

## AMERICAN, BRITISH AND SOUTH AFRICAN ICONS

### Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady

#### Task 1: INTRODUCTION

Talk to your partner and discuss the following questions:

1. Have you heard of any famous women in politics?
2. Do you know names of any British politicians?
3. What do you know about Margaret Thatcher?

#### Task 2: READING AND VOCABULARY

Read the text below and write 3 questions for each paragraph. Don't worry if you don't understand all the words.

##### **Margaret Hilda Thatcher, Baroness**

**Thatcher**, (née **Roberts**; 13 October 1925 – 8 April 2013) was a British stateswoman who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990 and Leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990. She was the longest-serving British prime minister of the 20th century and the first woman to hold that office. A Soviet journalist dubbed her the **Iron Lady**, a nickname that became associated with her uncompromising politics and leadership style. As Prime Minister, she implemented policies known as Thatcherism.

A research chemist at Somerville College, Oxford, before becoming a barrister, Thatcher was elected Member of Parliament for Finchley in 1959. Edward Heath appointed her Secretary of State for Education and Science in his Conservative government. In 1975, Thatcher defeated Heath in the Conservative Party leadership election to become Leader of the Opposition, the first woman to lead a major political party in the United Kingdom. She became Prime Minister after winning the 1979 general election.

Thatcher introduced a series of economic policies intended to reverse high unemployment and Britain's struggles in the wake of the Winter of Discontent and an ongoing recession. Her political philosophy and economic policies emphasised deregulation (particularly of the financial sector), flexible labour markets, the privatisation of state-owned companies, and reducing the power and influence of trade unions. Thatcher's popularity in her first years in office waned amid recession and rising unemployment, until victory in the 1982 Falklands War and the recovering economy brought a resurgence of support, resulting in her decisive re-election in 1983. She survived an assassination attempt in the Brighton hotel bombing in 1984.

Thatcher was re-elected for a third term in 1987, but her subsequent support for the Community Charge ("poll tax") was widely unpopular, and her views on the European Community were not shared by others in her Cabinet. She resigned as Prime Minister and party leader in November 1990, after Michael Heseltine launched a challenge to her leadership. After retiring from the Commons in 1992, she was given a life peerage as Baroness Thatcher (of Kesteven in the County of Lincolnshire) which entitled her to sit in the House of Lords. In 2013, she died of a stroke in London at the age of 87.

Always a controversial figure, she is nonetheless viewed favorably in historical rankings of British prime ministers, and her tenure constituted a realignment towards neoliberal policies in the United Kingdom; despite the passage of time, debate over the complicated legacy of Thatcherism persists.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Thatcher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Thatcher)

### **Task 3: READING AND SPEAKING**

Work in pairs. Ask your questions to your partner and answer their questions. You can ask and answer questions on paragraph 1 and then move to the next paragraph and so on.

### **Task 4: DISCUSSION**

How was Margaret Thatcher seen by the British people in the light of the following decisions or events?

1. economic policies intended to reverse high unemployment
2. Britain's recession
3. deregulation (particularly of the financial sector)
4. flexible labour markets
5. privatisation of state-owned companies
6. reducing the power and influence of trade unions
7. Falklands War

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#### Teachers' Notes

These activities have been designed for upper-intermediate and advanced students to be used before the event as an introduction and a way of getting students interested in the subject.

The reading can be set for homework. If you do it in class, let students use their mobile phones to check terms they do not understand such as 'deregulation', or facts such as 'Falkland War'.