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Madame Marie Curie

CONNECTIONS

Literature Connection—*Madame Curie: A Biography* by Eve Curie

Madame Marie Curie’s youngest daughter wrote this biography about her mother. The story of hard work, dedication, and accomplishments of a little girl born in Warsaw is an inspiration to young women everywhere.

Content Connections—Language Arts, Biographies

Madame Marie Curie introduces readers to renowned scientists Marie and Pierre Curie. This husband-and-wife team made important discoveries in the fields of physics and chemistry. Both received Nobel Prizes, and Marie Curie received two for her work.

OBJECTIVE

Students will use text organizers (e.g., headings, topic and summary sentences, graphic features, typeface, chapter titles) to determine the main ideas and to locate information in a text.

VOCABULARY

1. Introduce the key vocabulary words from the script. Write each word on the board.
2. Describe the meaning of each word and point out its use in the script. Show pictures that represent the meaning of each word if you have them.
3. Restate the definition or explanation of each vocabulary word. As you do, ask students to respond to your statement by saying the vocabulary word. For example, say to students, “not real and imitation.” Then students would respond by saying “artificial.”
4. Have students write a sentence for each of the vocabulary words.
 - **detrimental**—harmful, damaging
 - **industrial**—regarding manufacturing, businesses, and factories
 - **tuition**—fees a student pays for schooling
 - **magnetism**—an attraction or pull between two objects
 - **thesis**—a dissertation, or an essay on a specific topic
 - **artificial**—man-made, non-natural, or fake

BEFORE THE READER’S THEATER

1. Read the title of the script. Ask students to make predictions about the selection based on the title. Ask students what they know about Madame Marie Curie. Who was she? What did she accomplish? What is she known for?
2. Display the Outline Form graphic organizer (page 59 or outlineform.pdf). Explain to students that they will be using this organizer to record information about Madame Marie Curie.

Madame Marie Curie (cont.)

BEFORE THE READER’S THEATER (cont.)

3. Read the script aloud, modeling appropriate reading strategies while you read. To help build fluency and comprehension, it is important for students to hear the script read aloud before practicing on their own.

DURING THE READER’S THEATER

1. Divide the class into groups of five to read and practice the script.
2. Students need to decide which character they will play and then highlight their parts in the script (Readers 1–5). They should also mark with a star any places where they need to pause while reading.
3. Give students a few minutes to practice reading with expression in their voices. Additionally, students may decide on a few props or materials to use during their reading. They need to use materials that can be easily acquired or assembled in the classroom.
4. After they have finished practicing, have each group perform the reader’s theater for the rest of the class. You may also want them to perform for another class.

AFTER THE READER’S THEATER

1. Have students complete the Outline Form graphic organizer with with a partner.
2. Using the information gained after reading and performing the reader’s theater, students will write a newspaper article about the life of Marie Curie. Students can use the Outline Form graphic organizer to assist them with this assignment. Remind them to answer the Who, What, When, Why, Where, and How questions in the newspaper article. If desired, publish a newspaper with all the newspaper articles.

RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Group Discussion Questions

- Marie worked as a team with her husband, Pierre, at the beginning. How does working as a team make things easier to accomplish? Do you like working as a team?
- Marie paid the ultimate sacrifice for her research and study. How was her life dedicated to mankind?

Written Response Questions

- Marie was the first woman to receive her doctorate degree in physics. What impact did this have on women in her time period and women in the future? What have women accomplished since Marie’s time?

Name _____ Date _____

Outline Form

Title: _____

I. _____

A. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

B. _____

1. _____

2. _____

II. _____

A. _____

1. _____

2. _____

B. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Conclusion: _____

Madame Marie Curie

BY SARAH KARTCHNER CLARK

A reader's theater with five parts



Reader 1: Maria Sklodowska, otherwise known as Madame Marie Curie, was born on November 7, 1867, in Warsaw, Poland.

Reader 2: Her family and friends nicknamed her Manya.

Reader 3: Maria's parents raised their children to be patriotic to the country of Poland, but patriotism proved to be harmful to the family.

Reader 4: By 1815, Russia controlled Poland. Maria's father was forced out of a good teaching position because of his beliefs and dedication to the family.

Reader 5: The family suffered great financial difficulties when he lost his job.

Reader 1: Because Maria's parents were teachers, they taught their five children themselves and taught the children to value education.

Reader 2: Before Maria was 11, her eldest sister died of typhus and her mother died of tuberculosis.

Reader 3: Despite these tragedies, Maria graduated from high school at the age of 15 with the highest honors.

Reader 4: Maria began to suffer from a nervous illness. Today, doctors would probably call it depression. She was very tired and did not feel like doing anything.

Reader 5: Maria's father sent her to the countryside to live with a cousin and to spend the year without any responsibilities or concerns in hopes that she would feel better.

Madame Marie Curie (cont.)

