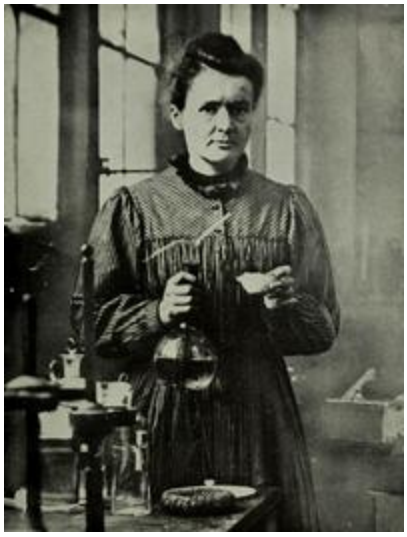
Marie Curie.

Published in: Salem Press Primary Encyclopedia, 2023, Topic Overviews K-5

Physicist

- **Born:** November 7, 1867
- **Birthplace:** Warsaw, Poland
- **Died:** July 4, 1934
- **Place of death:** Sancellemoz, near Sallanches, France

Marie Curie was a famous physicist, a scientist who studies matter, motion, and how things work. Everything we see, taste, touch, or smell is matter. Marie Curie and her husband, Pierre, discovered two new kinds of matter.



Portrait of Marie Curie. See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Her Life

Marie Curie was born Marie Sklodowska in 1867. Her family lived in Warsaw, Poland. She went to school there and learned science from her father. Her father was a high school teacher.

In 1891 Marie went to Paris, France to study at a famous university called the Sorbonne. Marie got a degree in physics, the study of matter, motion, and how things work. Very few women studied physics at that time. However, she got the highest score on the physics exam.

Marie met Pierre Curie at the Sorbonne. He was also a physicist. She married him in 1895. They worked together for the rest of their lives.

The Curies had two daughters. Their daughter Irène Joliot-Curie was also a famous scientist.

Her Work

Marie and Pierre Curie studied tiny parts of matter called atoms. They became interested in studying radiation in atoms. Radiation happens when matter in atoms is unstable, or when the matter in atoms can break apart easily. An unstable atom does not stay together. In an unstable atom, tiny pieces escape from the center (nucleus) of the atom. These pieces that are escaping from the atom are radiation.

Marie and Pierre Curie discovered radiation coming from material found in some rocks from the ground. This material was called uranium. Uranium was the first radioactive material (material containing radiation) to be discovered by anyone. In addition to uranium, the Curies found two new radioactive materials in the rock. These materials were named polonium and radium.

Together the Curies won the Noble Prize in physics in 1903 for their discoveries. The Nobel Prize is the most important award in science. Marie was the first woman ever to win a Nobel Prize.

Her husband Pierre died in 1906, but Marie kept on working. She won another Nobel Prize in 1911. She also helped show doctors how radiation could be used to help sick people. X-ray machines use radiation to see inside people's bodies.

Marie Curie died in 1934 at the age of 66.

Bibliography

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By Tina Posner

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