

THE WORLD NEEDS

Mothers



With their words, actions, and unconditional love, mothers have a profound influence on their children. They teach us, take care of us, and give us advice (wanted or unwanted!), and often provide a motherly presence for many others in their lives as well. To celebrate Mother's Day, here are some of the world's most inspiring moms.

"The carnation does not drop its petals, but hugs them to its heart as it dies, and so, too, mothers hug their children to their hearts, their mother love never dying."

— Anna Jarvis, the founder of Mother's Day in the United States, on why she picked a white carnation to represent Mother's Day.

Text: Chow Ee-Tan Images: Courtesy of iStockphoto

Only mothers are the best in the world'— goes a famous Chinese saying and a well-known children's song. Yes, a mother's love knows no bound.

A mother means much more than someone who has carried you in her womb and has given birth to you. Mothers nurture and support us from babies to adulthood. With their care, their words, and actions, mothers have a profound influence on their children. They teach us, guide us, give us advice, and they are always there for us throughout our lives.

A mother's love is said to be unconditional. Many mothers put their children before themselves. To offer their children the best while raising them, many mothers have to sacrifice their personal time while juggling their careers. And there are those mothers whose dedications extend beyond their families. Their love and caring ways tend to make a difference in the world around them.

To celebrate Mother's Day, we want to pay tribute and recognise the unsung heroines of our world. The list is not exhaustive but here are 10 of the most inspiring mothers from history and today.



Marie Curie



Irena Sendlerowa
Image Credit 1942/WikiCommons

GREAT MOTHERS IN HISTORY

Marie Curie

Marie Curie (1867-1934) was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, but she was also a wonderful and celebrated mother. She raised two young daughters, aged one month and eight years old, alone after her husband died in an accident in 1906. Her elder daughter Irène Joliot-Curie was a chemist like her and went on to co-win the Nobel Prize in Chemistry with her husband for their own work on radioactivity. Her younger daughter Ève was a journalist, famous for writing her mother's biography, *Madame Curie*.

Irène said that her mother instilled hard work and flexibility in her children. She was quoted: "That one must do some work seriously and must be independent and not merely amuse oneself in life—this our mother has told us always, but never that science was the only career worth following."

Irena Sendler

Irena Sendler (1910 - 2008) was a Polish social worker at the Warsaw Social Welfare Department who smuggled almost 2500 Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust, saving their lives. She gave the children false identification documents and temporary non-Jewish identities, hoping to reunite these children with their families after the war. In 1943, Sendler was caught by the Nazis and was tortured and sentenced to death. However, the Gestapo was bribed into forgiving her, and she survived the war.

During the remaining years of the war, she lived a hidden life, just like the children she rescued, and never relinquished a single piece of information about the whereabouts of the children she helped to escape. Sendler eventually married and had three children of her own. The brave social activist was honoured as the 2003 winner of the Jan Karski award for Valor and Courage. She lived to be nearly 100 years old.





Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams

As the wife of President John Adams, Abigail Smith Adams (1744 – 1818) was the second First Lady of the United States. Throughout her life, she was an incredible advocate for women. Because her husband was often away from home for work, she often single-handedly ran their farm, wrote letters supporting equal rights for women and the abolition of slavery. She was responsible in educating their five children into adulthood—including future president John Quincy Adams.

Quincy Adams wrote: "My mother was an angel upon earth. She was a minister of blessing to all human beings within her sphere of action. Her heart was the abode of heavenly purity... She was the real personification of female virtue—of piety, of charity, of ever active and never intermitting benevolence."

Hoelun

Famous as the mother of Genghis Khan, Hoelun (1142-1108) was known as the mother of all mothers belonging to the Oklhunuund tribe, a group of people known for their beauty. But since young, she survived getting kidnapped, widowhood, and being an outcast, to becoming the mother of one of the largest empires the world has ever known. Prior to her first marriage, she was kidnapped by Yesukhei, the chief of a minor and was forced to marry her captor. Several years later, Yesukhei was killed and Hoelun and her young children were kicked out of the clan, and barely survived on whatever they could forage. Eventually, one of her children with Yesukhei, Genghis Khan, became a great conqueror in history.

