
TOP SECRET

BRILLIANT GIRL FACTS

Top Secret Brain Missions
for Curious Girls

VEGA PUBLISHING • 2026

Brilliant Girl Facts: Top Secret Brain Missions for Curious Girls

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Published by Vega Publishing • First Edition, 2026

Printed in the United States of America

The facts, puzzles, and activities in this book are for educational and entertainment purposes. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy at time of publication.

*To every curious girl who asks “why?”
and never, ever stops exploring.*

Your brilliance has no limits.



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Amazing Women Who Changed the World

Throughout history, brilliant women have shaken up science, cracked open new worlds, and changed the way we live — often while being told they couldn't, shouldn't, or wouldn't succeed. From discovering invisible elements to writing the first computer code, women have been pioneers, inventors, and leaders in every field imaginable. Ready for your first brain mission? Buckle up, because these women's stories are about to blow your mind!



AMAZING WOMEN — FACTS 1 TO 4

FACT #1 — MARIE CURIE

Marie Curie discovered two chemical elements — polonium and radium — and became the first person in history to win Nobel Prizes in *two* different sciences: Physics in 1903 and Chemistry in 1911. She was so dedicated to her research that she carried glowing test tubes of radioactive material in her lab coat pockets. Warning: don't try that at home!

FACT #2 — ADA LOVELACE

Ada Lovelace wrote the world's first computer program in 1843 — over 100 years before modern computers existed. She was working with mathematician Charles Babbage on his mechanical “Analytical Engine” when she realized it could do far more than just crunch numbers. She saw the future of computing before anyone else did.

FACT #3 — WANGARI MAATHAI

Wangari Maathai started Kenya's Green Belt Movement in 1977 by teaching local women to plant trees — beginning with just 9 seedlings in her own backyard. Her movement grew to plant over 51 million trees across Africa. In 2004, she became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, proving that caring for nature is also caring for people.

FACT #4 — MAE JEMISON

Mae Jemison became the first African American woman to travel to space when she launched aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour in September 1992. But here's the twist: before becoming an astronaut, she was also a medical doctor, a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa, and she even appeared as a crew member on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*!

AMAZING WOMEN — FACTS 5 TO 8

FACT #5 — MALALA YOUSAFZAI

Malala Yousafzai was shot by the Taliban at age 15 for going to school and speaking out for girls' education — and she survived to keep fighting louder than ever. At just 17 years old she became the youngest Nobel Prize winner in history. Today she leads the Malala Fund, fighting to give every girl on the planet at least 12 years of quality education.

FACT #6 — HEDY LAMARR

Hedy Lamarr was one of Hollywood's biggest movie stars in the 1940s — but she was also a secret inventor! During World War II she co-invented a “frequency-hopping” radio system to protect military communications from being jammed. That invention became the foundation of the technology we now use every day: WiFi, Bluetooth, and GPS.

FACT #7 — VALENTINA TERESHKOVA

Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space on June 16, 1963, piloting the Soviet spacecraft Vostok 6 solo. She orbited Earth 48 times in less than 3 days — logging more time in space than all American male astronauts combined up to that point. She was only 26 years old and had previously worked as a textile factory worker.

FACT #8 — KATHERINE JOHNSON

Katherine Johnson was a NASA mathematician whose calculations were so brilliantly precise that astronaut John Glenn refused to fly his famous 1962 Earth orbit unless Katherine personally checked the computer's numbers first. Her work was also vital to the Apollo 11 moon landing. NASA called her “the human computer.” Her story inspired the film *Hidden Figures*.

BRAIN TEASERS — MISSION 1

* TIMELINE CHALLENGE

Can you put these amazing achievements in order from EARLIEST to LATEST?

- A. Malala Yousafzai wins the Nobel Peace Prize
- B. Ada Lovelace writes the world's first computer program
- C. Mae Jemison flies to space on the Shuttle Endeavour
- D. Marie Curie wins her first Nobel Prize in Physics
- E. Valentina Tereshkova becomes the first woman in space

Answer: B (1843) > D (1903) > E (1963) > C (1992) > A (2014)

* MYSTERY WOMAN

"I used X-ray photography to capture a crucial image that helped reveal the double-helix structure of DNA. Yet when the Nobel Prize was awarded for this discovery in 1962, three men received the credit. My contribution was only fully recognized after my death. Who am I?"

Answer: Rosalind Franklin (1920–1958)

* DID YOU KNOW?

