

Shirley Chisholm

Shirley Chisholm was an American **politician, activist** and educator. In 1968, she became the first Black female member of **Congress** in the USA.

Childhood

Shirley Anita St. Hill was born on 30th November 1924 in New York City. Her father, Christopher, was a factory worker who was originally from Guyana. Her mother, Ruby, was a seamstress who was originally from Barbados.

When Shirley was five years old, she went to live in Barbados with her grandmother. During her time in Barbados, Shirley took her education seriously and she worked hard.

Education

Shirley returned to the USA and graduated from Girls' High School in Brooklyn in 1942. After that, she went on to study at Brooklyn College and she graduated in 1946 with very high scores.

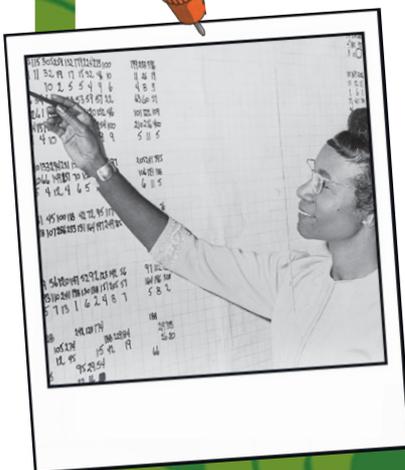
During her time at Brooklyn College, Shirley was part of a debate team. She was also part of a club which campaigned for race equality. Shirley's teachers thought that she should think about a career in **politics**. However, Shirley thought that being both female and Black would stop her from doing this because of prejudice and discrimination at this time.



Career

Shirley began her career as a nursery school teacher. While working, she earned a master's degree from Columbia University in 1951. This made her an expert in early childhood education and she used this knowledge to help schools across New York City.

Shirley knew that people in her community were experiencing racial and gender inequality. Because of this, she joined many groups which campaigned for equality.



Political Beginnings

In 1964, Shirley began her career in politics. Shirley campaigned for equality in many ways and set up schemes to help those who needed it.

Then, Shirley ran for a position in the United States Congress. She campaigned in her local area and called herself 'fighting Shirley Chisholm'. She showed how passionate she was about the causes she supported.



After defeating local competitors, Shirley was one of the final two candidates. It is reported that the other candidate said that Shirley would be unable to do the job because she was female. Shirley tore down this prejudice and she passionately explained how she could represent those, like herself, who had never been fairly represented before. 'Unbought and Unbossed' was her slogan.

Shirley used her fluency in English and Spanish to talk to voters – something which her opponent did not do. People believed in Shirley and she was elected with 67% of the votes. She became the first Black woman elected to the Congress.

As a congresswoman, Shirley introduced over 50 new laws and she actively campaigned for racial and gender equality. Because of her actions, Shirley is remembered as an influential activist who believed in equality for all.



Glossary

activist:	A person who campaigns to try to bring about change.
Congress:	Part of the government of the USA.
politician:	A person whose job it is to govern a country or area.
politics:	Activities that relate to governing a country or area.

Questions

1. What was Shirley's slogan? Tick one.

- Unbiased and Unbought
- Unbought and Unbossed
- Unbelievable and Unbought
- Unrelenting and Unbossed

2. What happened in Shirley's life in 1942? Tick one.

- Shirley began her career in politics.
- Shirley moved to Barbados.
- Shirley graduated from Girls' High School in Brooklyn.
- Shirley graduated from Brooklyn College.

3. Look at the section called **Career**.

Find and copy one word which shows that Shirley knew a lot about early childhood education.

4. What did Shirley earn in 1951?

5. **After defeating local competitors,...**

How else could the author have written this phrase?

6. Discuss how Shirley's experience on the debate team may have prepared her for a career in politics.

7. Initially, Shirley thought that being both female and Black would stop her from having a career in politics. Comment on how Shirley's belief changed.

8. Find one unique fact about Shirley and explain why this was special.

Answers

1. What was Shirley's slogan? Tick one.

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- Shirley graduated from Brooklyn College.

