

## Winston Churchill



Winston Churchill is one of the best-known, and some say one of the greatest, statesmen of the 20th century. Though he was born into a life of privilege, he dedicated himself to public service. His legacy is a complicated one—he was an idealist and a pragmatist; an orator and a soldier; an advocate of progressive social reforms and an unapologetic elitist; a defender of democracy as well as of Britain’s fading empire—but for many people in Great Britain and elsewhere, Winston Churchill is simply a hero. Winston Churchill's life was a trajectory of events leading to his stand against Adolph Hitler's threat to control Europe. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Churchill helped lead a successful Allied strategy with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and General Secretary Joseph Stalin during WWII to defeat the Axis powers and craft post-war peace.

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### **Where & when born**

Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill was born to an aristocratic family on November 30, 1874 at Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, England

### **Brief history of the person**

From age two to six, Winston Churchill lived in Dublin, where his grandfather had been appointed Viceroy and employed Churchill's father as his private secretary. Churchill's earliest exposure to education occurred in Dublin. Independent and rebellious by nature, Churchill was educated at three independent schools. He did poorly at his first two schools and in April, 1888, he was sent to Harrow School, a boarding school near London. Within weeks of his enrollment, he joined the Harrow Rifle Corps, which put him on a path to a military career.

Winston never even made it into the upper school because he would not study the classics. Though he did poorly in his schoolwork, he grew to love the English language. He hated Harrow. At first it didn't seem the military was a good choice for Churchill. It took him three tries to pass the exam for the British Royal Military College. Churchill was rarely visited by his mother, and wrote letters begging her either to come to the school or to allow him to come home. His relationship with his father was distant; he once remarked that they barely spoke to one another. His father died on 24 January 1895, aged 45, leaving Churchill with the conviction that he too would die young and so should be quick about making his mark on the world.

Churchill had a lateral lisp that continued throughout his career, reported consistently by journalists of the time and later. After many years of public speeches carefully prepared not only to inspire, but also to avoid hesitations, he could finally state, "My impediment is no hindrance"

Churchill enjoyed a brief but eventful career in the British army at a zenith of British military power. He joined the Fourth Hussars in 1895 and served in the Indian northwest frontier and the Sudan, where he saw action in the Battle of Omdurman in 1898. While in the army, he wrote military reports for newspapers *The Pioneer* and the *Daily Telegraph*, and two books on his experiences, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898) and *The River War* (1899).



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In 1899, Churchill left the army and worked as a war correspondent for the *Morning Post*, a conservative daily newspaper. While reporting on the Boer War in South Africa, he was taken prisoner by the Boers while on a scouting expedition. He made headlines when he escaped, traveling almost 300 miles to Portuguese territory in Mozambique. Upon his return to Britain, he wrote about his experiences in the book *London to Ladysmith* (1900). In 1908 he married Clementine Ogilvy Hozier, after a short courtship.

At the forefront of politics for fifty years, he held many political and cabinet positions. Before the First World War, he served as President of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary, and First Lord of the Admiralty as part of Asquith's Liberal government. During the war, he continued as First Lord of the Admiralty until the disastrous Gallipoli Campaign caused his departure from government. He then briefly resumed active army service on the Western Front as commander of the 6th Battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. He returned to government as Minister of Munitions, Secretary of State for War, and Secretary of State for Air. In 1921–1922 Churchill served as Secretary of State for the Colonies, then Chancellor of the Exchequer in Baldwin's Conservative government of 1924–1929, controversially returning the pound sterling in 1925 to the gold standard at its pre-war parity, a move widely seen as creating deflationary pressure on the UK economy. Also controversial were his opposition to increased home rule for India and his resistance to the 1936 abdication of Edward VIII.