According to Frank McLynn in *Genghis Khan: His Conquests, His Empire, His Legacy*, Genghis was planning to execute his brother for treason and when Hoelun found out, she travelled to Genghis's headquarters, and begged Genghis to be merciful. Genghis eventually relented "because of his love and deference for his mother."



Hoelun
Image Credit: koizumiBS/
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NOTEWORTHY MOTHERS IN RECENT PAST

Indira Ghandi

As India's first female Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) worked to institute democracy and create jobs to combat food shortage. She was responsible for India's green revolution, which made the country self-sufficient and no longer reliant on imported grains. "Education is a liberating force, and in our age, it is also a democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and



Indira Ghandi
Image Credit
Yuri Turkov/Shutterstock

class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances," she was famously quoted.

She worked tirelessly to institute democracy and create jobs to combat food shortages. She also entrusted a sense of duty in her two sons, Rajiv and Sanjay Gandhi. Rajiv became the Prime Minister of India after his mother was assassinated in 1984. Indira Gandhi suffered the untimely deaths of her husband and one of her sons, but has since been honored for her strong connection to the poor.

Princess Diana

Diana, Princess of Wales (1961-1997) was well known and admired for being a compassionate royal figure who worked with many charities from supporting children's hospitals to raising awareness and combating landmines. Although she was always in the eye of the public, she tried to raise her two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry, to be as "normal" as possible. Princess Diana took being a mother very seriously and always made the effort to spend time with her sons. This desire to

be close to her children, rather than leaving them behind while she carried out her official role, was born out of her caring personality.

Princess Diana once said, "I live for my sons. I would be lost without them." Her legacy continues years after her death in 1997. Her oldest, Prince William, notably became a royal patron of a Child Bereavement charity. Speaking about Mother's Day, he once said: "I too have felt and still feel the emptiness on such a day as Mother's Day."

Lou Xiaoying

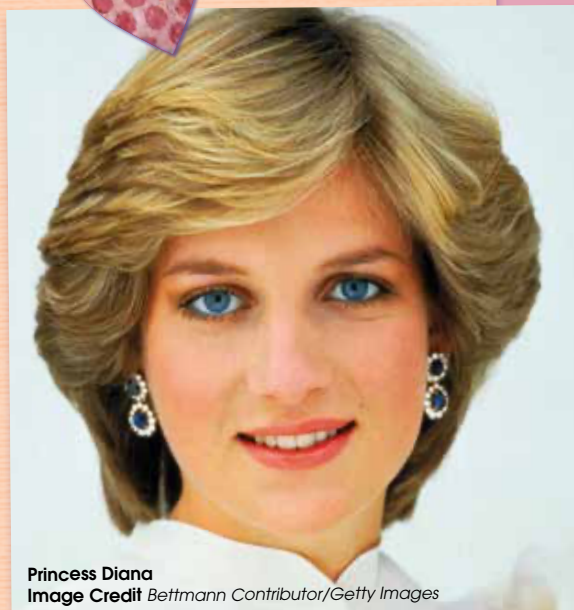
Lou Xiaoying (born 1924) was a poor, uneducated woman who supported herself by scavenging through the trash in Jinhua, China. From 1972 onwards, she began to rescue unwanted babies by adopting the babies she found in the trash—she is believed to have rescued more than 30 to date. Babies were being dumped in landfills and the like following the inception of China's Cultural Revolution, and later its one-child policy.

"These children need love and care. They are all precious human lives," said Lou, who had one biological daughter at the time she began rescuing infants, as she told the press in 2012. "I do not understand how people can leave such a vulnerable baby on the streets." She and her late husband personally raised four of the orphaned children while others were taken in by her family and friends. Her youngest son Zhang Qilin was found in a dustbin by Lou when she was 82.



