Marie Curie

Fact File

Name at Birth: Maria Salomea Sklodowska

Date of Birth: 7th November 1867

Place of Birth: Warsaw, Poland

Famous For: Discovering **radioactive** materials

She was the youngest of five children.
Her parents were both teachers. Marie's Dad taught maths and physics and inspired Marie to study science when she was older.

Moving from Poland to Paris

Marie Curie's greatest dream was to go to university. Unfortunately, universities in Poland were only for men at the time and she was not allowed to join.

Because of this, Marie had to make the difficult decision to move to Paris where women were allowed to go to university.

Did You Know...?

Marie Curie was not interested in having a traditional wedding.
Instead of a white wedding dress, she chose to wear dark blue.
This outfit ended up being her work clothes for the next few years!

In Paris, Marie studied physics at Sorbonne University. She did not have a lot of money. To keep herself warm during the winter, Marie would often wear all of her clothes at once!

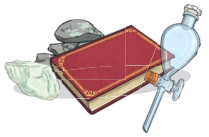
While she was working in Paris, Marie met another scientist called Pierre Curie. The couple fell in love over their shared interest in science and got married. From then on, Maria Sklodowska was known as Marie Curie.

Discovering New Elements

When she had finished university, Marie Curie began to work in a laboratory carrying out lots of different scientific experiments. She was very interested in the work of Henri Becquerel. Henri had discovered tiny waves that were so small that they could not be seen by the human eye yet they could travel inside the human body. These waves were called 'radiation'.

Together with her husband, Marie began research to see if there were other elements that were **radioactive**. After a long time spent crushing materials, setting them on fire and melting them, Marie Curie discovered two new elements which had never been seen before.

She named the first one 'polonium' after her birth country, Poland. The second element was named 'radium'.



Marie ran more tests on these radioactive elements and discovered that they were able to kill diseased cells in the human body. This incredible discovery led to a treatment for cancer that is still being used today.

Nobel Prizes

In 1903, Marie Curie was awarded a joint Nobel Prize in physics for her scientific discoveries. Although women were not supposed to win the prize, Marie's husband complained and Marie became the first woman ever to win the coveted Nobel Prize.

WARNING!

Marie Curie did not know how dangerous radioactive elements were and used to carry them around in her pocket. Because of this, she became extremely ill with radiation poisoning at the age of 66. Anyone holding radioactive elements must now be completely covered in protective gear to avoid **contamination**.

Glossary

contamination: Being polluted or poisoned. **radioactive:** Giving off radiation.

Questions

1. What was Marie Curie's greatest dream? Tick one.

   - ○ to get married
   - ○ to go to university
   - ○ to teach physics
   - ○ to move to France

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order they occurred in.

   - ☐ Marie Curie wins a Nobel Prize.
   - ☐ Marie Curie begins to research radioactive elements.
   - ☐ Marie Curie discovers two new elements.
   - ☐ Marie Curie moves to France.

3. Fill in the missing words.

   Marie Curie discovered two new elements, which she named _____ and _____.

4. Look at the section titled **Nobel Prizes**.
   Find and copy one word that shows that the Nobel Prize was highly sought after.

   _____

5. When she didn't have much money, what did Marie do to keep warm in the winter?

   _____

6. **After a long time spent crushing materials, setting them on fire and melting them, Marie Curie discovered two new elements which had never been seen before.**

   How do you think Marie Curie felt when she discovered these two new elements? Explain your answer.

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. How was Marie's new life in France different to her old life in Poland?

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. If you were to discover your own element, what would you name it? Explain your answer.

   _____

   _____

   _____