

CHRONOLOGY

- 1908 Simone Lucie Ernestine Marie Bertrand de Beauvoir
9 January is born to Françoise (Brasseur) de Beauvoir and Georges de Beauvoir.
- 1910 Birth of Simone's only sibling, Hélène, nicknamed Poupette.
- 1913 Starts school at the Catholic Cours Désir where she stays until she receives her *baccalauréat*.
- 1919 The family's dwindling finances necessitate a move to a cheaper flat at 71 rue de Rennes.
- 1922 Loses her faith in God and is struck by the fact that she is now 'condemned to death'.
- 1924 Completes the first stage of the *baccalauréat*.
- 1925-6 Completes the second stage of her final examinations in philosophy and mathematics.
- 1927 Completes her *licence* and obtains a certificate in philosophy.
- 1928 Begins her studies at the Sorbonne and the École Normale Supérieure for her postgraduate *agrégation* in philosophy.
- 1929 Passes the written part of the *agrégation*.
In July she meets Jean-Paul Sartre at the École Normale. They prepare for the oral part of the examination together and achieve top results.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

- In November Sartre begins his military service.
Simone starts writing and teaching part-time.
- 1931 Simone is appointed to a teaching post in Marseilles; Sartre to one in Le Havre.
- 1932 Finishes her first (unpublished) novel and is appointed to a new post in Rouen.
- 1933 Visits London with Sartre. Beginning of the triangular relationship with Olga Kosakiewicz.
- 1934 Visits Sartre in Berlin.
- 1936 Begins teaching at the Lycée Molière in Paris and moves to the hotel Royal-Bretagne on the rue de la Gaîté.
- 1937 Two publishers reject Simone's *Quand prime le spirituel* (*When Things of the Spirit Come First*), which is published by one of them, Gallimard, forty years later.
- Begins work on *L'Invitée* (*She Came to Stay*).
- 1938 Sartre's *Nausea* appears, dedicated to Simone 'the Beaver'.
- 1939 War is declared and Sartre is drafted into the army. From 1 September Simone begins to keep a journal of which a part appears in *Force of Circumstance*.
- 1940 Simone flees Paris in the face of the Nazi Occupation, but soon returns. Sartre is interned in a German prisoner-of-war camp.
- 1941 Sartre returns to Paris. The Resistance group, 'Socialisme et Liberté', is formed.
- In July, Simone's father dies.
- 1943 Existentialism is born. Simone writes *Pyrrhus and Cinéas*.
- In August *She Came to Stay* is published. She completes *The Blood of Others* and begins her third novel, *All Men are Mortal*.
- 1944 Paris is liberated. Simone becomes a founding editor of *Les Temps Modernes*.

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- 1945 September sees the publication of *The Blood of Others*.
Simone's only play, *Les Bouches Inutiles*, is a failure and closes after some fifty performances.
- 1946 In November *All Men are Mortal* is published.
- 1947 'Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté' ('The Ethics of Ambiguity') is published in *Les Temps Modernes*.
From 27 January until 20 May Simone visits the United States. She meets Nelson Algren in February.
She starts working on what will become *The Second Sex*.
- 1948 *America Day by Day* is published in July.
Extracts from *The Second Sex* begin to appear in *Les Temps Modernes*.
- 1949 Nelson Algren visits Paris in June.
The Second Sex appears in two volumes in June and November and provokes a heated response.
Simone begins work on *The Mandarins*.
- 1950 In August she goes to the US and spends two months with Algren.
- 1951 The affair with Algren is over.
- 1952 Benign tumour is removed from Simone's breast.
She begins relationship with Claude Lanzmann; they decide to live together.
- 1953 *The Second Sex* appears in the US.
In the autumn, she finishes *The Mandarins*.
- 1954 *The Mandarins* is published in October and receives the coveted Prix Goncourt.
- 1955 With the money from the Prix Goncourt, Simone buys the flat in which she spends the rest of her life.
Visits China with Sartre and spends a week in Moscow on the return trip.
Privileges appears.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

