

20th Century Superstar

Curie

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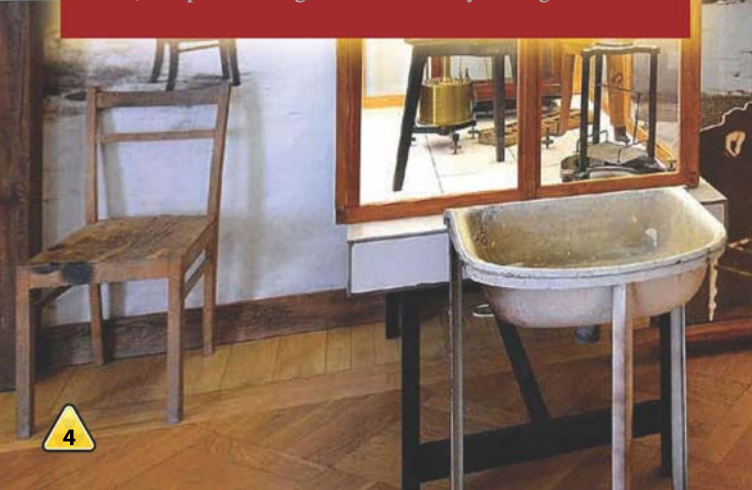
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Radioactive!

It's like something out of a science fiction movie. Her papers are kept in lead-lined containers. If you receive permission to study them firsthand, you must wear protective clothing. The fact is, the documents are highly **radioactive**. Exposure to them can be sickening—even deadly. Those who want to study the vast amount of paperwork left behind by the great twentieth century scientist, Marie Curie, must take great care not to follow her poisoned path to the grave.

The truth is, Curie is one of the most brilliant, important, and revolutionary scientists the world has ever known. She transformed the way people look at the world of energy and the resources available to us. But in doing so, she paid the ultimate price. She worked daily with radioactive materials, long before anyone knew their dangers. She took detailed notes of her observations and experiments, as a good scientist does. Little did she know, her painstaking work was slowly killing her.



Radioactivity

When something gives off energy, it produces **radiation**. For example, the sun radiates heat and light. Curie did not think *radiation* was the right word to describe the energy coming from substances she studied. She called it *radioactivity*. It is **generated** when the nuclei within the **atoms** of radioactive substances break down.



Marie Curie Museum
in Warsaw, Poland

1,500 Years

Many people think that the materials Curie left behind will stay radioactive for the next 1,500 years. These include her notebooks, clothing, and furniture. People who are allowed access to her notebooks must sign a **liability waiver**.

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