

# Eleanor Roosevelt

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt

Eleanor Roosevelt was born in 1884. She started doing social work in her late teens, as a volunteer in the slums of east New York. When she was 18 she met Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was then studying at Harvard. Though his mother was not in favor of the union, the two married after three years of courtship. They had been married for 16 years when Franklin contracted polio, a crippling disease which left him in a wheelchair. Eleanor was instrumental in helping him adjust to his disability, and encouraged him to return to public life.

During this time, Eleanor taught literature and American history in New York, but she was becoming more and more involved in local and state politics. She worked in the New York Democratic party and campaigned for issues like women’s rights. Her political activism helped her husband win the presidency in 1932, as she influenced women and members of labor organizations to vote for him.

Roosevelt’s presidency took place during the Great Depression, when there was mass unemployment. Rather than staying in the background and tending to domestic matters, Eleanor was an outspoken first lady who made frequent public appearances. People respected her, and she was a role model for women whose lives, in those days, were mostly confined to the home.

During World War II, Eleanor supported the rights of black Americans to serve in a visible way in the military, and she supported civil rights generally. Franklin died in the final months of the war, and his successor appointed Eleanor as a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly. Eleanor helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by General Assembly on December 10, 1948, an act which she considered this her greatest achievement.

1. What were Eleanor Roosevelt’s early interests?

2. Who did Eleanor influence to vote for her husband for president in 1932?

- A. women
- B. African Americans
- C. members of labor unions
- D. A and C



3. How was Eleanor different from other first ladies?

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4. What did Eleanor consider her greatest achievement?

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