

A black and white portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt, looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. Her hair is styled in a classic 1940s fashion.

Eleanor Roosevelt

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Eleanor Roosevelt

Discover a famous figure you might not have known was a teacher!



Today, Eleanor Roosevelt is known as one of the most famous first ladies of the United States. But before that? She was a teacher! Read on to find out how Roosevelt got her start in education.

Early Life

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (later known by her middle name, Eleanor) was born in Manhattan, New York, in 1884. At the age of 15, Roosevelt moved to England to attend a boarding school for girls. There, she met someone who would greatly influence her life—you guessed it, a teacher! Marie Souvestre was an educator at the boarding school. She acted as a role model, or mentor, to Roosevelt. Souvestre encouraged Roosevelt to think independently, and to speak up for herself. This was not always common in Europe and the United States in the 19th century. Back then, women did not have many of the rights that men had. They were often not given the same opportunities or education. But thanks to Souvestre, Roosevelt became very interested in education and equality for women.

In fact, when Roosevelt returned home, she herself began to work as a teacher. She taught dance and a form of physical exercise known as calisthenics. Then, in 1905, Roosevelt married Franklin Delano Roosevelt (often known as FDR).

FUN FACT

Roosevelt had her own newspaper column for more than 25 years.



Eleanor Roosevelt



Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt disembark from a train.

Teacher to First Lady

FDR was interested in politics. In 1910, he was elected to the New York State Senate, a part of the government. At that time, women were not encouraged to participate in politics. In fact, women didn't even have the right to vote in the U.S. until 1920. But Roosevelt became involved in politics as well. She joined the Women's Trade Union League, an organization that supported women workers. She also joined the League of Women Voters, a group that supported women in government and politics. And Roosevelt continued to work in education.

In 1926, she and a friend bought a school for girls, called the Todhunter School. Roosevelt began teaching subjects like history, current events, drama, and literature. She was especially passionate about promoting the education of women and girls.

DID YOU KNOW?

Eleanor Roosevelt sometimes flew with Amelia Earhart, one of the world's first female pilots.

In 1932, FDR was elected as the president of the United States. This made Roosevelt the nation's first lady. In the past, the role of the first lady was a social one. First ladies were expected to host important guests. However,

Roosevelt wanted to make a difference in politics. She began to hold weekly press conferences for female reporters.



Eleanor Roosevelt



This helped women become involved in journalism. It also encouraged more women to take part in politics.

Roosevelt also became an advocate for many causes. She promoted equal rights for women and Black Americans, who were unfairly denied many rights. Roosevelt also worked to give opportunities to people in need. She called for housing reform to provide homes to people who could not afford them, and for programs to help children and workers.

Legacy

In 1945, FDR, who had been suffering from poor health, passed away. Although Roosevelt was no longer the first lady, she continued to fight to make the world a better place. In fact, the next president, President Harry Truman, appointed Roosevelt as a representative to the United Nations. The UN is an international organization that was created in 1945, after the end of World War II. Its goal is to promote peace and security around the world. During her time at the UN, Roosevelt helped create a document called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration protects the basic rights of people all around the world, regardless of their place of birth, gender, or race.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy appointed Roosevelt as the chair of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. There, Roosevelt continued to fight for equal rights for women across the country. Although she died in 1962, Roosevelt remains an inspiration for activists around the world.