Famous as a soldier and historian, but most well known as a national leader and statesman. Churchill’s reputation was made by his performance as Prime Minister in World War Two, when he appeared to be the ‘man for the hour’ in 1940 and afterwards. He inspired people by his courage, restless energy, unshakeable faith in ultimate victory and memorable rhetoric.

Yet for all of his fame today, if his career had stopped in 1939 it might have been seen as a disappointment, hence the title of James’s biography: *Winston Churchill: A Study in Failure*. He served as First Lord of the Admiralty at the outbreak of war and then became Prime Minister for the first time in 1940, a post he held for five years of war leadership. In the elections of 1945, the Conservative Party was defeated and he spent much time as opposition leader warning of the new danger presented by Soviet Russia and also supporting the idea of a United States of Europe. He was returned to office as Prime Minister in 1951 and lasted for four more years before handing over to Sir Anthony Eden. He stayed in the House of Commons until 1964.

In wartime Britain, his premiership illustrated the full scope of the position of Prime Minister. Between 1940 and 1945, his power was enormous. After 1951, he placed much greater emphasis upon more collective decision-making in Cabinet.

Further reading:

Summary Article: *Churchill, Winston (Leonard Spencer)*
From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

British Conservative politician, prime minister 1940–45 and 1951–55. In Parliament from 1900, as a Liberal until 1924, he held a number of ministerial offices, including First Lord of the Admiralty 1911–15 and chancellor of the Exchequer 1924–29. Absent from the cabinet in the 1930s, he returned in September 1939 to lead a coalition government from 1940 to 1945, negotiating with Allied leaders in World War II to achieve the unconditional surrender of Germany in 1945. He led a Conservative government between 1951 and 1955. His books include a six-volume history of World War II (1948–54) and a four-volume *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (1956–58). *War Speeches 1940–45* (1946) contains his most memorable orations. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953.

**Early career** Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, the elder son of Lord Randolph Churchill. Educated at Harrow and Sandhurst, he joined the army in 1895. In the dual role of soldier and military correspondent he served in the Spanish–American War in Cuba, and then in India, Egypt, and South Africa, where he made a dramatic escape from imprisonment in Pretoria.

In 1900 he was elected Conservative member of Parliament for Oldham, but he disagreed with Joseph Chamberlain’s tariff-reform policy and joined the Liberals. In 1906 he won Northwest Manchester for
the Liberals. He had in the meantime been appointed undersecretary of state for the colonies in the Henry Campbell-Bannerman administration. Herbert Asquith made Churchill president of the Board of Trade in 1908, where he introduced legislation for the establishment of labour exchanges. As home secretary in 1910, he lost much of his previously won reputation as a radical by his action in sending in the military to aid police against rioting miners in Tonypandy, south Wales.

World War I In 1911 Asquith appointed Churchill First Lord of the Admiralty, a position he still held on the outbreak of World War I. He devised an ill-fated plan to attack the Turkish-held Dardanelles in 1915 in order to relieve pressure on the Russians fighting Turkish troops in the Caucasus. The disaster of the Dardanelles expedition brought political attacks on Churchill that led to his demotion to the Duchy of Lancaster and to his resignation later that year. In 1915–16 he served in the trenches in France, but then resumed his parliamentary duties and was minister of munitions under David Lloyd George in 1917, when he was concerned with the development of the tank. After the armistice he was secretary for war 1919–21 and then as colonial secretary played a leading part in the establishment of the Irish Free State. During the post-war years he was active in support of the Whites (anti-Bolsheviks) in Russia.

Between the wars During the period 1922–24 Churchill was out of Parliament. He left the Liberals in 1924, and was returned for Epping as a Conservative in the same year. Baldwin made him chancellor of the Exchequer, and he brought about Britain's return to the gold standard. During the General Strike of May 1926, Churchill edited the government newspaper, the British Gazette, and was prominent in the defeat of the strike. He was out of office 1929–39, and as a back-bench MP he disagreed with the Conservatives on India (he was opposed to any abdication of British power), rearmament (he repeatedly warned of the rate of German rearmament and Britain's unpreparedness), and Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.

World War II On the first day of World War II he went back to his old post at the Admiralty. In May 1940 he was called to the premiership as both prime minister and defence minister at the head of an all-party administration, and made a much-quoted 'blood, tears, toil, and sweat' speech to the House of Commons. He had a close relationship with US president Roosevelt, and in August 1941 concluded the Atlantic Charter with him. He travelled to Washington, DC; the Casablanca Conference, Morocco; Cairo, Egypt; Moscow, USSR; and the Tehran Conference, Iran, meeting the other leaders of the Allied war effort. He met Stalin and Roosevelt in the Crimea at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 to draw up plans for the final defeat of Germany and for its occupation and control after its unconditional surrender.

The coalition government was dissolved on 23 May 1945, and Churchill formed a caretaker government drawn mainly from the Conservatives. In June he went to the Potsdam Conference in Germany to discuss the final stages of the war. He was already worried by Soviet intentions in Eastern Europe, but he could have no part in the eventual decisions of the conference, because in July his government was defeated in a general election and he had to return to Britain.

Churchill and the Cold War Although Churchill was voted out of office just as the Cold War started, he still had a significant influence on the course of the Cold War by virtue of his leadership of the UK during World War II, his immense stature as an international politician, and his subsequent speeches on the subject.

Churchill had been present at all the major meetings held by the UK, USA, and USSR during World War II, Casablanca, Tehran, Yalta, and the Potsdam Conference in Germany. These meetings saw the changing
relationships between the great powers played out. By Potsdam the initially friendly alliance against Nazi Germany had crumbled to mistrust and fear between the capitalist allies of Britain and the USA and the communist USSR. Churchill's inability to instil trust between the USA and USSR reflected their incompatible ideologies, rather than lack of effort on his part.

After his electoral defeat, Churchill returned to journalism and public speaking. He went to the USA for a lecture tour, and was invited to make a speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, on 5 March 1946. It was here that Churchill described the existence of an Iron Curtain across Europe between the Soviet-dominated states of Eastern Europe and the democracies of the West. The phrase had previously been used by others, notably the Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. Churchill had crystallized the thoughts of many, that the USA and USSR had now become ideological enemies who were playing out a war for power and influence across the world.

**Post-war career** He became leader of the opposition until the election in October 1951, in which he again became prime minister until his resignation in April 1955.

His peacetime government saw an apparent abatement of the Cold War, and a revival in the country's economy. There was, however, little progress towards the united Europe of which Churchill had proclaimed himself an advocate. He remained in Parliament as MP for Woodford until the dissolution in 1964. Churchill was made Knight of the Garter in 1953.

**Commemoration** His home from 1922, Chartwell in Kent, is a museum. In 1995 the British government agreed to pay Winston Churchill's family £13.25 million for his pre-1945 writings, the Chartwell papers. The offer followed a long-running legal battle to prevent the possible sale of the papers to a US university.

**quotations**

Churchill, Winston (Leonard Spencer)

**essays**

The Embattled Island: Britain in the World Wars

**documents**

Churchill, Winston: Churchill's address to the House of Commons

Churchill, Winston: War situation

Stevenson, Adlai: Eulogy for Winston Churchill

Thompson, Dorothy: Let's Face the Facts

**didyouknews**

Churchill, Winston (Leonard Spencer)

**weblinks**

Churchill: The Evidence

International Churchill Societies Online

[https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/churchill_winston_1874_1965](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/churchill_winston_1874_1965)
APA


Chicago


Harvard


MLA