3. Look at the section called **Career**.

Find and copy one word which shows that Shirley knew a lot about early childhood education.

expert

4. What did Shirley earn in 1951?

Shirley earned a Master's degree from Columbia University in 1951.

5. **After defeating local competitors,...**

How else could the author have written this phrase?

Pupils' own responses, such as: After becoming more popular than other candidates,...

6. Discuss how Shirley's experience on the debate team may have prepared her for a career in politics.

Pupils' own responses, such as: When you are on a debate team, you have to argue in support of things that you believe in. As a politician, Shirley campaigned for things that she believed in. Being on a debate team might have helped her to learn how to do this.

7. Initially, Shirley thought that being both female and Black would stop her from having a career in politics. Comment on how Shirley's belief changed.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Shirley's belief changed because she still began a career in politics regardless of how she initially felt. She also became the first Black congresswoman in the USA which must have shown her that her initial beliefs were untrue.

8. Find one unique fact about Shirley and explain why this was special.

Pupils' own responses, such as: One unique thing about Shirley was that she spoke to voters in both English and Spanish. This was special because her opponent did not do this and this would have helped people to understand her views.

Shirley Chisholm

Shirley Chisholm was an American **politician, activist** and educator. In 1968, she became the first Black **congresswoman** in the USA.

Early Life

Shirley Anita St. Hill was born on 30th November 1924 in New York City. She was the eldest daughter of Charles Christopher St. Hill and Ruby Seale St. Hill. Shirley's father was a factory worker who was originally from Guyana and her mother was a seamstress who was originally from Barbados.

When Shirley was five years old, she began to live in Barbados with her grandmother. During her time in Barbados, Shirley took her education seriously and she worked hard.



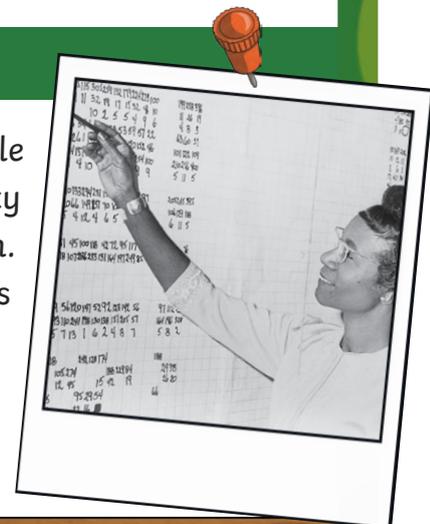
Further Education

Shirley returned to the USA and she graduated from Girls' High School in Brooklyn in 1942. She went on to study **sociology** at Brooklyn College, graduating in 1946 with remarkable scores.

During her time at Brooklyn College, Shirley was part of a debate team. She won many prizes for taking part. She was also part of a club which campaigned for race equality. Shirley's professors encouraged her to consider a career in **politics**. However, Shirley thought that being both female and Black would stop her from doing this because of prejudice and discrimination at this time.

Early Career

Shirley began her career as a nursery school teacher. While working, she earned a master's degree from Columbia University in 1951. This made her an expert in early childhood education. She used this knowledge to help schools and day care centres across New York City.



Alongside her work, Shirley was an active member of the community. She was aware of the racial and gender inequality that people in her community were experiencing. Because of this, she joined many groups which campaigned for equality.

