

Teacher Information

Background History on Eleanor Roosevelt & Resource List



Biography of Eleanor Roosevelt 1884 -1962



Eleanor Roosevelt defied stereotype. A complex woman in her private and public life, Eleanor Roosevelt struggled to adapt the cherished part of her heritage to an ever-changing world. In the process, she not only redefined her life and changed American politics, but also presented the world with a new vision of peace and justice.

Born October 11, 1884 to Elliott and Anna (Hall) Roosevelt, the young Eleanor quickly encountered life's volatile nature. Her mother, distressed by her daughter's plain looks, dubbed her "Granny" and her adored father, consistently battling illness and depression, turned to morphine and alcohol for comfort. Orphaned at the age of ten, she lived a quiet, sad life with her grandmother Hall until an aunt recommended that sixteen-year-old Eleanor be sent to boarding school in London. Under the careful tutelage of Marie Souvestre, she blossomed intellectually and socially. "Mlle. Souvestre shocked one into thinking, and that on the whole was very beneficial." For the first time, she was "totally without fear." Reluctantly, she returned to New York to make her debut in 1902.

In 1905, Eleanor married Franklin Delano Roosevelt, her fifth-cousin once removed. She was teaching at the Rivington Street Settlement house when she became pregnant with their daughter Anna (1906) and then bowed to her mother-in-law's wishes that she cease working in unsanitary neighborhoods. Anna was followed in rapid succession by James (1907), Franklin (1909, who died soon after birth), Elliott (1910), Franklin (1914), and John (1916).

That began to change in 1910 when Dutchess County elected her husband to the New York State senate. In Albany, she made new friends and watched her husband shape government policies. In 1913, the Roosevelts moved to Washington where FDR served as assistant secretary of the Navy. During the trauma of World War I, Eleanor spent months working in the Red Cross canteen at Union Station. Appalled at the treatment veterans received at Saint Elizabeth's hospital, she forced the Interior Department to change its standards. In Washington, Eleanor soon learned that working on issues she cared about could be fun, productive, and helpful to her husband. Thus, before FDR was stricken with polio in 1921, Mrs. Roosevelt worked to build the Roosevelt network and soon became a political force in her own right.

Through out the 1920s, she helped lead the Woman's City Club, the National Consumers League, the Women's Division of the Democratic State Committee (DWC), and the New York chapters of the League of Women Voters and the Women's Trade Union. League. As chair of the Civic League's City Planning Department, she coordinated its responses on housing and transportation issues, chaired its legislation committee, arbitrated disputes over child labor law, promoted workmen's compensation and, in a move that made banner headlines across New York State, strongly urged adoption of an amendment to the Penal Law legalizing the distribution of birth control information among married couples. In 1924, she chaired both the Bok Peace Prize Committee and the women's delegation to the platform committee of the Democratic National Convention and served Al Smith's liaison to 1927, she, with friends Marion Dickerman, Nancy Cook, and Caroline O'Day,

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Mrs. Roosevelt's skillful use of the media helped offset criticism her activism provoked. In December 1935, she began her daily syndicated column, "My Day." She continued it devote four weeks to a nationwide lecture tour. She explained her reading audience by launching a monthly question and answer magazine column; appearing on radio; writing more than one hundred articles for magazines, newsletters and policy journals; and releasing the first installment of her autobiography (*This is My Story*) and two small books on foreign policy (*This Troubled World*) and democratic values (*The Moral Basis of Democracy*). By the end of the second term, Mrs. Roosevelt was recognized as a political force in her own right.

When FDR died, Mrs. Roosevelt confronted new challenges. Whether at Val-Kill her apartment in New York City, or traveling the world, she brought people together and urged them to work to make their dreams come true. She continued her column, expanded her speaking tour, wrote ten books, joined NAACP board of directors, campaigned for Adlai Stevenson and countless other candidates, and chaired the first Presidential Commission on the Status of Women.

Perhaps her greatest legacy was her work as a member of the American delegation to the United Nations. As chair of the Human Rights Commission, she shepherded the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and gave the world a new vision to combat the horrors of war and prejudice: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Eleanor Roosevelt spent the last two years of her life tired and in pain, but she rarely curtailed her schedule. Battling aplastic anemia (later diagnosed as bone marrow tuberculosis), she nevertheless continued to speak out on issues relating to racial justice, world peace, and women's rights. Outraged by the violence the Freedom Riders encountered in Mississippi and Alabama and discouraged by the tepid response of the Kennedy Administration, Mrs. Roosevelt quickly agreed to a request from CORE in May 1962 to chair a public hearing charged with investigating law enforcement officials acts against the young protesters. She returned home to Hyde Park where she struggled to complete her last book, *Tomorrow is Now*, in which she pleaded for racial, political, and social justice. Eleanor Roosevelt died November 7th, 1962 in her New York Apartment at the age of seventy eight.

