

Winston Churchill: A Man of Destiny [B2]

Bevitore accanito, pittore amatoriale e amico degli animali, era un oratore prodigioso, capace di arringare una nazione intera nei peggiori momenti della seconda guerra mondiale. Fra luci e ombre, questo militare e politico conservatore fu uno dei personaggi che segnarono il XX secolo.



One of the most significant figures in world history, Winston Churchill was born in November 1874 into a wealthy, aristocratic family in Oxfordshire. A [statesman](#), soldier and Nobel Prize-winning writer, he had a powerful personality and was a brilliant orator. Wartime Prime Minister from 1940 to 1945, when he [rallied](#) the country against Nazi Germany, and then after the war from 1951 to 1955, he was a Member of Parliament for more than sixty years, mostly in the Conservative Party.

FROM WAR TO POLITICS

As a young man, Churchill fought in the British army against the Boers in South Africa in the 1890s. He returned to Britain a hero and went into politics. Some years later, as [Home Secretary](#), he supported prison reform and workers' social security. In the First World War, now with war

responsibilities, he ordered the disastrous Gallipoli military campaign in p resent-day Turkey. Chastened, he returned to the army to fight. Another failure came in 1926 when, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he introduced economic changes which led to exports collapsing and a catastrophic general strike.

WILDERNESS YEARS

The 1930s were Churchill's Wilderness Years, when he was an irrelevant political figure. He wrote articles and made speeches, many calling for rearmament against Nazi Germany, to general ridicule. But World War Two began in September 1939 and by May 1940, Britain and its allies were losing the war. Churchill became Prime Minister and formed a coalition government. He was an inspirational leader. His self-confidence (he called himself "a man of destiny") and strong leadership helped take the country from near-defeat to glorious victory. His speeches stimulated British morale during periods of great hardship. He electrified Parliament with his very first speech: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

****Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent It . Ignorance may deride it. Malice may distort it. But there it is.****

COMPLEX CHARACTER

Churchill was a complex character. He suffered from depression (his "black dog"). An imperialist and monarchist, he could also be racist. Economically liberal, he was socially a conservative, but supported working-class rights. An animal lover, his pets included cats, dogs, pigs, goats and lambs. He was an excellent amateur painter and also a prolific writer, especially on World War Two: for his "mastery of historical and biographical description", he received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953. Another of his hobbies was bricklaying, strangely enough, and he was also a heavy drinker.

Personally, I am always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught.

THE IRON CURTAIN

Churchill spent much of the late 1940s and 1950s warning of Russia's "Iron Curtain" (his phrase) dividing Europe. He also promoted European unity. He was Prime Minister again from 1951 to 1955, but his powers were clearly [waning](#). He died on 24 January 1965 and received a state funeral. Huge, silent crowds [lined the streets](#) of London as his [coffin](#) passed by. They knew that Churchill, twenty years earlier, had played a major role in saving Britain from Nazi tyranny.

WATCH THIS VIDEO

È stato Primo ministro del Regno Unito dal 1940 al 1945 e poi di nuovo dal 1951 al 1955. Durante il suo primo mandato ha guidato il paese mentre era in corso la Seconda guerra mondiale, conclusasi con la vittoria del Regno Unito. In questo video ti raccontiamo la traiettoria politica di quello che è considerato il personaggio britannico più importante di tutti i tempi.

Glossary

- **collapsing** = collassare
- **bricklaying** = fare il muratore
- **coffin** = feretro
- **statesman** = statista
- **rallied** = mobilitare
- **to general ridicule** = oggetto di scherno generale
- **lined the streets** = riempire i lati delle strade
- **goats** = capre
- **present-day** = attuale
- **Chastened** = ammonito, castigato
- **general strike** = sciopero generale
- **Wilderness Years**, = anni nei quali un politico non è al potere (lett. anni selvatici)
- **hardship** = avversità
- **toil** = duro lavoro, fatica
- **resent** = infastidirsi
- **waning** = calare, diminuire
- **Home Secretary** = ministro degli Interni
- **failure** = fallimento
- **Chancellor of the Exchequer** = ministro del tesoro
- **self-confidence** = sicurezza di sé
- **deride** = deridere, prendersi gioco
- **lambs** = agnelli
- **heavy drinker** = bevitore accanito