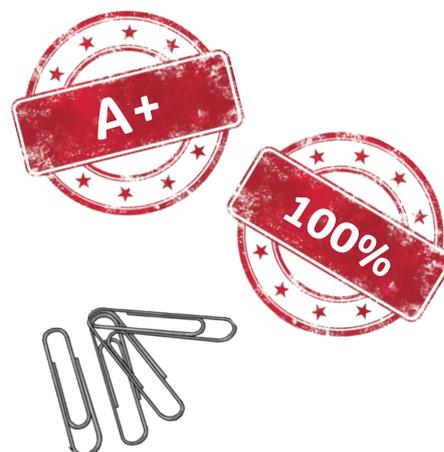
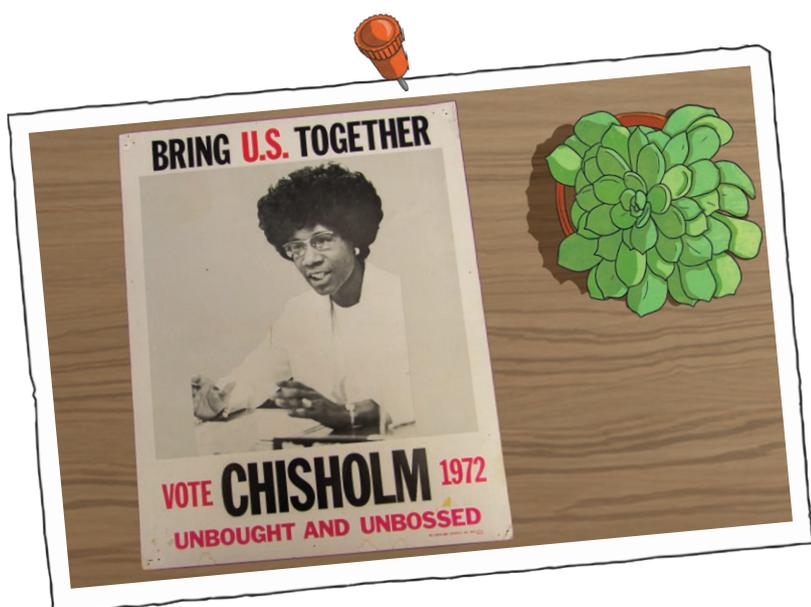
Political Career

In 1964, Shirley began her career in politics and she immediately made a notable impact.

Shirley campaigned for equality in many ways, including by sponsoring a scheme that would allow disadvantaged students to access the help that they need in order to attend university.

She ran for a position in the United States Congress – the government of the whole country. She campaigned in her local area, calling herself 'fighting Shirley Chisholm'. She showed how passionate she was about the causes she supported.

After defeating local competitors, Shirley was one of the final two candidates. It is reported that her opponent said that Shirley would be unable to do the job because she was female. With 'Unbought and Unbossed' as her slogan, Shirley tore down this prejudice and she passionately explained how she could represent those, like herself, who had never been fairly represented before.





Shirley used her fluency in English and Spanish to talk to voters – something which could not be done by her opponent. As a result, Shirley was elected with 67% of the votes. She became the first Black woman elected to Congress and the only new woman elected to Congress that year.

During her seven terms as a congresswoman, Shirley introduced over 50 new laws and actively campaigned for racial and gender equality. Through her actions, Shirley secured her place in history as a pioneering activist and an advocate for equality for all.

Glossary

activist:	A person who campaigns to try to bring about change.
congresswoman:	A female member of Congress.
politician:	A person whose job it is to govern a country or area.
politics:	Activities that relate to governing a country or area.
sociology:	The study of human society.

Questions

1. What is an activist? Tick one.

- a female member of Congress
- a person who campaigns to bring about change
- a person whose job it is to govern a country
- a person who studies human society

2. According to the text, who encouraged Shirley to pursue a career in politics? Tick one.

- her parents
- her grandmother
- her professors
- her opponent

3. Look at the section called **Early Life**.

Find and copy a phrase which shows that Shirley was older than all of her siblings.

4. Find and copy Shirley's campaign slogan.

5. **... graduating in 1946 with remarkable scores.**

What does this phrase imply about the scores that Shirley achieved?

6. Comment on how Shirley's beliefs about her future in politics changed throughout her life.

7. Explain how Shirley's use of language impacted her success.

8. If Shirley were a congresswoman today, what issues do you think that she would campaign about? Give a reason for your answer.

9. Summarise what you have learnt about Shirley Chisholm in 20 words or fewer.

Answers

1. What is an activist? Tick one.

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- her opponent

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Find and copy a phrase which shows that Shirley was older than all of her siblings.

