

Source A: from a BBC interview conducted on 27 April 1979 during the general election campaign. This was Thatcher's response when asked about the prospect of being Britain's first female Prime Minister.

I just hope that they will take me, as I am, for what I can do. Not as man or woman, but as a personality, who has an absolute passion for getting things right for Britain. I can't *bear* Britain in decline. I just can't. We who either defeated or rescued half Europe, who kept half Europe free, when otherwise it would be in chains. And look at us now. I just hope they'll look at that and say "does it matter whether it's a man or a woman? Isn't it just best to get it right?"

Source B: from Thatcher's speech to the Tory Party Conference on 10 October 1980. This was part of her 'You turn if you want to ... this lady is not for turning' speech in response to strong criticism of her economic policy. Britain was in the middle of a recession.

If I could press a button and genuinely solve the unemployment problem, do you think that I would not press that button this instant? Does anyone imagine that there is the smallest political gain in letting this unemployment continue, or that there is some obscure economic religion which demands this unemployment as part of its ritual? This Government are pursuing the only policy which gives any hope of bringing our people back to real and lasting employment.

Source C: from Thatcher's speech at a Conservative rally on 2 July 1982. The Falklands War had just ended, the Argentinians having surrendered on 14 June.

What has indeed happened it that now once again Britain is not prepared to be pushed around. We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a new-found confidence – born in the economic battles at home and tested and found true 8,000 miles away. That confidence comes from the re-discovery of ourselves, and grows with the recovery of our self-respect ... Britain found herself again in the South Atlantic and will not look back from the victory she has won.

Source D: from a TV interview conducted by journalist and former Labour MP Brian Walden on 16 January 1983. This was Thatcher's response to a question about the similarity between her ideology and the values of Victorians.

Those were the values when our country became great, but not only did our country become great internationally, also so much advance was made in this country. Colossal advance, as people prospered themselves so they gave great voluntary things to the State. So many of the schools we replace now were voluntary schools, so many of the hospitals we replace were hospitals given by this great benefaction feeling that we have in Britain, even some of the prisons, the Town Halls. As our people prospered, so they used their independence and initiative to prosper others, not compulsion by the State.

Source E: future Labour leader Neil Kinnock's comments on the upcoming general election, made on 7 June 1983.

If Margaret Thatcher wins on Thursday, I warn you not to be ordinary. I warn you not to be young. I warn you not to fall ill. I warn you not to get old.

Source F: the comments of Sir Max Hastings, a military historian and also a journalist who writes for traditionally right-wing publications like *The Spectator*, *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail*. In response to Thatcher's death in 2013, he wrote this piece for the *BBC History Magazine*.

Her contribution to making Britain once more a viable proposition is almost impossible to overstate, but nor will history ignore the brutality and insensitivity with which she imposed some of her policies, especially in Wales and Scotland. She failed, or never seriously attempted, to reform state institutions unfit for privatisation: health, education, the prisons and police. Most of her great achievements took place in her second term, when she had the confidence and momentum generated first by victory in the Falklands, then by defeating the miners' union. By her third term, she was displaying a worsening stridency and even irrationality, vividly reflected in stubborn adherence to the poll tax when its unpopularity was manifest, and in her opposition to German reunification. Such behaviour caused her downfall.

Source G: the comments of Chris Skidmore, historian and Conservative MP. In response to Thatcher's death in 2013, he wrote this piece for the *BBC History Magazine*.

That Thatcher's impact upon British politics was seismic seems undeniable: but how should historians interpret the 'Thatcher era'? The polarisation of opinion regarding Thatcher's premiership reveals how histories are often formed, through the prism of identity and an alluring narrative of 'them versus us'. Yet historians must be wary not to fall into the trap of creating a divided past, but must seek to explain the appeal of the far more complex politics of aspiration. The fact that Thatcher won 13.7 million votes in the 1987 general election, compared to 13 million in 1983, or that northern seats such as Darlington or Barrow and Furness, Labour seats in 1979, turned blue in 1983 and 1987, point to a far more nuanced approach. As historians, we must not allow politics to blind ourselves from reaching an impartial and balanced picture of the achievements and failings of the Thatcher government.

Source H: the comments of Francis Beckett, who wrote biographies of Attlee, Macmillan and Brown and worked for the Labour Party in early 1980s. In response to Thatcher's death in 2013, he wrote this piece for the *BBC History Magazine*.

Clement Attlee and Margaret Thatcher were the two great change-makers among 20th century prime ministers. Most of the rest were not change-makers but change-managers: as Harold Macmillan, one of the most skilful of them, famously remarked, what dictated action was 'events, dear boy, events'. Attlee and Thatcher had the skill and decisiveness to ride a popular mood and leave behind them a fundamentally different sort of society from the one they inherited. Just as Blair was one of Thatcher's greatest achievements, so the Conservative government after 1951 under Churchill, Eden, Macmillan and Home was Attlee's greatest achievement. But Attlee was far and away the more successful. He built something genuinely new, while the Thatcher settlement was largely a throwback to the inter-war years. The welfare state - though battered - has survived, even though its principles specifically contradict the Thatcher statement (even in its context) that 'there is no such thing as society'.

Source I: the comments of June Purvis, Emeritus professor of Women's and Gender History at the University of Portsmouth. In response to Thatcher's death in 2013, she wrote this piece for the *BBC History Magazine*.

Although the tough, determined Thatcher was an important role model for some aspiring women, she was no feminist. She did not pursue women-friendly policies, nor did she extend a ladder to other able women in her party. A conviction politician with a strong belief that she was right, she liked confrontation and argument rather than a consensual style of leadership. Thatcher enjoyed being surrounded by men, like a queen bee. Her femininity was part of the key to her success. Conservative men, many of whom had been brought up by authoritative women such as nannies or distant mothers, were not used to challenging such a formidable figure.

Thatcher's belief that tyrannous and oppressive political systems must be fought has been underplayed in assessments of her legacy. In Ronald Reagan she found a friend who shared her hatred of Soviet communism. In the 1980s, she had the insight to make contact with a relatively unknown moderniser in the Politburo, Mikhail Gorbachev, a man with whom she could do business.

Yet her domestic policies at home made her a divisive, polarising figure. Determined to do something about the strikes that had plagued Britain in the 1960s and 70s, she decided to tackle the 'enemy within' with a harshness that shocked the British people. She rolled back the state, introduced privatisation of state-owned utilities and supported a free market economy. As unemployment rose to three million, she seemed indifferent to the personal hardships of ordinary people, especially in coal-mining or ship-building communities.

Task:

Complete the table below by carefully reading and analysing the sources.

Further reading:

- The text of Thatcher's speeches and interviews can be found at www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/default.asp
- *BBC History Magazine* article: www.historyextra.com/thatcher

		What does it suggest about ...		
Source	Comment on the provenance of the source (Who? What? When? Why was it written? How reliable?)	Thatcher's leadership? (How she conducted politics)	Thatcher's ideology? (Her views on what should happen in domestic & foreign policy)	Thatcher's reputation? (How effective her policies were, how they were received, her legacy)
A				
B				
C				

		What does it suggest about ...		
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D				
E				
F				

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G				
H				
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