut welfare programs that encouraged joblessness. Her unique style and uncompromising political convictions came to be known as "Thatcherism."

During the **Cold War**, she defended democracy and took a hard line against **communism** and the Soviet Union. Margaret became one of the closest friends of Ronald Reagan, the 40th President of the United States.



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Interesting Facts

- ★ Born on October 13, 1925 in Grantham, Lincolnshire
- ★ First woman to serve as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1979-1990)
- ★ Supported conservative views: limited government, free markets, nationalism, and individualism
- ★ Nickname: "The Iron Lady" (for her strong opposition to communism)
- ★ Awarded the U.S. **Presidential Medal of Freedom** by President George H. W. Bush on March 7, 1991
- ★ Died April 8, 2013 in London

Young Margaret

Margaret was born to Alfred and Beatrice Roberts in a small town in Eastern England. Her father was a Methodist preacher and owned a small grocery store.

Margaret and her older sister Muriel spent a lot of time helping out in the store. They worked behind the counter, slicing cheese and meat, weighing butter, and selling candies and cakes.

As Margaret's father became involved in local politics, the store became a meeting place for neighborhood people who shared his ideas. Margaret learned a lot about politics by listening to their conversations. She helped during local elections by addressing campaign pamphlets and attending local political meetings. Alfred Roberts served as a council member and eventually as mayor of Grantham.



Margaret admired her father and was deeply influenced by his traditional values. He emphasized the importance of individual responsibility and self-reliance, and taught her that life must be used for a noble purpose.

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Margaret Thatcher on Leadership:

*"Never follow the crowd.
You work things out for yourself."*

Education, Family & Early Career

Margaret was a very serious student and attended Oxford University. She became involved in politics at the Oxford University Conservative Association, where she honed her debating skills, met influential politicians, and served as one of the association's first women presidents.

After graduating with a degree in Chemistry in 1947, Margaret worked as a research chemist at a plastics company. In her spare time, she volunteered at the local Conservative party organization, and was noticed by party leaders who recommended that she run for office in the nearby town of Dartford.

Margaret followed their advice and ran for Dartford's parliamentary seat in two separate elections in the early 1950s. Although she didn't win, she received a lot of publicity as the youngest woman candidate in the country. Running for office proved to be a good learning experience.

Around this time, Margaret met a wealthy businessman, Denis Thatcher. He shared Margaret's views and supported her political ambitions. They married in December 1951. Two years later Margaret gave birth to twins Carol and Mark. She returned to school for legal training, specializing in taxation.



Margaret Thatcher
on Women in Politics:

*"In politics,
if you want
anything said,
ask a man.*

*If you want
anything done,
ask a woman."*

Parliament

Margaret enjoyed her legal career and family life but had high ambitions to serve in public office. Her experience as a mother, tax lawyer, and housewife enabled her to relate to many different people. She searched for a district that would adopt her as a candidate, and was interviewed many times by Conservative Party officials, but wasn't chosen.

Finally, in 1959, Margaret's persistence paid off. The London suburb of Finchley selected her to be their candidate and she won the election, becoming one of the only women Members of Parliament (MPs) at the time. Over the next several years, Margaret was appointed to many leadership positions in the government, including Education Minister. She grew to become a powerful force in the Conservative Party.

After the Conservatives lost the majority in 1974, Margaret decided to run for leadership of the Conservative Party. In 1975, she was elected leader, making her the first woman to become Leader of the **Opposition**.

Around that time, Great Britain was experiencing great economic and political instability under the socialist-leaning Labour Government. The government was nearly bankrupt, unemployment was on the rise, and basic services, like power and garbage collection, were frequently interrupted.

When the Conservatives won the 1979 election, Mrs. Thatcher became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. A new political star was born.

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What is a Prime Minister?

A Prime Minister is the leader of a country with a parliamentary political system, like the United Kingdom. Each political party selects a leader from within its ranks. In a general election, the leader of the winning party is appointed Prime Minister by the Monarch (the King or Queen in some countries, including Great Britain), or the President (in countries like France and Israel). In contrast, American Presidents are elected directly by the people (via the electoral college).



