

# Winston Churchill

Churchill, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer (1874-1965), Great Britain's greatest 20th-century statesman, best known for his courageous leadership as prime minister during World War II.

Churchill, born November 30, 1874, was the eldest son of Lord Randolph Churchill and the American heiress Jennie Jerome. He graduated from the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, but having served in India and the Sudan he resigned his cavalry commission in 1899 to become a correspondent during the Boer War. A daring escape after he had been captured made him a national hero, and in 1900 he was elected to Parliament as a Conservative. Despite his aristocratic background, he switched in 1904 to the Liberal Party. In 1908 he became president of the Board of Trade in Herbert Henry Asquith's Liberal cabinet. Then, and later as home secretary (1910-11), he worked for special reform in tandem with David Lloyd George. As first lord of the admiralty (1911-15), Churchill was a vigorous modernizer of the navy.

## World War I and the Interwar Period

Churchill's role in World War I was controversial and almost destroyed his career. Naval problems and his support of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign forced his resignation from the admiralty. Following service as a battalion commander in France, he joined Lloyd George's coalition cabinet, and from 1917 to 1922 he filled several important positions, including minister of munitions and secretary for war. The collapse of Lloyd George and the Liberal Party in 1922 left Churchill out of Parliament between 1922 and 1924. Returning in 1924, he became chancellor of the Exchequer in Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government (1924-29). As such he displayed his new conservatism by returning Britain to the gold standard and vigorously condemning the trade unions during the general strike of 1926. During the depression years (1929-39) Churchill was denied cabinet office. Baldwin and later Neville Chamberlain, who dominated the national government from 1931 to 1940-disliked his opposition to self-government for India and his support of Edward VIII during the abdication crisis of 1936. His insistence on the need for rearmament and his censure of Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler at Munich in 1938 also aroused suspicion. When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, however, Churchill's views were finally appreciated, and public opinion demanded his return to the admiralty.

Was Churchill born in a ladies bathroom?

There is quite a bit of speculation about exactly WHERE Winston Churchill was born. Contrary to the rumor, he was not born in a ladies bathroom during a dance. He WAS born in a home where a dance was held, however, it was held three days prior to his birth, which took place in a downstairs bedroom. Now quit telling people that. It's wrong!

Churchill as Prime Minister

Churchill succeeded Chamberlain as prime minister on May 10, 1940. During the dark days of World War II that followed-Dunkerque, the fall of France, and the blitz-Churchill's pugnacity and rousing speeches rallied the British to continue the fight. He urged his compatriots to conduct themselves so that, "if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'" By successful collaboration with President Franklin D. Roosevelt he was able to secure military aid and moral support from the United States. After the Soviet Union and the U.S. entered the war in 1941, Churchill established close ties with leaders of what he called the "Grand Alliance." Traveling ceaselessly throughout the war, he did much to coordinate military strategy and to ensure Hitler's defeat. His conferences with Roosevelt and Stalin, most notably at Yalta in 1945, also shaped the map of postwar Europe. By 1945 he was admired throughout the world, his reputation disguising the fact that Britain's military role had become secondary. Unappreciative of the popular demands for postwar social change, however, Churchill was defeated by the Labour Party in the election of 1945. Churchill criticized the "welfare state" reforms of Labour under his successor Clement Attlee. He also warned in his "Iron Curtain" speech in Fulton, Missouri, in 1946, of the dangers of Soviet expansion. He was prime minister again from 1951 to 1955, but this time age and poor health prevented him from providing dynamic leadership. Resigning in 1955, Churchill devoted his last years to painting and writing. He died on January 24, 1965, at the age of 90. Following a state funeral he was buried at Bladon near Blenheim Palace. Churchill was also an able historian. His most famous works are *The World Crisis* (4 vol., 1923-29), *My Early Life* (1930), *Marlborough* (4 vol., 1933-38), *The Second World War* (6 vol., 1948-53), and *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (4 vol., 1956-58). He received the Nobel Prize for literature and a knighthood in 1953.

Assessment

Churchill's death in 1965, like that of Queen Victoria in 1901, marked the end of an era in British history. Born into a

Victorian aristocratic family, he witnessed and participated in Britain's transformation from empire to welfare state, and its decline as a world power. His true importance, however, rests on the fact that by sheer stubborn courage he led the British people, and with them, the democratic Western world, from the brink of defeat to a final victory in the greatest conflict the world has ever seen.

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Churchill Quotes

.... You ask, What is our policy? I will say; "It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us: to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy." You ask, What is our aim? I can answer with one word: Victory - victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.

In the course of my life I have often had to eat my words, and I must confess that I have always found it a wholesome diet.

Although prepared for martyrdom, I preferred that it be postponed.

It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.

I like pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals.

We are all worms, but I do believe I am a Glow Worm.

In war, resolution; in defeat, defiance; in victory magnanimity; in peace, goodwill.

There is nothing more exhilarating than to be shot at without result.

A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject.

My wife and I tried to breakfast together, but we had to stop or our marriage would have been wrecked.

It's a good thing for an uneducated man to read books of quotations.

MacDonald has the gift of compressing the largest amount of words into the smallest amount of thoughts.

I have taken more out of alcohol than alcohol has taken out of me.

If you go on with this nuclear arms race, all you are going to do is make the rubble bounce.

[He] looks at foreign affairs through the wrong end of a municipal drainpipe. (of Chamberlain)

Who will relieve me of this Wuthering Height (of Sir Stafford Cripps at a dinner party.)

If heaven is going to be full of people like Hardie, well, the Almighty can have them to himself. (of Keir Hardie)

There but for the grace of God goes God. (of Cripps)

It might be said that Lord Rosebery outlived his future by ten years and his past by more than twenty.

History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.

[On recognizing China] But if you recognize anyone it does not mean you like them. For instance, we all recognize the right honorable gentleman the member for Ebbw Vale. (on Mr Bevan)

I gather, young man, that you wish to be a Member of Parliament. The first lesson that you must learn is, when I call for statistics about the rate of infant mortality, what I want is proof that fewer babies died when I was Prime Minister than when anyone else was Prime Minister. That is a political statistic.

I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.

Don't talk to me about Naval tradition. It's nothing but rum, sodomy, and the lash.

Everybody has a right to pronounce foreign names as he chooses.

We do not want to punish the landlord. We want to alter the law.

Men occasionally stumble on the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.