

Maria Skoldowska Curie



Maria Skłodowska Curie was not only the first woman to receive a Nobel Prize, she was also the first person to receive two Nobel Prizes. When speaking of Maria, Albert Einstein stated “Marie Curie is, of all celebrated beings, the one whom fame has not corrupted.” Maria’s family was just as important as her studies and it showed.

Maria Skłodowska Curie was born on November 7, 1867 in Warsaw, Poland. Maria attended the Sorbonne University in Paris where she became the first woman in Europe to receive a doctorate of science. She married Pierre Curie in 1895. They had two daughters, Irene and Eve, one of which would follow in her mother’s footsteps to receive a Nobel Prize in Chemistry. In 1898, Marie and Pierre discovered polonium and radium. In 1903, they and Henri Becquerel received the Nobel Prize for the discovery of radioactivity. Pierre passed away three years later. As difficult as this was for Marie, she turned herself to her work. Marie was awarded her husband’s teaching position at the university. In 1911, she received her second Nobel Prize, this time in chemistry for the isolation of pure radium. She continued work in her field with her daughter, Irene, studying radioactivity and its applications to medicine.

Marie developed leukemia, among other disorders, due to her work. In July of 1934, leukemia took her life. In 1995, the French Government moved her remains, placing her with her husband under the Pantheon in Paris, an honor no other woman holds.

Marie Curie paved the road for many. She showed the world that women are capable of great achievements. She once said, “Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and, above all, confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained.” The most intriguing thing about Marie is that we hear so much of her accomplishments but little of the obstacles she faced. If the world stood in her way, she didn’t argue, she just worked until she found a way to succeed.