For the complete biography form which this was taken, visit "Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt" at www.nps.gov/elro/teaching.htm

Resources List



Websites:

Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt
Roosevelt Presidential Library
Hudson River Valley Institute
Val-Kill Virtual Tour

www.nps.gov/elro/teaching.htm
www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu
www.hudsonrivervalley.net
www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/elro/explorevk.html

Helpful Phone Numbers:

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Museum
Jeff Urbin (Educational Specialist) (845) 486-7761
Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Park Service
Susanne Norris (Education Programs) (845) 229-7770 or 489-2658

Audio-Visual Materials:

Power Point Presentations:
(available on CD-rom to HPCSD teachers)
Eleanor Roosevelt's Life

A photographic history of ER's life from childhood through adulthood. Includes a written narrative to accompany slides giving history and slide content. Written and compiled by Al Vinck and Linda Bouchey

An Introduction to Val-Kill

A presentation depicting the history of the buildings and industry of Val-Kill. Includes photographs and text. Adapted for 3-5 graders from the Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt website mentioned above.

Books:

There are far too many published books to mention all in this document. This list was compiled using books we used for curriculum development and others we thought were appropriate for our students.

STUDENTS:

Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride by Pam Munoz Ryan, Brian Selznick (Illustrator)

ISBN: 059096075X

While still dressed in evening gowns, Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt go on a night flight above Washington, D.C. on April 1933. Extensively researched, the story contains actual dialogue and facts of the account. Breathtaking illustrations tell the trip of these two American heroines as it might have been.

Picture Book of Eleanor Roosevelt by David A. Adler, Robert Casilla (Illustrator)

ISBN: 0823411575

A brief account of the life and accomplishments of Eleanor Roosevelt.

Eleanor by Barbara Cooney, Dena Wallenstein Neusner (Editor) Product Details:

ISBN: 0140555838

Presents the childhood of Eleanor Roosevelt, who married a president of the United States and became known as a great humanitarian.

Learning about Integrity from the Life of Eleanor Roosevelt by Nancy Ellwood, N. Ellwood

ISBN: 0823953459

A brief biography examining the value of integrity in the life of the First Lady who devoted herself to helping others and working for peace.

Eleanor Everywhere: The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt: (Step into Reading Books Series: A Step 4 Book) by Monica Kulling, Cliff Spohn (Illustrator)

ISBN: 067998996X

Profiles the first wife of a president to have a public life and career of her own, devoted to helping others and working for peace.

A Letter to Mrs. Roosevelt by C. Coco De Young, C. Coco Young

ISBN: 0385326335

Eleven-year-old Margo fulfills a class assignment by writing a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt asking for help to save her family's home during the Great Depression.

When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Brian Selznick (Illustrator)

ISBN: 0439269679

Marian Anderson is best known for her historic concert at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939, which drew an integrated crowd of over 75,000 people in pre-Civil Rights America. While this momentous event showcased the uniqueness of her character, and the struggles of the times in which she lived, it is only part of her story.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: An Adaptation for Children by Ruth Rocha, Otavio Roth

ISBN: 9211004233

TEACHERS:

My Day - The Best of Eleanor Roosevelt's Acclaimed Newspaper Columns, 1936-1962,

Introduction by Blanch Wiesen Cook, Edited by David Emblidge

ISBN: 0306810107

Eleanor Roosevelt wrote her hugely popular syndicated column "My Day" for over a quarter of a century, from 1936 to 1962. This collection brings together for the first time in a single volume the most memorable of those columns, written with singular wit, elegance, compassion, and insight—everything from her personal perspectives on the New Deal and World War II to the painstaking diplomacy required of her as chair of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights after the war to the joys of gardening at her beloved Hyde Park home.

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters from Children of the Great Depression by Robert Cohen
(Editor), Eleanor Roosevelt (Editor)

ISBN: 0807854131

In their own words, the letter writers confide what it was like to be needy and young during the worst economic crisis in American history. They poignantly depict the mental, emotional, and physical tolls of poverty on their lives and their families. But their letters are more than a record of suffering; they are also a testament to the idealism of youth. Many young writers, for example, insisted that in a democratic society no one should be forced to drop out of school because of poverty and called for the New Deal to do more to right such inequities.

Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery by Russell Freedman

ISBN: 0395845203

The story of Eleanor Roosevelt traces the life of the former First Lady from her early childhood through the tumultuous years in the White House to her active role in the founding of the United Nations after World War II. A Newberry Honor Book.

Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882-1905 by Geoffrey C. Ward

ISBN: 0060913444

A unique, intimate portrait of the uncommon family, early years, and private world of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Eleanor and Franklin by Joseph P. Lash

ISBN: 0451053109