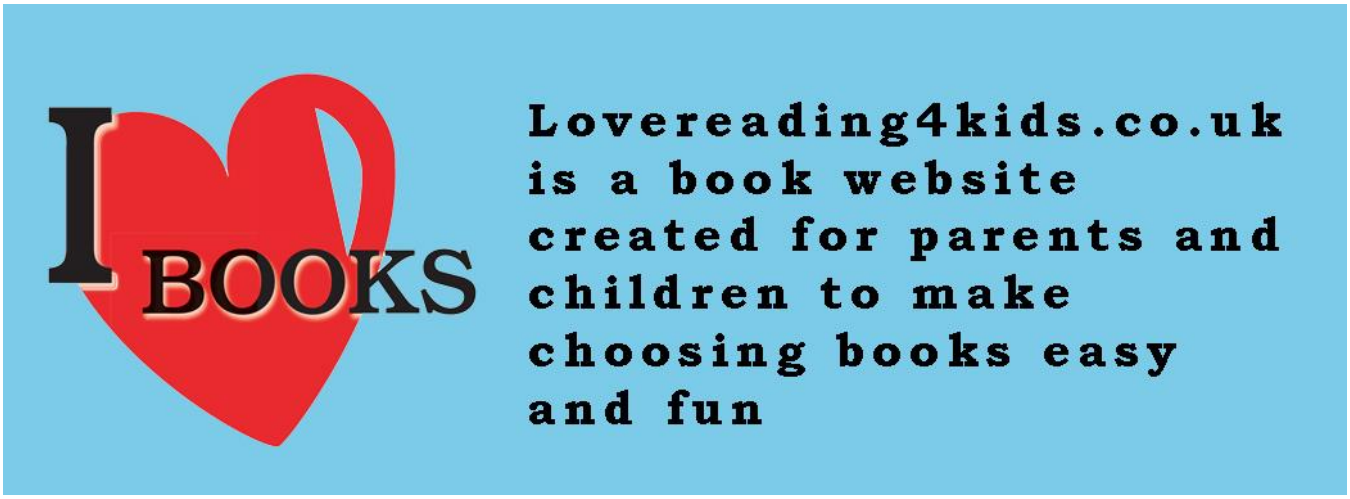


an extract from

Women in Science 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World

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'I WAS TAUGHT THAT THE WAY OF PROGRESS IS NEITHER SWIFT NOR EASY.' — MARIE CURIE

MARIE CURIE

PHYSICIST AND CHEMIST

Marie Curie was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1867. She went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne, where she met Pierre Curie, a fellow scientist and her great love.

Scientist Henri Becquerel had discovered a mysterious glow coming from uranium salts. Marie was fascinated by the glow and wanted to know what it was and why it was happening. In a stuffy shed, she and Pierre went to work. Using Pierre's electrometer, Marie examined 'glowing' compounds and discovered that the energy being produced came from the uranium atom itself. She started calling the effect 'radioactivity'. To find the source, she and Pierre ground up and filtered down other radioactive materials, in doing so discovering two new radioactive elements: polonium and radium. The Curies received a Nobel Prize in physics in 1903, for the discovery of radiation. In 1911, Marie won a Nobel Prize in chemistry for her discovery of and research into polonium and radium.

Sadly, the radiation from their experiments was making Pierre and Marie sick. Their long-term exposure made them both tired and achy – we now understand that the effects of radiation poisoning are deadly. In 1906, Pierre was killed in a horse-carriage accident. Despite her grief, Marie continued to work and discovered that radium could treat cancer. She spent hours collecting radon for hospitals even though it left her feeling weak.

France was invaded during the First World War. With her daughter, Marie created a unit of X-ray trucks, which they drove on to battlefields to help wounded soldiers.

Marie Curie did scientific work because she loved it, and dangerous work because the world needed it. Her life and achievements continue to inspire scientists today.

FIRST WOMAN TO GET A DOCTORATE IN FRANCE.

POLONIUM WAS NAMED AFTER POLAND.

RADIUM WAS NAMED AFTER THE SUN.

MOTHER OF 2 GIRLS.

FIRST WOMAN TO BE HONOURED FOR HER OWN ACHIEVEMENTS WITH HER BURIAL IN THE PANTHEON IN PARIS.

ONLY PERSON TO WIN A NOBEL IN TWO DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES.

COINED THE WORD 'RADIOACTIVITY'.

ALL OF HER RESEARCH IS KEPT IN LEAD-LINED CASES. THE MATERIALS ARE STILL RADIOACTIVE.

KEPT VIALS OF GLOWING RADIUM IN HER POCKETS. A DANGEROUS PRACTICE.

INHERITED PIERRE'S CHAIR AT THE SORBONNE.

BECOMING THEIR FIRST FEMALE PROFESSOR.