

# UNIT 22

## EVA PERÓN

(1919–1952)



### BEFORE YOU READ

Eva Perón was a poor girl who married a president. She became very powerful and was loved by millions.

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Who are some famous political leaders of the past or present?
2. Who is your favorite political leader? What makes this person great?
3. Look at the picture of Eva Perón. What can you say about her?

Now read about Eva Perón.

# EVA PERÓN

Eva Perón was born in 1919 in a small village in Argentina. Her family was very poor. Eva always had big dreams. She wanted to be a famous actress. When she was 15 years old, she convinced a tango singer to take her to Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina. In Buenos Aires, Eva learned that big-city life was not easy. She had no friends, no job, and no work experience. But she was **determined** to succeed. She got small parts in radio programs and began to make money. She became well known as an actress on the radio. Soon she was a **celebrity**.

Colonel Juan Perón was Vice President and Minister of War when he and Eva met. They immediately fell in love. He was 48 years old and she was 24. Juan Perón helped Eva get better jobs. Soon she became the head of all the radio stations in Argentina. Juan Perón became President in 1946. Eva worked hard for his **election**. She gave many speeches, and many people said she was one of the best speakers in Argentina. Five days after Perón's election, he and Eva got married.

As first lady of Argentina, Eva Perón worked very hard to help Perón's government. She became head of the Ministry of Labor and Health. Some people, especially those in the upper classes, did not like her. They thought that this ordinary actress had too much power. They **accused** her of spending too much government money on herself. Eva liked to look glamorous and wore very expensive clothes. One report said she wore 306 different dresses in 207 days!

Eva Perón decided that she wanted to help poor people. She wanted to change her **image**. She wore simpler clothes. She gave food, money, and clothing to the poor.

Working people loved her and called her "Evita." She built houses and hospitals for the poor and the elderly. She also worked hard for women's rights. In 1947, her work helped Argentinian women get the right to vote. But she spent a lot of the government's money. People said she spent so much money that the government was **bankrupt**.

People were obsessed with Evita. Once when she gave a speech, nine people died in the rush to see her. When she visited Spain, 3 million people greeted her. In 1950, Evita started to look tired and she fainted in public. Doctors discovered that she had cancer. Her doctor told her not to work so much, but she didn't listen. She worked hard to get her husband re-elected, and in 1951 he won the presidential election for a second time. But Eva Perón's health was getting worse. She weighed only 70 pounds. When she appeared in public, she was so weak that her husband had to help her stand up.

Eva Perón died in 1952 at the age of 33. After her death, 40,000 people signed a letter to ask the Roman Catholic Church to make her a **saint**. For 16 days, people came from all over Argentina to mourn her death and see her body. So many people came that 120,000 people were injured in one day. All the flower shops in Buenos Aires were sold out.

Eva Perón's body was dressed and made up so she looked like she did when she was alive. Juan Perón wanted to make a monument for her. He thought that this would help him to be popular again. But he soon lost power and General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu became President. Aramburu wanted people to forget about Juan and Eva Perón. He didn't allow the monument to be built and wanted to **get rid of** Eva's body.

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There were many stories about what happened to Evita's body. After President Aramburu died in 1970, his lawyer gave the government information that solved the mystery. In 1971, officials opened the grave of a woman in Italy. They found the body of Eva Perón. The body had been there for 16

years. In 1976, the government buried Eva's body in her family's grave in Buenos Aires. No one will ever forget Evita, and today she is as famous as ever. Over the years, many people wrote books, songs, and plays about her life, including the famous musical play *Evita*. The legend of Evita will live forever.

# VOCABULARY

## ◆ MEANING

Match the words with their meanings.

- \_\_\_ 1. image
- \_\_\_ 2. get rid of
- \_\_\_ 3. election
- \_\_\_ 4. bankrupt
- \_\_\_ 5. determined to
- \_\_\_ 6. celebrity
- \_\_\_ 7. saint
- \_\_\_ 8. accuse

- a. having a strong desire to do something
- b. to say someone has done something wrong
- c. the opinion that people have of someone
- d. famous person, especially an entertainer
- e. someone who the Catholic Church honors after death
- f. to make something that is unpleasant go away
- g. time when people vote to choose a political leader
- h. not having money to pay one's debts

## ◆ USE

Work with a partner and answer these questions. Use complete sentences.

1. How do people usually *get rid of* things they don't want anymore?
2. What are the qualities of a *saint*?
3. In what profession is *image* very important?
4. Who votes in an *election*?
5. What happens when a company goes *bankrupt*?
6. What usually happens after a person is *accused* of a crime?



# COMPREHENSION

## ◆ UNDERSTANDING THE READING

Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. When Eva Perón arrived in Buenos Aires, she \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. was well prepared for her new life      b. had to overcome many troubles at first      c. became successful right away
2. Juan and Eva Perón \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. helped one another to succeed      b. argued about Eva's power      c. were bad for each other
3. While Eva Perón was the first lady, she \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. never thought about herself      b. was loved by all of Argentine society      c. both helped and hurt Argentina

## ◆ REMEMBERING DETAILS

Reread the passage and answer the questions.

1. Why did Eva leave her village and go to Buenos Aires?
2. What was Juan Perón's position when Eva met him?
3. When did Juan and Eva get married?
4. What government job did Eva Perón have?
5. Why did the poor people love "Evita"?
6. How long was Eva Perón's body in the grave in Italy?

## ◆ MAKING INFERENCES

Circle *T* if the sentence is true and *F* if it is false. Then, underline one sentence in the passage that supports your answer.

- |  | True | False |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Eva wasn't successful before she met Juan Perón.            | T    | F     |
| 2. Eva just wanted to enjoy life while she was the first lady. | T    | F     |
| 3. People forgot about Eva after she died.                     | T    | F     |

## ◆ TELL THE STORY

Work with a partner. Tell the story of Eva Perón to your partner. Use your own words. Your partner can ask you questions about the story. Then, your partner tells you the story and you ask questions.

# DISCUSSION

**Discuss the answers to these questions with your classmates.**

1. Some people didn't like Eva Perón because she had so much power and spent so much money. Other people liked her because she helped the poor. What do you think about Eva Perón?
2. Do you think women are better leaders than men? Why or why not?
3. Do you think a person who does not have a formal education can become a good political leader? Why or why not?

# WRITING

**On a separate piece of paper, write six sentences or a short paragraph. Write about a famous world leader of the past or present.**

*Example: King Abdullah II is the King of Jordan. He became King when his father died.*