Prime Minister



Mrs. Thatcher delivered a clear message as she assumed office: she wanted to put the “Great” back into “Great Britain.” The country was in decline, and needed to return to order, efficiency, and individual responsibility. Thatcher believed that British citizens were beginning to believe more in government and less in themselves. Thatcher criticized socialism for depriving British people of their traditional liberties. While **socialism** offered privileges only to the top government leaders, capitalism extended greater opportunity to many more people.

Thatcher focused her efforts on economic recovery, but initially, her policies resulted in higher unemployment and lower wages. Despite the pain these changes brought at first, she stayed focused on her long-term goal. She did not want Great Britain to become a socialist country, and she strove to empower individual citizens.

Thatcher cut welfare programs that encouraged joblessness, and allowed government-owned utilities to be privately owned. Over time, as the economy improved, peoples’ lives improved, and she became more popular.

In 1982, Prime Minister Thatcher faced a major foreign crisis when Argentina invaded the British Falkland Islands, off the coast of South America. She tried to resolve the crisis using diplomacy, but when it didn’t work, she directed British troops to go to war to defend the Falklands. It was a risky move, because Britain was still in the middle of its economic recovery, and war is expensive. But in just 10 days, Great Britain won the war, and returned the islands to British control. Thatcher’s decision to defend the Falklands was very popular with the British people, and helped her win reelection in 1983.



Margaret Thatcher on Socialism:

“There is no such thing as public money. There is only taxpayers’ money.”



Domestically, Thatcher sought to limit the power of the trade unions because she believed they didn't allow their members to have a say in important decisions. From 1984 to 1985, she stood her ground in a year-long miners' strike. Her government protected workers who wanted to go to work, even when the miners' union insisted on closing the mines. Her government applied pressure to the unions by fining them when they held illegal strikes. A year later when the union had been defeated, the miners gradually returned to work.

In foreign policy, Thatcher became an important leader in the Cold War. She and U.S. President Ronald Reagan took a unified and tough stance against communism. Thatcher strongly supported President Reagan's Cold War policies. She improved Britain's relations with reformist Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, which helped end the Cold War peacefully, without ever firing a shot.

During her third term as Prime Minister, Thatcher sought to reform England's socialized medical system and create a standard educational curriculum. She also tried to implement a fixed rate local tax, which was very unpopular, even in her own party. Widespread public protests erupted against her tax policy.

Her Conservative Party colleagues feared that her tax policies were going to prevent them from winning the next elections. In 1990, under pressure, Thatcher resigned her position as Prime Minister.



Retirement

Thatcher served as a Member of Parliament until she retired in 1992. After retirement, she became a public speaker and wrote several books about her experience in politics. She suffered a number of small strokes before her death in 2013.

Fascinating Facts about Margaret

- Young Margaret's family lived in an apartment above her father's grocery store in Grantham. The apartment didn't have running water or an indoor toilet!
- In 1939, Margaret's family helped a young Jewish girl named Edith escape Austria after Hitler took over. Edith lived with the Roberts family and shared what life was like living as a Jew under an anti-Semitic regime. Young Margaret was shocked.
- Before becoming Prime Minister, Thatcher underwent speech training to lower her pitch and perfect a calm tone.
- Thatcher became known as "Thatcher, the milk snatcher" for ending a government-sponsored free milk program during her tenure as Education Minister.
- Thatcher survived an assassination attempt on October 12, 1984 when a bomb exploded at the hotel where she was staying.



Fill-in-the-Blank

1. In 1925, Margaret Roberts was born in the town of _____, the second of two children.
2. Margaret attended _____ where she earned a degree in Chemistry.
3. Margaret later became a tax lawyer, but she really aspired to be a _____.
4. Margaret's conservative political views were initially inspired by her _____.
5. Mrs. Thatcher created a sensation when she became the first _____ Prime Minister in British history.
6. As Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher embraced policies that gave _____ more freedom.
7. Mrs. Thatcher earned the nickname "_____" because she took a very strong position against communism.

