Eleanor Roosevelt

Pre-reading

Questions:

- Who was Eleanor Roosevelt? Where have you heard about her?

Definitions:

- Diphtheria – a serious disease that causes high fever and difficulty breathing
- Self-sufficient – independent, able to do things for oneself
- Genuine – sincere, real, or honest

Reading

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt was born in 1884. She was the oldest child of Elliot and Anna Hall Roosevelt. They were a wealthy couple with great social status. By the time Eleanor was ten, both her parents had died. Her mother died of diphtheria and her father died of excessive drinking.

Eleanor was sent to live with her maternal grandmother. She was strict and mindful of the proper way to do things. Eleanor had few social contacts and no friends her own age. It was a lonely and miserable life.

When she was fifteen, Eleanor was sent to an exclusive girls' school in London. At this school she met a kind and caring teacher who helped her grow in many ways. The teacher taught Eleanor how to be sociable and develop friendships. She also taught her how to be self-sufficient.

Eleanor returned to New York and went to work as a social worker in the city slums. She brought concern and caring to her vocation. She also became reacquainted with her distant cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Their friendship turned into love. They were married in 1905. They had six children, although one died in infancy.

As the wife of a politician, Eleanor enjoyed meeting and entertaining people. She had a genuine interest in others and the ability to put them at ease. These qualities became her trademark. She was well read and was a patient listener and intelligent observer.

In August of 1921 Franklin Roosevelt was stricken with polio and was paralyzed. He would never walk again. He went into a deep depression and feared that his political career had ended.

Eleanor was determined that Franklin would not give up politics. She vowed to become his legs. She toured the places he would have gone and reported back to him. She made speeches and learned to discuss ideas in political forums. In short, Eleanor became a politician in her own right.

In 1932 Franklin Roosevelt won what was to be the first of four bids for the U.S. Presidency. Through Franklin Roosevelt’s physical and political struggles, Eleanor remained strong and poised.

She was always a willing helpmate and gracious First Lady.

During World War II, Eleanor visited U.S. troops in Great Britain and on the front line in the South Pacific. It was the first time a First Lady had made such a voyage alone. Throughout her life, Eleanor Roosevelt was brilliant, patient and hard-working. She died in 1962.
Understanding

1. What was Eleanor Roosevelt’s first job? ____________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

2. For what traits was she well-known? ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

3. What is the title of wife of the U.S. President? ______________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

4. What effect did polio have on Franklin Roosevelt? _____________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

5. What effect did it have on Eleanor? _________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

6. Why was she considered “a politician in her own right”? ______________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

7. What does the word miserable mean? _______________________________________________
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Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.
Option B: Eleanor Roosevelt is admired by many. Write about a woman you admire. Does she share any of Eleanor’s qualities? If yes, which ones?

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