*"A mother's arms
are more comforting
than anyone else's."*

— Princess Diana



Princess Diana
Image Credit Bettmann Contributor/Getty Images

INSPIRING MOTHERS OF TODAY



Angelina Jolie

Oscar-winning actress Angelina Jolie is one of the highest paid actresses in the world and a celebrated humanitarian but it's being a mother that she really feels is her main role. She has six children, three of whom she adopted. She once said, "I see myself as a mom first. I'm so lucky to have that role in life. The world can like me, hate me or fall apart around me and at least I wake up with my kids and I'm happy."

Jolie first got involved with humanitarian work for refugees and people displaced in 2000. She adopted her eldest son Maddox from Cambodia and eventually adopted two more children from Ethiopia and Vietnam. For her role as a UN Goodwill Ambassador, her ex-husband Brad Pitt told *The Wall Street Journal* that when she has a day off, "the first thing she does is get up and take the kids out. This is the most important 'to do' of the day. No matter how tired she might be, she plans outings for each and all." Jolie filed for divorce from Brad Pitt in 2016, and requested physical custody of all six kids.

"Sometimes, when I want to take on the world, I try to remember that it's just as important to sit down and ask my son how he's feeling or talk to him about life."

— Angelina Jolie

J.K. Rowling

J.K. Rowling wrote the first four Harry Potter books while she was a single mother living on state benefits. Today, we know her as one of the world's best-selling authors and also the world's first

billionaire author—but she has since given much of her money away to charity. She built her fortune up from virtually nothing—an inspirational mother if ever there was. She now serves as the president of Gingerbread, an organisation that works with single parents and their children find resources and programmes to help them succeed.

"I am prouder of my years as a single mother than of any other part of my life," Rowling said of that time and the work she put in. For Mother's Day 2016 in the UK, she tweeted: "Today is Mother's Day in the UK. If your mum isn't here to treat, do something nice for yourself, because she's part of you. Take a hug, too."



"Love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark ... to have been loved so deeply .. will give us some protection forever."

— J.K. Rowling



Michelle Obama
Image Credit
Nuamfolio/
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"I tell my kids, 'I am thinking about you every other minute of my day.'"

— Michelle Obama

Michelle Obama

Before becoming the first African-American first lady in 2009, Michelle Obama graduated from Princeton and Harvard Law and later practised law in Chicago, where she was born and raised. In the years leading up to her time in the White House, she worked at the University of Chicago Medical Centre as the vice president of community and external affairs while also raising her two daughters, Sasha and Malia.

When her husband assumed office in 2009, Michelle Obama said she decided to focus on her family. "The truth of the matter was that whether I'm the first lady and he's the president, our first job is to make sure that our kids are on point," she said. "That is the most important legacy we will ever leave." Indeed, she's a self-confessed mom-in-chief and made no secret of the fact her two daughters would always be her priority even when having to step into the role of First Lady. ☺

The Amazing Abilities of

Mothers

This Mother's Day, tell your mom what super power abilities you've noticed she uses! Most importantly tell her how much you love and appreciate her.

THE POWER TO RUN ON LITTLE OR NO SLEEP

Mothers don't actually sleep. Sometimes they appear to be sleeping but really, they are just lying down with their eyes closed, ready to spring into action the moment their child needs them.

THE POWER TO TELEPORT EVERYWHERE

Mothers have the uncanny ability to be in multiple places at once. They can nurse a newborn, spend their day at the office, run errands, hit the gym, pick up the kids, make dinner for the family, run a load of laundry, stitch clothes, pay bills, and more—all in one day!

THE POWER TO QUICKLY WHIP A MEAL

Regardless of their level of culinary experience, they sometimes know exactly what their kids like. Mothers have an unlimited variety of recipes that they use to make nutritious meals for the entire family.

THE POWER TO TAKE ON MULTIPLE FORMS

Mothers can change forms effortlessly, shifting between roles like nurse, story-teller, disciplinarian, corporate executive, coach, and more! There is no limit to the forms that mothers can take, and often they take on the form ideal for the current situation.

THE POWER TO LOVE AND ACT SELFLESSLY

Mothers have no fear of physical or emotional pain, difficulty, or stress. Instead, they are more concerned about what is best for their family. Mothers will put themselves in harm's way, if it means protecting their child. Family always comes first for mothers that their own safety is second.