- 1957 *The Long March* is published.
Simone is active on behalf of Algerian liberation.
- 1958 Sartre's health begins to deteriorate.
In October *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* is published to excellent reviews.
Simone and Lanzmann separate.
- 1959 Continues militancy on behalf of Algerian war of liberation.
'Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome' is published in *Esquire*.
Simone writes a preface to a book on family planning.
- 1960 Visits Cuba with Sartre and meets Castro.
Campaigns on behalf of an Algerian woman, Djamila Boupacha, tortured by the French.
Visits Brazil with Sartre.
The second volume of Beauvoir's autobiography, *The Prime of Life*, appears in November.
- 1961 Because of activities against colonial rule in Algeria, Sartre's life is threatened and his flat bombed. He and Simone move several times under false names to avoid further attacks.
- 1962 Simone's life is threatened on the day that the book on Djamila Boupacha appears. On 18 March, peace in Algeria is declared.
- 1963 Publication of *Force of Circumstance* in October.
In November Simone's mother dies. She begins to write *A Very Easy Death* which is published in the autumn of 1964.
- 1964 Simone writes a preface to her friend Violette Leduc's *La Batarde*.
- 1965 Visits the Soviet Union again with Sartre.
Simone suffers a car accident and breaks several ribs.
She begins writing *Les Belles Images*.

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- 1966 She travels to Moscow and in the autumn to Japan where she and Sartre are heralded by an enthusiastic public.
- 1967 Visits the Middle East.
Participates in the Bertrand Russell Tribunal of War Crimes in Vietnam.
- 1968 *The Woman Destroyed* is published.
During the May events, Sartre and Simone side with the students.
- 1970 *Old Age* is published.
Simone takes part in a women's liberation demonstration demanding rights to abortion and contraception.
- 1971 Signs the Manifesto of 343, admitting to having had an illegal abortion.
- 1972 Simone declares herself a feminist.
Marches in protest against crimes against women.
The final volume of her autobiography, *All Said and Done*, is published in September.
Takes part in a film portrait of Sartre: *Sartre par lui-même*, much of which is filmed in her flat.
- 1973 Under Simone's direction, *Les Temps Modernes* starts a new section which asks readers to report on sexist behaviour.
- 1974 Simone is named President of the French League of Women's Rights.
- 1975 Simone makes her first television appearance in France.
She is awarded the Jerusalem prize for writers who have promoted the freedom of the individual.
She provides the commentary for a film on old age.
- 1978 Film portrait of Simone de Beauvoir is made by Josée Dayan and Malka Ribowska.
- 1979 ✓ Publication of her first set of short stories, *When Things of the Spirit Come First*.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

- 1980 Death of Jean-Paul Sartre on 15 April. Simone falls into a depression which can only be partly relieved by work.
- 1981 Publication of *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*.
Death of Nelson Algren.
- 1983 Publication of *Lettres au Castor et à quelques autres* (Letters to the Beaver and to several others), Simone's edition of Sartre's letters.
- 1984 Claude Chabrol's film of Simone's second novel, *The Blood of Others*, opens in Paris. Simone has no desire to see it.
- 1986 Simone de Beauvoir dies in Paris on 14 April.

ONE

The Dutiful Daughter

I knew a great deal about Simone de Beauvoir well before I had set eyes on a single one of her books. In the sixties, in the snowy Canadian vastness where I grew up, her name had taken on legendary proportions. I knew that she was that coveted being: an independent woman. More than that, I knew she was an accomplished writer, an intellectual who held the keys to Paris – that magical city across the waters, crucible of twentieth-century culture. I imagined her as a sophisticated thirty year old dressed in existentialist black (the colour was far more familiar to me than the philosophy), whiling the days and nights away in cafés and clubs, a pen and notebook always to hand. The life she inhabited seemed intensely desirable.

What gave this life its ultimate mythical flourish was Simone de Beauvoir's relationship with the famous philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre. They were the Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall of the intellectual world, partners in a gloriously modern love affair. Indissolubly united, bound by complete intellectual understanding, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were yet unmarried and free to engage