Out of office and politically "in the wilderness" during the 1930s, Churchill took the lead in warning about Nazi Germany and in campaigning for rearmament. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he was again appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. Following the resignation of Neville Chamberlain on 10 May 1940, Churchill became Prime Minister. His steadfast refusal to consider surrender helped inspire British resistance, especially during the difficult early days of the war when the British Commonwealth and Empire stood alone in its active opposition to Adolf Hitler. Churchill was particularly noted for his speeches and radio broadcasts, which helped inspire the British people. He led Britain as Prime Minister until victory over Nazi Germany had been secured.

After the Conservative Party lost the 1945 election, he became Leader of the Opposition to the Labour Government. He publicly warned of an "Iron Curtain" of Soviet influence in Europe and promoted European unity. After winning the 1951 election, Churchill again became Prime Minister. His second term was preoccupied by foreign affairs, including the Malayan Emergency, Mau Mau Uprising, Korean War, and UK-backed coup d'état in Iran. Domestically his government laid great emphasis on house-building and introduced safety and sanitation regulations for housing and workplaces. Churchill suffered a serious stroke in 1953 and retired as Prime Minister in 1955, although he remained a Member of Parliament until 1964.

On January 15, 1965, Churchill suffered a severe stroke that left him gravely ill. He died at his London home nine days later, at age 90, on January 24, 1965. Upon his death aged ninety in 1965, Elizabeth II granted him the honour of a state funeral, which saw one of the largest assemblies of world statesmen in history. Named the Greatest Briton of all time in a 2002 poll, Churchill is widely regarded as being among the most



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influential people in British history, consistently ranking well in opinion polls of Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom.

### **Career in Political & Military**

In 1900, Churchill became a Member of Parliament in the Conservative Party for Oldham, a town in Manchester. Following his father into politics, he also followed his father's sense of independence, becoming a supporter of social reform. Unconvinced that the Conservative Party was committed to social justice, Churchill switched to the Liberal Party in 1904. He was elected a Member of Parliament in 1908, and was appointed to the Prime Minister's Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade.

As president of the Board of Trade, he joined newly appointed Chancellor Lloyd George in opposing the expansion of the British Navy. Also in 1908, he introduced several reforms for the prison system, introduced the first minimum wage, and helped set up labor exchanges for the unemployed and unemployment insurance. Churchill assisted in the passing of the People's Budget, which introduced new taxes on the wealthy to pay for new social welfare programs. The budget passed the House of Commons in 1909, but was initially defeated in the House of Lords, before being passed in 1910. He also drafted a controversial piece of legislation to amend the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913, mandating sterilization of the feeble-minded. The bill eventually passed both Houses with only the remedy of confinement in institutions.

In January 1911, Churchill showed his tougher side when he made a controversial visit to a police siege in London. Police had surrounded a house where two robbers had been caught. Churchill's degree of participation is still in some dispute. The house caught fire during the siege and Churchill prevented the fire brigade from extinguishing the flames, later the bodies of the two robbers were found inside the charred ruins.

While serving as First Lord of the Admiralty since 1911, Churchill helped modernize the British Navy, ordering that new warships be built with oil-fired instead of coal-fired engines. He was one of the first to promote military aircraft and set up the Royal Navy Air Service. So enthusiastic was he about aviation that he took flying lessons to understand firsthand its military potential. Though not directly involved in the disastrous Battle of Gallipoli, Churchill resigned his post because he felt responsible for proposing the expedition. For a brief period, he rejoined the British Army commanding a battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers on the Western Front and seeing action in "no man's land." In 1917, he was appointed Minister of Munitions for the final year of the war, overseeing the production of tanks, airplanes and munitions.

From 1919 to 1922, Churchill served as Minister of War and Air and Colonial Secretary under Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Fractures in the Liberal Party led to the defeat of Churchill as a Member of Parliament in 1922, and he rejoined the Conservative Party. He served as Chancellor of the Exchequer, returning Britain to the gold standard, and took a hard line against a general labor strike that threatened to cripple the British



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economy. With the defeat of the Conservative government in 1929, Churchill was out of government. He was perceived as a right-wing extremist, who was out of touch with the people. He spent the next few years concentrating on his writing and published A History of English Speaking People.