- * The word “computer” originally described a **person** — usually a woman — who did complex mathematical calculations by hand. NASA employed hundreds of female “human computers” before electronic computers took over.
- * Hypatia of Alexandria was one of the world’s first known female mathematicians, teaching astronomy and philosophy in ancient Egypt over **1,600 years ago**. She wrote commentaries on advanced mathematics and astronomy.
- * Stephanie Kwolek invented **Kevlar** — the super-strong material used in bulletproof vests — while working at DuPont in 1965. Her invention has saved thousands of lives around the world.
- * Marie Curie’s original research notebooks from the 1890s are **still radioactive today**. They are kept in lead-lined boxes at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Anyone who wants to read them must wear protective gear and sign a safety waiver!
- * The world’s first known novel, *The Tale of Genji*, was written around the year **1000 CE** by a Japanese woman named Murasaki Shikibu — over 700 years before most people recognize the novel as an art form.
- * Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin was the first scientist to discover that **stars are made mostly of hydrogen and helium**. Her male supervisor initially told her she was wrong — and then years later published the same conclusion himself.
- * **Ada Lovelace Day** is celebrated every second Tuesday of October to honor women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics around the world.

* GIRL POWER SPOTLIGHT

Wangari Maathai — The Tree Mother

Born in a small village in Kenya in 1940, Wangari Maathai grew up watching the lush forests that gave her community food, firewood, and clean water slowly disappear. When she returned home after studying biology in the United States, she found drought, poverty, and bare hillsides where trees once stood.

Instead of waiting for someone else to solve the problem, Wangari had a simple but radical idea: **teach women to plant trees**. In 1977, she launched the Green Belt Movement with just 9 seedlings in her own backyard. She paid local women a small fee for every tree they planted and kept alive.

The results were extraordinary. Communities with trees gained cleaner water, more food, and better income. Women who joined the movement became more confident, more educated, and more politically powerful. Those 9 seedlings eventually multiplied into over **51 million trees** planted across Africa.

In 2004, Wangari Maathai received the Nobel Peace Prize — the first African woman ever to win it. The Nobel Committee praised her for showing that protecting the environment and fighting for human rights are the same struggle.

"It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees."

— Wangari Maathai

* TOP SECRET BRAIN MISSION #1

Your Personal Timeline of Awesomeness

Every amazing woman in this chapter had a story that started small — one idea, one choice, one decision to keep going no matter what. Wangari started with 9 seedlings. Ada started with a notebook. Katherine started with a pencil and a stubborn refusal to get the math wrong.

Now it's **your turn**. Write down 5 amazing things you have already accomplished — they don't have to be big! Learning to cook, finishing a hard book, being kind when it was difficult, mastering a skill — it all counts. Then write 5 brilliant things you want to achieve in the future.

MY AMAZING PAST:

1. _____ Year: _____
2. _____ Year: _____
3. _____ Year: _____
4. _____ Year: _____
5. _____ Year: _____

MY BRILLIANT FUTURE:

1. _____ Year: _____
2. _____ Year: _____
3. _____ Year: _____
4. _____ Year: _____
5. _____ Year: _____

* MISSION 1 BRAIN CHECK!

1. How many Nobel Prizes did Marie Curie win, and in which subjects?

- a) 1 Prize — Chemistry only
- b) 2 Prizes — Physics & Chemistry
- c) 2 Prizes — Peace & Science
- d) 3 Prizes

2. What was Ada Lovelace's historic achievement in 1843?

- a) She discovered radioactivity
- b) She became the first woman in space
- c) She wrote the first computer program
- d) She invented the telephone

3. Which everyday technology is based on Hedy Lamarr's wartime invention?

- a) Television
- b) WiFi and Bluetooth
- c) The microwave oven
- d) Solar panels

4. What was the name of Wangari Maathai's tree-planting organization?

- a) The Climate Action Fund
- b) The Green Belt Movement
- c) The Tree Peace Campaign
- d) Nature First Kenya

5. Why did astronaut John Glenn insist Katherine Johnson check the flight computer's numbers?

- a) The computer was broken
- b) He didn't trust computers yet
- c) It was mission rules
- d) Katherine built the computer

Answers: 1-b 2-c 3-b 4-b 5-b

* YOUR MISSION LOG

If YOU could meet one amazing woman from history, who would it be — and what is the one question you would ask her?