- Reader 1:** After recuperating for a year in the country, Maria returned to Warsaw. At this time, women were not permitted to study at the University of Warsaw.
- Reader 2:** So Maria and her older sister Bronya joined a “floating university.” Classes for the floating university were held at night so female students could avoid being caught by the Russian authorities.
- Reader 3:** Maria and her sister knew that to get a formal education, they would need to attend a university in Western Europe.
- Reader 4:** The two sisters made a pact. Maria would work as a governess to raise money for Bronya to attend the university.
- Reader 1:** When Bronya finished school, Bronya would work to raise money for Maria to attend school.
- Reader 5:** Bronya studied medicine. The owner of a beet sugar factory hired Maria to teach his children. Maria also taught some of the Polish peasant workers how to read.
- Reader 4:** If the Russian authorities found out she was teaching peasants to read, she would be punished.
- Reader 1:** Maria used her spare time to read and study. She found that she was good at physics, math, and chemistry.
- Reader 2:** The Russians didn't allow the Poles to learn laboratory science, but a chemist in the beet sugar factory gave Maria some lessons.
- Reader 3:** By 1889, Maria's father was earning a good living as the head of a reform school. Maria returned to Warsaw.
- Reader 5:** For two more years, Maria continued working to send money to Bronya and to raise money for her own schooling.

Madame Marie Curie (cont.)

Reader 4: During the evenings and on Sundays, she studied in secret at an illegal lab that trained Polish scientists. This lab was called the “museum.”

Reader 5: At 24, Maria had earned enough money to go to the university.

Reader 3: She said farewell to her father and promised to return to Poland one day.

Reader 1: Maria had barely enough money to cover tuition, rent, and a little bit of food.

Reader 4: She also changed her name to Marie from Maria, which was the French version of her name.

Reader 2: Marie was not as well prepared as her fellow students, but she worked and studied very hard to make up the difference.

Reader 3: In just three years, she managed to get a master's degree in math and physics.

Reader 4: She focused so hard on her studies that at times she forgot to eat.

Reader 5: Marie's hard work paid off. She received a scholarship and a job.

Reader 3: The Society for the Encouragement of National Industry hired her to research the magnetic properties of steel.

Reader 1: To do this, Marie needed a laboratory.

Reader 2: The Laboratory Chief at the Paris Municipal School of Industrial Physics and Chemistry was named Pierre Curie. His lab was not one of the best, but he allowed Marie to work there.

Madame Marie Curie (cont.)

Reader 1: Pierre was ten years older than Marie and had already made some important scientific discoveries on magnetism and crystals. But he had not done the work necessary to complete a doctoral thesis.

Reader 4: A relationship between Pierre and Marie was blossoming.

Reader 2: Pierre convinced Marie to stay in Paris to continue her studies in science, and Marie convinced Pierre to finish the necessary research to earn his doctoral degree.

Reader 5: Pierre and Marie were married in July of 1895. Marie finished her research on the magnetism of steel.

Reader 4: Two years later, they had their first daughter, Irene.

Reader 3: Pierre's father, a retired doctor, moved in to help care for Irene. Marie and Pierre had a second daughter, Eve.

Reader 1: Marie began searching for a subject in which she could earn her doctoral degree in science.

Reader 5: No woman had ever received such a degree before.

Reader 2: Marie decided to study uranium rays. She was intrigued by what she discovered.

Reader 3: Marie and Pierre began to research radioactive substances. Together, they discovered two radioactive elements: radium and polonium.

Reader 4: In 1903, the Curies won the Nobel Prize for Physics as a result of this discovery.

Reader 5: They shared this award with another physicist, Henri Becquerel, from France.

Madame Marie Curie (cont.)

- Reader 1:** Three years later, Pierre was run over by a horse drawn carriage and killed instantly. He had been ill for some time and was weak from exposure to radiation over long periods of time.
- Reader 2:** Less than a month after the funeral, Marie resumed her work and was named the first woman professor at the Sorbonne.
- Reader 3:** After years of more study, Madame Marie Curie won the 1911 Nobel Prize in chemistry for isolating radium and identifying its chemical properties.
- Reader 4:** When World War I broke out, Marie thought x-rays, using the radium, would help doctors locate bullets.
- Reader 5:** She invented x-ray vans and trained 150 female attendants.
- Reader 1:** On July 4, 1934, Madame Curie died at the age of 67 from leukemia, a disease thought to have been acquired through exposure to high levels of radiation.
- Reader 2:** Marie did not live to see her daughter, Irene, and her son-in-law, Frederic Joliot-Curie, receive the Nobel Prize for the discovery of artificial radioactivity.
- Reader 3:** After her death, the Radium Institute was renamed the Curie Institute in Marie's honor.
- Reader 4:** Marie dedicated her life to science.
- Reader 5:** Her discoveries set the groundwork for many other new discoveries in the future.
- Reader 1:** Her dedication, commitment, and hard work are an example to students everywhere!