

Elizabeth Taylor dies aged 79

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

Who do you consider to be 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.

arraigned oceans of tears courtesy of on-screen prowess mainstay
 indulgent movie collaborations ride to the defence of soap opera
 spurred on by passed away punctuated by gorging on

1. _____ is another way of saying *died*.
2. The person that something depends on most in order to continue or be successful is the _____.
3. Another way of saying *as a result of* is _____.
4. _____ something is having as much of an enjoyable experience as you want.
5. _____ refers to a person's great skill and ability in acting.
6. A television series about the imaginary lives of a group of people is called a _____.
7. The act of working together to make films for your own purposes or pleasure may be described as _____.
8. a large amount of crying _____
9. To be _____ something is to be encouraged and motivated by it.
10. If you _____ of someone, you give them your full support (often publically).
11. If you are _____, you are ordered to go to a court of law to be formally charged with a crime.
12. To be _____ something is to be frequently interrupted by it.

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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 congestive 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 1.28am."
- 3 Taylor's luminous screen presence, allied to a colourful private life, made her a mainstay of US popular culture for more than 50 years. She won her first best actress Oscar for playing the self-styled "slut of the world" in the 1960 film *BUTterfield 8*. Her second came courtesy of an electrifying turn opposite then husband Richard Burton in the 1966 drama *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*.
- 4 Born in Hampstead, north London, Taylor relocated to the US in 1939 and made her screen debut as a nine-year-old in the 1942 Universal comedy *There's One Born Every Minute*. She found fame as the perky child star of *Lassie Come Home* and *National Velvet* before graduating to adult roles with the 1950 comedy *Father of the Bride*.
- 5 The following year she gave one of her most vibrant and vital performances in *A Place in the Sun*. George Stevens's melodrama cast her as a spoiled debutante who bewitches Montgomery Cliff's ambitious social climber. According to the critic Andrew Sarris, the film's young actors were "the most beautiful couple in the history of cinema. Those gigantic close-ups of them kissing were unnerving – like gorging on chocolate sundaes."
- 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 prowess 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 embraced as the hydra-headed emblem of Hollywood glamour, their lives a whirl of ritzy premieres, champagne receptions and indulgent movie collaborations. "It was probably the most chaotic time of my life," Taylor would later recall. "It was fun and it was dark – oceans of tears – 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. Spurred on by the 1985 death 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 rode to the defence of Michael Jackson after the singer was arraigned on charges of child abuse.
- 9 Away from the cameras, her own life was punctuated 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 largely confined to a wheelchair as a result of osteoporosis. Yet there was something resilient about Elizabeth Taylor – a fighting spirit belied by her famous good looks. "I've been through it all, baby," she once boasted. "I'm Mother Courage."

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First published in *The Guardian*, 23/03/11

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3 Comprehension check

What do you now know about Elizabeth Taylor's personal life and her career? Write as many solid (not speculative) facts as you can find in the article next to the bullet points, then use these facts to talk about the star.

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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. culture | 10. personal | j. souls |
| 2. ill | b. couple | 11. British | k. premieres |
| 3. screen | c. debutante | 12. ritzy | l. looks |
| 4. popular | d. presence | 13. champagne | m. receptions |
| 5. screen | e. health | 14. chaotic | n. spirit |
| 6. vibrant | f. star | 15. fragile | o. actor |
| 7. spoiled | g. performance | 16. health | p. time |
| 8. beautiful | h. roles | 17. fighting | q. life |
| 9. notable | i. debut | 18. good | r. problems |

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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? Refer back to the collocations in task 4.

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 contains extensive biographies of film stars. What further information about Elizabeth Taylor can you find there?

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KEY

2 Key words and expressions

1. passed away
2. mainstay
3. courtesy of
4. gorging on
5. on-screen prowess
6. soap-opera
7. indulgent movie collaborations
8. oceans of tears
9. spurred on by
10. ride to the defence of
11. arraigned
12. punctuated by

4 Adjective-noun collocations

(ET = Elizabeth Taylor)

1. f (ET)
2. e (ET)
3. d (ET)
4. a (US)
5. i (ET)
6. g (ET)
7. c (ET's role)
8. b (ET and Montgomery Clift)
9. h (ET)
10. q (ET)
11. o (Richard Burton)
12. k (the lives of ET and Richard Burton)
13. m (the lives of ET and Richard Burton)
14. p (ET's time with Richard Burton)
15. j (people ET was drawn to)
16. r (ET)
17. n (ET)
18. l (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.