(she was the) eldest daughter (of parents)

4. Find and copy Shirley's campaign slogan.

Unbought and Unbossed

5. ... **graduating in 1946 with remarkable scores.**

What does this phrase imply about the scores that Shirley achieved?

This phrase implies that Shirley's scores were so good that they were difficult to believe.

6. Comment on how Shirley's beliefs about her future in politics changed throughout her life.

Pupils' own responses, such as: At first, Shirley did not believe that she could have a future in politics because of prejudice at the time. Then, Shirley proved herself wrong by becoming the first Black congresswoman in the USA, which must have made her change her mind.

7. Explain how Shirley's use of language impacted her success.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Shirley used her fluency in English and Spanish to talk to voters. Because her opponent could not do this, this means that Shirley was able to speak to more people than they could and was more likely to get their votes.

8. If Shirley were a congresswoman today, what issues do you think that she would campaign about? Give a reason for your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that Shirley would still be campaigning about racial and gender equality if she were a congresswoman today because there is still work to be done so that all people are treated as equals.

9. Summarise what you have learnt about Shirley Chisholm in 20 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Shirley Chisholm was an American politician, activist and educator. In 1968, she became the first Black congresswoman in the USA.

Shirley Chisholm

Shirley Chisholm was an American politician, activist and educator who, in 1968, became the first Black congresswoman in the USA.



Early Life

Shirley Anita St. Hill was born on 30th November 1924 in New York City. She was the eldest daughter of parents Charles Christopher St. Hill – a factory worker originally from Guyana – and Ruby Seale St. Hill – a seamstress originally from Barbados.

When Shirley was five years old, she began to live in Barbados with her grandmother. During her time in Barbados, Shirley took her education seriously and worked hard at the one-room schoolhouse that she attended in her parish.

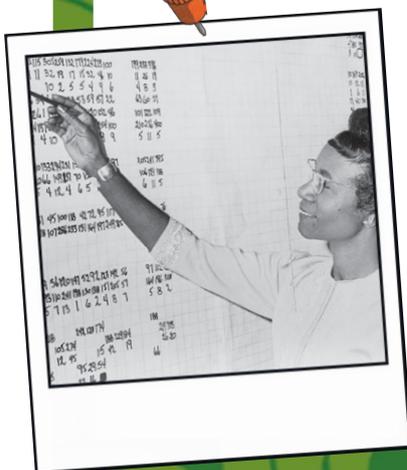
Further Education

Shirley returned to the USA and graduated from Girls' High School in Brooklyn in 1942. She advanced to study sociology at Brooklyn College, graduating in 1946 with exceptional scores.



During her time at Brooklyn College, Shirley was part of a debate team and she won many prizes for her participation. She was also part of a club which campaigned for race equality and inclusivity. Seeing her potential, Shirley's professors encouraged her to consider a career in politics; however, due to prejudice and discrimination at this time, Shirley initially believed that being both female and Black would prevent her from doing this.

Early Career



Shirley began her career as a nursery school teacher and earned a master's degree from Columbia University in 1951, making her an expert in early childhood education. By 1960, Shirley had experience of running her own childcare centre; she was renowned for her knowledge about early education and child welfare and she used this knowledge to help schools and day care centres across New York City.



Alongside her work, Shirley was an active member of the community and she was aware of the racial and gender inequality that her fellow citizens were experiencing. Because of this, she joined many groups which campaigned for equality, taking her first steps into politics.

Political Beginnings

In 1964, Shirley began her career in politics and was elected as a member of the New York State Legislature – the political body responsible for governing and passing laws in the state of New York. She immediately made a notable impact.

Shirley campaigned against a test that was being used in New York to assess a person's level of literacy (the level at which they can read and write). This test was always conducted in English, regardless of the first language of the person sitting the test. Shirley argued that people should not be judged by this standard if their first language was not English: they should have their literacy assessed in the language with which they are most comfortable.

Shirley also campaigned for equality in other ways: she sponsored the introduction of a scheme that would allow disadvantaged students to access the help that they need in order to attend university.