Though not at first seeing the threat that Adolph Hitler posed when he rose to power in 1933, Churchill gradually became a leading advocate for British rearmament. By 1938, as Germany began controlling its neighbors, Churchill had become a staunch critic of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement toward the Nazis. On September 3, 1939, the day that Britain declared war on Germany, Churchill was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty and a member of the War Cabinet, and by April, 1940, he became chairman of the Military Coordinating Committee.

As the world war II wound down, Churchill proposed plans for social reforms in Britain, but was unable to convince the public. Perhaps seeing him only as a "war-time prime minister," he was defeated in the general election in July 1945.

During the next six years, Churchill became the Leader of the Opposition Party and continued to have an impact on world affairs. In March 1946, while on a visit to the United States, he made his famous "Iron Curtain" speech, warning of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe. He also advocated that Britain remain independent from European coalitions and maintain its independence.

After the general election of 1951, Churchill returned to government. He was appointed Minister of Defense between October 1951 and January 1952, and became prime minister in October 1951. In 1953, Churchill was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.

He introduced various reforms such as the Mines and Quarries Act of 1954, improving working conditions in mines, and the Housing Repairs and Rent Act of 1955, establishing standards for housing. These domestic reforms were overshadowed by a series of foreign policy crisis in the colonies of Kenya and Malaya, where Churchill ordered direct military action. While successful in putting down the rebellions, it became clear that Britain was no longer able to sustain its colonial rule

Churchill had shown signs of fragile health as early as 1941, while visiting the White House. At that time, he suffered a mild heart attack and, in 1943, he had a similar attack while battling a bout of pneumonia. In June 1953, at age 78, he suffered from a series of strokes at his office, located at 10 Downing Street. The news was kept from the public and Parliament, with the official announcement stating that he had suffered from exhaustion. He recuperated at home, and returned to his work as prime minister in October. However, it was apparent even to him that he was physically and mentally slowing down. Churchill retired as prime minister in 1955. He remained a Member of Parliament until the general election of 1964, when he did not seek re-election.



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Despite his poor health, Churchill was able to remain active in public life, albeit mostly from the comfort of his homes in Kent and Hyde Park Gate, in London.

### Leadership qualities

**1. Leaders Are Self-Created.** Winston Churchill was anything but a “self-made man.” He was born to the aristocracy at Blenheim Palace. Nonetheless, as much as anyone could be, he was *self-created*. He transcended numerous limitations—from an unprepossessing physical endowment to a distracting speech impediment—transforming himself into the heroic mold conjured in his romantic imagination.

This process of self-creation never ended. He was continually evolving in significant ways, not held back by the needs for predictability and consistency that limit so many others. This also enabled him to recover from setbacks that most would have accepted as career-ending.

**2. Courage is the First Virtue.** If people were asked to describe Churchill in one word, who can doubt that *courage* would be the anticipated response?

In common with many other effective leaders, he exhibited courage in numerous ways. His career intertwined service as a soldier, a writer, and a politician. The disparate strands were braided tightly in his ultimate contribution, as warlord of the British Empire in the Second World War. His courage continued through his final premiership, in the 1950s, when he sought to broker improved relations between the United States and Soviet Union.

All of his accomplishments can be comprehended as arising from a shared root of courage—advanced through a related trait: audacity.

**3. Vision Can be Transmitted Faithfully through a Romantic Lens.** From youth, Churchill experienced the world as a cavalcade of heroes and heroines, of pageantry and ritual, of bright colors and vivid renderings. Some of this doubtless arose from the great loneliness he experienced, feeling neglected if not abandoned by a beautiful, vivacious mother and a mercurial, doomed father. His romantic inclinations are also seen in his description of his marriage to the formidable Clementine Hozier Churchill.

