

## Elizabeth Taylor dies aged 79

### Level 2 • Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

Who are the greatest Hollywood actresses of the 20th century? Write your suggestions in the stars below.



#### 2 Key words and expressions

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words and expressions from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

resilient	luminous	fragile souls	upstaged
notable	vibrant	soap opera	ritzy
scandal	passed away	screen debut	premiere

- \_\_\_\_\_ is another way of saying *died*. (para 2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ means *very bright*. (para 3)
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is the first time an actor or actress is on film in the cinema. (para 4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ means *lively and exciting*. (para 5)
- If something is \_\_\_\_\_ it is unusual or interesting enough to be mentioned or noticed. (para 6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ means *when something else got more attention than the thing or person that should have got the attention*. (para 6)
- A television series about the imaginary lives of a group of people is called a \_\_\_\_\_. (para 6)
- A situation in which important people behave in a way that shocks people is a \_\_\_\_\_. (para 6)
- Something that is \_\_\_\_\_ is glamorous. (para 7)
- The first public performance of a movie is its \_\_\_\_\_. (para 7)
- People in need of help, with personal problems or with delicate states of mind are \_\_\_\_\_. (para 8)
- If you are \_\_\_\_\_, you are able to quickly become healthy, happy, or strong again after an illness, disappointment, or other problem. (para 9)

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*Dame Elizabeth Rosemond Taylor, arguably the last great female star of the Hollywood studio system, has died at the age of 79.*

**Xan Brooks**

**23 March, 2011**

- 1 The Oscar-winning star died in the early hours of the morning at Cedars-Sinai medical centre in Los Angeles from heart failure, according to her spokeswoman, Sally Morrison. She said Taylor's children were at her side.
- 2 Dame Elizabeth, who had been in ill health for a number of years, was taken to the hospital with heart failure in February. A spokeswoman for the hospital said: "She passed away at 1.28 am."
- 3 Taylor's luminous screen presence, as well as her colourful private life, made her a part of US popular culture for more than 50 years. She won her first best actress Oscar in the 1960 film *BUTterfield 8*. Her second came from an electrifying performance opposite her then husband Richard Burton in the 1966 drama *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*.
- 4 Born in Hampstead, north London, Taylor moved to the US in 1939 and made her screen debut as a nine-year-old in the 1942 comedy *There's One Born Every Minute*. She became famous as the child star of *Lassie Come Home* and *National Velvet* before moving into adult roles with the 1950 comedy *Father of the Bride*.
- 5 The following year she gave one of her most vibrant performances in *A Place in the Sun* alongside Montgomery Clift. According to the critic Andrew Sarris, the film's young actors were "the most beautiful couple in the history of cinema."
- 6 Other notable roles were in *Giant*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Suddenly*, *Last Summer* and *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. Yet Taylor's on-screen talent was often upstaged by the ongoing soap opera of her personal life. She was married eight times to seven husbands and sparked a scandal when she began an affair with the British actor Richard Burton on the set of *Cleopatra*.
- 7 The couple wed in 1964 and divorced a decade later. They remarried in 1975 and then split again the following year. Throughout this period they were the emblem of Hollywood glamour; their lives a whirl of ritzy premieres, champagne receptions and movies. "It was probably the most chaotic time of my life," Taylor would later recall. "It was dark, but there were some good times too."
- 8 Throughout her life, Taylor seemed drawn to fragile souls and those in need. She reportedly saved the life of the notoriously self-destructive Montgomery Clift following a car crash in 1956. After the death in 1985 of her friend Rock Hudson, she helped found the American Foundation for AIDS Research and went on to raise an estimated \$50 million to fight the disease. More recently, she supported Michael Jackson after the singer was accused of child abuse.
- 9 Away from the cameras, her own life was interrupted by health problems. She survived a brain tumour, suffered from a heart condition and reportedly broke her back on five separate occasions. In later life, she was often in a wheelchair as a result of osteoporosis. Yet there was something resilient about Elizabeth Taylor – a fighting spirit behind her famous good looks. "I've been through it all, baby," she once boasted. "I'm Mother Courage."

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#### 3 Comprehension check

What do you now know about Elizabeth Taylor's personal life and her career? Write as many facts as you can find from the article into the table.

personal life	professional life

#### 4 Adjective-noun collocations

Join the adjectives with the nouns to make collocations from the article. Which refer to Elizabeth Taylor? What or whom do the others refer to?

- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. Oscar-winning | a. life        |
| 2. ill           | b. actress     |
| 3. private       | c. health      |
| 4. popular       | d. star        |
| 5. best          | e. performance |
| 6. electrifying  | f. culture     |
|                  |                |
| 7. beautiful     | g. glamour     |
| 8. British       | h. spirit      |
| 9. Hollywood     | i. actor       |
| 10. chaotic      | j. couple      |
| 11. fighting     | k. looks       |
| 12. good         | l. time        |

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#### 5 Discussion

Why do you think the author calls Elizabeth Taylor 'the last great female star of the Hollywood studio system'?

What qualities do you think someone needs to become a Hollywood legend? Use the collocations from task 4 and other useful vocabulary from the article to help you.

#### 6 Webquest

Type the names of the films that are mentioned in the article into a search engine. Are you able to watch trailers or excerpts of the films online?

The Internet Movie Database [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) contains extensive biographies of film stars. What further information about Elizabeth Taylor can you find there?

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#### KEY

#### 2 Key words

1. passed away
2. luminous
3. screen debut
4. vibrant
5. notable
6. upstaged
7. soap opera
8. scandal
9. ritzy
10. premiere
11. fragile souls
12. resilient

#### 3 Comprehension check

personal life	professional life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dame Elizabeth Rosemond Taylor married eight times.</li> <li>• She married the same man (Richard Burton) twice.</li> <li>• She was born in London, England.</li> <li>• She moved to the USA in 1939.</li> <li>• She died in Los Angeles in 2011, aged 79.</li> <li>• She died of heart failure.</li> <li>• She helped found the American Foundation for AIDS Research.</li> <li>• She raised around \$50 million to fight AIDS.</li> <li>• She publically supported Michael Jackson when he was accused of child abuse.</li> <li>• She survived a brain tumour, had a heart condition and broke her back five times. She was often in a wheelchair because of osteoporosis.</li> <li>• She led a glamorous but chaotic Hollywood lifestyle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She started her film career at the age of nine.</li> <li>• She was a famous child star.</li> <li>• She made her screen debut in <i>There's One Born Every Minute</i>.</li> <li>• She also starred in <i>Lassie Come Home</i> and <i>National Velvet</i> as a child.</li> <li>• She won two Oscars for <i>BUTterfield 8</i> and <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>.</li> <li>• She starred in many other successful films, such as <i>Giant</i>, <i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i>, and <i>Cleopatra</i>.</li> </ul>

#### 4 Adjective-noun collocations

(ET = Elizabeth Taylor)

1. d (ET)
2. c (ET)
3. a (ET)
4. f (US)
5. b (ET)
6. e (ET)
7. j (ET and Montgomery Clift)
8. i (Richard Burton)
9. g (ET and Richard Burton)
10. l (ET and Burton's life together in the 1960s and '70s)
11. h (ET)
12. k (ET)

**Teacher's note:** Students may discover that they can make other adjective-noun collocations using these words. First ask them to find the ones from the article and then ask them to identify other possible combinations.