Unbought and Unbossed

Shirley wanted to take her political career further. She ran for a position in the United States Congress – the government of the whole country. She campaigned in her local area, calling herself 'fighting Shirley Chisholm', showing how passionate she was about the causes she supported.



After defeating local competitors, Shirley was one of the final two candidates – both of whom had very similar beliefs and policies. It is reported that her opponent made many comments about how Shirley would be unable to do the job because she was female. With 'Unbought and Unbossed' as her slogan, Shirley tore down this prejudice: she passionately explained how she could represent those, like herself, who had never been fairly represented before and she discussed how many male candidates before her had failed to do the job she was more than capable of doing. She used her fluency in English and Spanish to talk to voters – something which could not be done by her opponent – and, as a result, Shirley was elected with 67% of the votes. She became the first Black woman elected to Congress in the USA and the only new woman elected to Congress that year.



During her seven terms as a congresswoman, Shirley introduced over 50 new laws and actively campaigned for racial and gender equality. Through her actions, Shirley secured her place in history as a pioneering activist and an advocate for equality for all.

Questions

1. Which of these titles are applicable to Shirley? Tick **three**.

- politician
- professor
- educator
- activist

2. In which year did Shirley achieve her master's degree? Tick one.

- 1942
- 1946
- 1951
- 1960

3. Look at the section called **Unbought and Unbossed**

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'revolutionary'.

4. List **two** ways that you know that Shirley worked hard at her education.

- _____
- _____

5. **Seeing her potential, Shirley's professors encouraged her...**

What do you think the phrase 'seeing her potential' means?

6. Discuss the impression that you get of Shirley from her campaign slogan 'Unbought and Unbossed'.

7. Comment on how prejudice and discrimination affected Shirley and how this changed over time.

8. Explore **two** ways that Shirley was inclusive of citizens for whom English was not their preferred language.

9. Discuss how Shirley may have inspired women in the USA in the 1960s.

10. Summarise Shirley's beliefs, as discussed in the text, in 25 words or fewer.

Answers

1. Which of these titles are applicable to Shirley? Tick **three**.

- politician**
- professor
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- 1942
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3. Look at the section called **Unbought and Unbossed**

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'revolutionary'.

pioneering

4. List **two** ways that you know that Shirley worked hard at her education.

Accept any two of the following: During her time in Barbados, Shirley took her education seriously and worked hard at the one-room schoolhouse that she attended in her parish; She advanced to study sociology at Brooklyn College, graduating in 1946 with exceptional scores; Shirley was part of a debate team and she won many prizes for her participation; She earned a master's degree from Columbia University in 1951, making her an expert in early childhood education.

5. **Seeing her potential, Shirley's professors encouraged her...**

What do you think the phrase 'seeing her potential' means?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the phrase 'seeing her potential' means that they knew how great she would be.

6. Discuss the impression that you get of Shirley from her campaign slogan 'Unbought and Unbossed'.

Pupils' own responses, such as: From her campaign slogan, I get the impression that Shirley could not be bossed around or have her opinion changed by other people, no matter how hard they tried.

7. Comment on how prejudice and discrimination affected Shirley and how this changed over time.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Prejudice and discrimination affected Shirley because it made her (and others) believe that she would not be successful in politics. However, Shirley fought against this and proved that her race and her gender were not factors which impacted her success.

8. Explore **two** ways that Shirley was inclusive of citizens for whom English was not their preferred language.

Pupils' own responses, such as: One way that Shirley was inclusive was that she campaigned to change the New York literacy assessment to include other languages. Another way that she was inclusive was that she spoke to voters in Spanish when that was their preferred language.

9. Discuss how Shirley may have inspired women in the USA in the 1960s.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Shirley may have inspired women in the 1960s to believe that they could be anything that they wanted to be, despite prejudice and discrimination. She did this by proving that she could become a member of Congress despite what other people thought.

10. Summarise Shirley's beliefs, as discussed in the text, in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Shirley believed in race and gender equality. She also believed in equality for the disadvantaged and supported those who preferred to speak other languages.