Word Scramble

MRIEP EINRTSMI

NROVTCVEAIES

AITSRTEHCMH

DGNANEL

LCDO WRA

RNMPIELATA

DFXORO YVIREUSTIN

ICEEOTNL

AGATMERR

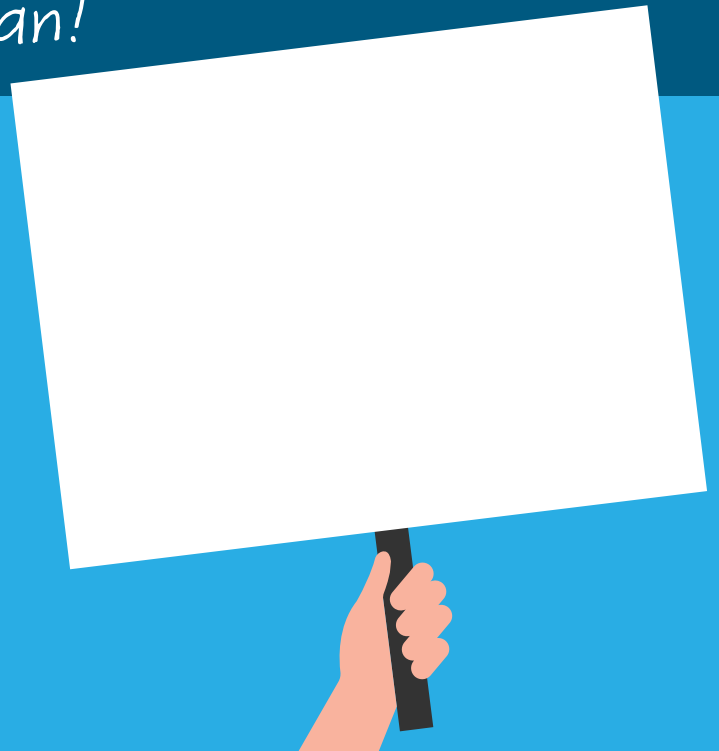
ITOISCPL

Answer key on page 10

Write Your Campaign Slogan!

A political campaign slogan is a brief statement that describes what your campaign is about. Margaret Thatcher's 1950 campaign slogan was "Vote Right to Keep What's Left."

Imagine that you are running for public office. What cause is important to you? What causes are important to your friends and your community?



Glossary



- **Cold War:** A state of political tension between nations that stops short of full-scale war, especially that which existed between the United States and Soviet Union following World War II.
- **Communism:** A system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single authoritarian party holds power, claiming to make progress toward a higher social order in which all goods are equally shared by the people.
- **Conservative Party:** A political party that promotes traditional views, especially in the United Kingdom or Canada.
- **Determination:** The act of persisting and not giving up.
- **Humble:** Low in rank, quality, or station.
- **Opposition:** The act of resisting. The Opposition party is the party not currently in power.
- **Parliament:** The national legislature of the United Kingdom, made up of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. When people in Great Britain vote, they elect Members of Parliament (MPs) and those MPs vote for the Prime Minister.
- **Presidential Medal of Freedom:** An award given by the U.S. president to recognize people who have made an especially significant contribution to the security or national interests of the United States or world peace.
- **Reformist:** A person who promotes change of an existing system.
- **Self-reliance:** Dependence on one's own capabilities, judgment, or resources.
- **Socialism:** A system or condition of society in which the means of production are owned and controlled by the state/government.

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FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY: 1. GRANTHAM, 2. OXFORD UNIVERSITY, 3. POLITICIAN, 4. FATHER, 5. WOMAN, 6. INDIVIDUALS, 7. IRON LADY, WORD SCRAMBLE KEY: 1. PRIME MINISTER, 2. CONSERVATIVE, 3. THATCHERISM, 4. ENGLAND, 5. COLD WAR, 6. PARLIAMENT, 7. OXFORD UNIVERSITY, 8. ELECTION, 9. MARGARET, 10. POLITICS.