**4. Insight is Superior to Intellect.** Winston Churchill stands as an irrefutable monument to the power of Albert Einstein’s dictum:

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.



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Churchill was not university educated. He was nonetheless highly learned, largely self-directed. As a result, his thought processes were not limited by convention. His boundless curiosity and capacity for fascination were not wrested into compliance and conventionality by pedants.

He was notably gifted with insight. His variety of worldly experiences expanded it. His temperament, fortified with the assurance of an aristocrat who reached adulthood during the apogee of the British Empire, impelled him to express his often unexpected points of view.

**5. Apply History to Illuminate the Present and Future.** Like Theodore Roosevelt (whom he resembled in many ways), Churchill was obsessed with history. He frequently turned to historical events and characters as if they were at his side. In fact, one might well say that they *were* at his side, coursing through the currents of his preternaturally active mind and imagination. Even as the emerging destiny of Churchill's political project—protecting the survival of the British Empire—stirred his forebodings, his immersion in history enabled him to see far into the future. It made him relentlessly adaptive and innovative—qualities not generally associated with a fundamentally conservative vision.

**6. Master the Written Word.** Churchill's early encounters with formal education were in large part unsatisfactory. Nonetheless, it soon emerged that he had gifts of memorization and writing—when his interest and passion were engaged. His project of self-education included exposure to great English writers. Echoes of Macaulay and Gibbon ring throughout his highly crafted books, essays, and speeches.

Churchill's recognizable writing style at once reflected his thinking, refined it—and, at times, may have hijacked it toward unexpected destinations.

**7. Master the Spoken Word.** It is as a speaker that Churchill achieved his greatest leadership influence. As President Kennedy said, Churchill “mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.”

Churchill acknowledged that he was not an orator. He meant that he was not a speaker, such as David Lloyd George, who could connect deeply with a live audience, receiving and responding to their rising emotions. One wonders if this was a lingering result of his hard-earned triumph over a distracting lisp and the concomitant self-consciousness it inevitably engendered.

By contrast, Churchill prepared extensively, speaking to his audiences with methodically crafted ideas and writing. Many of his legendary witticisms turn out, on inspection, to have been premeditated rather than impromptu. The value was created largely in the interplay of Churchill's evolving thoughts and words as he drafted the speech, rather than in the interplay of his relationship with an audience during presentation.

He customarily dictated his writing. He referred to this as living “from mouth to hand.”



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**8. Summon Unconquerable Grit in Oneself—as a Prelude to Inspiring Others.** One might be thinking of resilience as a notable aspect of Churchill's life and work, though one imagines that he might incline toward a simple, clear, onomatopoeic descriptor such as *grit*.

Churchill's journey of self-creation and self-assertion was marked by ever-greater examples of determination against all odds, against polite and expert opinion—sometimes in the face of rationality itself. The trials and errors might well have been viewed as constituting a failed career—had not fate summoned him to formal leadership in the struggle against Hitler in 1940.

**9. Embrace Exuberance.** Churchill battled depressive episodes throughout his life. According to Anthony Storr and others, this was an impetus for his ceaseless activity. Idleness was to be avoided at all costs. So, too, it may lay behind other personality traits, such as his predilection for stimulating company—even as it rendered him vulnerable to mountebanks in his midst.

He embraced exuberance as a fuel for his enthusiasm, which could then be transmitted to others.

In the struggle against Hitler, Churchill was able to combine the bracing realism of the pessimist with the indomitable optimism required to rouse the dispirited, demoralized people he served. His was not the easy optimism of one who had never known failure or misfortune. Rather, it was the hard-earned optimism of one who had proven that he could take a devastating punch—and, against all odds, pull himself off the mat.

**10. Live and Lead as an Artist.** Churchill epitomizes the leader as performance artist. He strode the world stage with others who were consciously artistic in their approach, including Franklin Roosevelt, de Gaulle, and Hitler.

