

## Not virgin but very competent (1911)

The first female Nobel laureate ever was *Marie Skłodowska Curie* (1867 – 1934). The year was 1903. She received the Nobel prize in physics together with her husband, *Pierre Curie*, and the physicist *Henri Becquerel*. They got the prize for their research on radioactivity. In 1906 Marie was struck by a terrible tragedy. Her husband slipped in the rain when he crossed a street. He was run over by a horse wagon and was injured so badly he immediately died. Eventually Marie recovered and engaged in a love affair with her married colleague *Paul Langevin*. When this affair became known it was an enormous scandal!

In 1911 Marie was awarded her second Nobel prize, this time in chemistry. The prize was awarded for the discoveries of the elements radium and polonium. When she was about to travel to Stockholm to receive the prize, the Swedish Nobel committee did not want her to come. They were worried there would be too much talk about her love affair. *Svante Arrhenius*, commissioner in the Nobel committee even wrote a letter to Marie asking her to stay in France. Marie still travelled to receive her prize. Everything went well. She regarded she was awarded not for her love life – but for her research!