According to some, his writing may have been, in part, an artistic response to his tendency to depression. Whatever the wellsprings, the results were spectacular. Late in life, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

### **Critical moments of independence, struggle, war etc.**

When Winston Churchill served as Colonial Secretary, he ordered air power be used on rebellious Kurdish tribesmen in Iraq, a British holding. At one point, he suggested that poisonous gas be used to put down the rebellion. This proposal was considered but never enacted, though the conventional bombing campaign was and failed to end the resistance.

In May 1940, Germany invaded and occupied Norway, which was a setback for Neville Chamberlain, who had resisted Churchill's proposal that Britain pre-empt German aggression by unilaterally occupying vital Norwegian iron mines and sea ports. In the same month, the debate in Parliament on the Norwegian crisis led to a vote of no confidence toward Prime Minister Chamberlain. On May 10, King George VI appointed





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Churchill as prime minister and Minister of Defense. Within hours, the German Army began its Western Offensive, invading the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Two days later, German forces entered France. Britain stood alone against the onslaught.

Quickly, Churchill formed a coalition cabinet of leaders from the Labor, Liberal and Conservative parties. He placed intelligent and talented men in key positions. On June 18, 1940, Churchill made one of his iconic speeches to the House of Commons, warning that "the Battle of Britain" was about to begin. Churchill kept resistance to Nazi dominance alive, and created the foundation for an alliance with the United States and the Soviet Union. Churchill had previously cultivated a relationship with U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s, and by March 1941, was able to secure vital U.S. aid through the Lend Lease Act, which allowed Britain to order war goods from the United States on credit.

After the United States entered World War II, in December 1941, Churchill was confident that the Allies would eventually win the war. In the months that followed, Churchill worked closely with U.S. President Roosevelt and Soviet Union leader Joseph Stalin to forge an Allied war strategy and post-war world. In meetings in Teheran (1943), Yalta (February 1945) and Potsdam (July 1945), Churchill collaborated with the two leaders to develop a united strategy against the Axis Powers, and helped craft the post-war world with the United Nations as its centerpiece.

### **Principles & Practices**

Winston Churchill exemplified key leadership skills during his reign as the Prime Minister of Britain during the 1940's and 1950's. Through the study of leadership theories it can be ascertained Winston Churchill portrayed a number of characteristics, traits and behaviours of a charismatic / transformational leader. His charismatic leadership traits enabled him to adopt a vision and concentrate on the bigger picture, which enabled him to claim victory for his nation. Churchill was able to perform his duties democratically and not as a totalitarian dictator. To be an exceptional leader one must have strong communication skills. When much of Britain was in despair, he excelled and through his inspirational speeches, encouraged people to have faith in him. By using simple, but precise language he was able to deliver effective speeches to his nation that all could understand, thus the people of Britain could identify with him and trust his vision. This enabled him to achieve the goals of the country and lead a democratic nation to victory over Nazi Germany. Much can be learnt from his strong communication skills, innovation and trustworthiness that made him one of the great leaders in history. He was and still is a true inspiration to others and his principles are still relevant today in our uncertain climate as they were more than 60 years ago. As Churchill said "History will be kind to me as I intend to write it".

### **Awards and achievements**

- Churchill was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) in 1941
- In 1953, Churchill received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his numerous published works, especially his six-volume set The Second World War.
- In 1963, Churchill was named an Honorary Citizen of the United States by Public Law



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**Literary Works**

*History*

- *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898);
- *The River War* (1899);
- *The World Crisis*(1923–29);
- *The Unknown War: The Eastern Front* (1931);
- *The Second World War*(1948–53);
- *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (1956–58).

*Biography and autobiography*

- *Lord Randolph Churchill* (1906); *My African Journey* (1908);
- *My Early Life* (1930);
- *Marlborough: His Life and Times* (1933–38).

**Sources**

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