



# Value Tales

## The Value of Caring



# The Story of Eleanor Roosevelt

by Ann Donegan Johnson

## *Once Upon a Time*

There was a very happy woman named Eleanor Roosevelt. She had everything a woman could want. She had a fine husband and beautiful, healthy children, and she lived in a lovely big house.



Of course she was never shy when she was having fun with her family. All summer long she watched her children swim in the sea near their home. Sometimes she and her husband went sailing in their boat.



Eleanor was proud of her husband Franklin. She was sure that he would do important things someday. But just when it seemed that she was most happy and most proud, a very sad thing happened.



Franklin caught a dreaded disease called polio. There were no shots to protect people against polio in those days, so many persons were crippled by this sickness. Eleanor thought of this as she nursed her husband.

"Franklin is so ill " she said to herself. "Perhaps he will never walk again. Oh how miserable that could make him!"



Eleanor went off by herself to think. "I'm afraid," thought Eleanor, "just like I used to be when I was a little girl. And I used to be lonely, too. But then I had a make-believe friend who cheered me up."



"You still have a make-believe friend," said a small voice near Eleanor.

"Oh my!" said Eleanor, seeing a little girl who looked the way Eleanor herself had looked when she was small. "My make-believe friend! And how blue you are! But then, I'm in a very sad mood today. You look just like I feel."



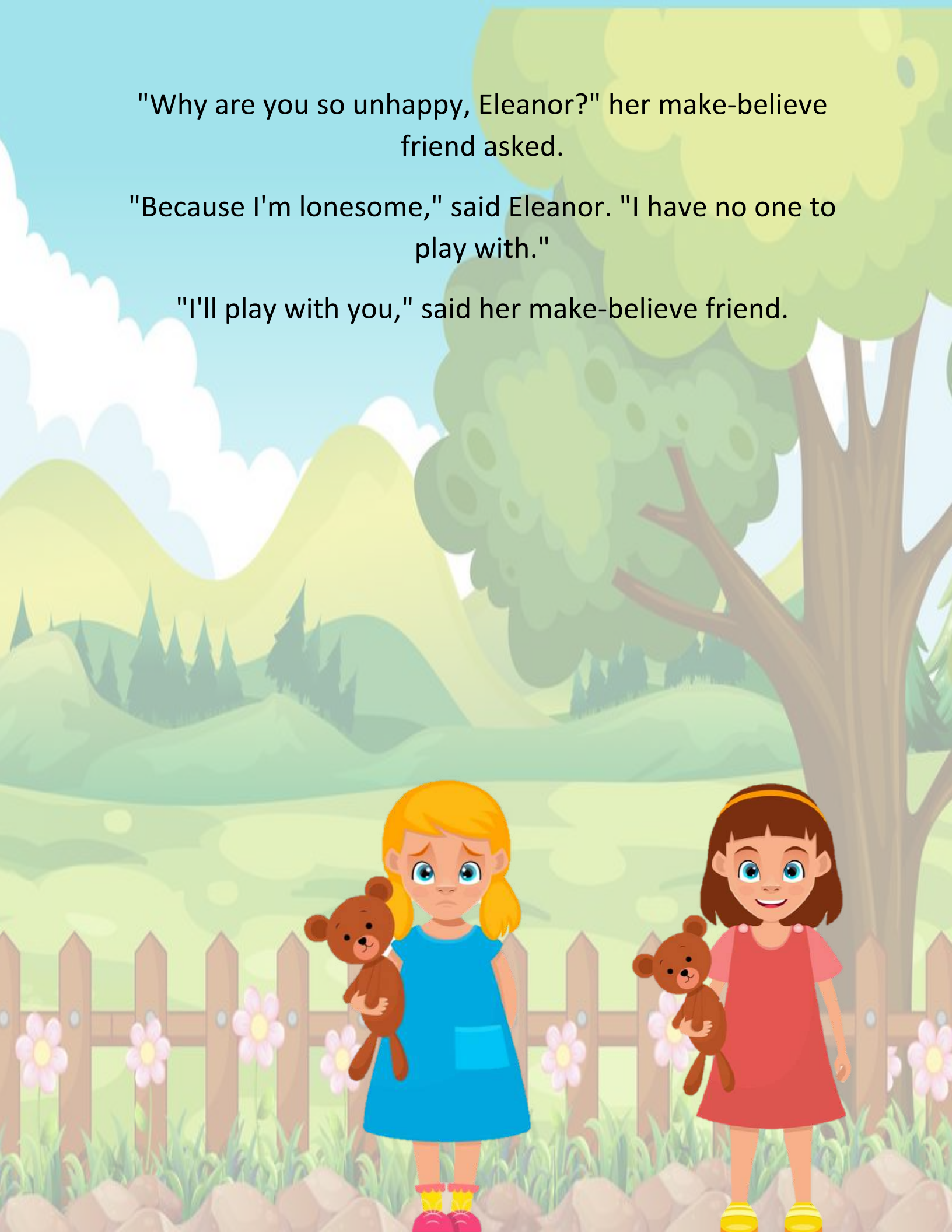
Then Eleanor remembered being a timid, fearful little girl. She remembered the first time her make-believe friend had come to her.



"Why are you so unhappy, Eleanor?" her make-believe friend asked.

"Because I'm lonesome," said Eleanor. "I have no one to play with."

"I'll play with you," said her make-believe friend.



"Will you?" said Eleanor. "Do you like me?" She knew that her little friend existed only in her mind, but she was still a comfort to Eleanor.

"I'm not beautiful like my mother and my aunts," Eleanor told her make-believe friend. "I'm sort of plain, and I'm clumsy. My mother says I'm so serious and old-fashioned that she ought to call me Granny. And my aunts laugh when she says this. I think they like to tease me!"



"But Granny is a nice name," said Eleanor's make-believe friend. "In fact, I'd like it if you'd call me Granny!"

"All right." said Eleanor. "I have to call you something, and it is nice to have someone to talk with. But I wish I were beautiful, like my mother."

"Don't you know that you are beautiful?" said Granny. "Beauty isn't just being pretty. Beauty is caring about other people and showing that you care!"



Eleanor felt better then. She felt still better when Granny stayed with her at night so that she wouldn't be afraid of the dark.

"Darkness is nothing to be scared about," said Granny.  
"It's just what happens when you put the lamp out."

Soon Eleanor was so brave that she and Granny could even go down into the unlighted cellar.



With Granny to cheer her on, Eleanor learned to do other hard things.

She practiced walking with a book on her head so that she would be more graceful. She was always neat and clean, so that people would like to have her around.



And Granny always reminded Eleanor that caring for others would make her feel better about herself.

It did make her feel better to care for others, although she was still shy with some people.



But she was always happy and comfortable when she was with her father. He was pleased when he saw her becoming a warm and caring person.

"If you can let people know you love them, you'll make them happy," he told her. "That will make you happy too."



Eleanor remembered her father's advice when she travelled with her family to the far-off country of Italy. She was riding a donkey, and she saw that the servant man who led her donkey was limping.

"You ride," said Eleanor, getting off the donkey. "Your feet are sore and you need a rest."

"No one else has ever seemed to care how I felt," said the man. "You're a very special little girl."



When she grew older Eleanor went away to school. Of course  
Granny went along.

"You'll have a good time here," said Granny, "because you care  
about your classmates."

Eleanor did have a good time, and she wasn't nearly as shy as  
she had been.



After she finished school, an absolutely wonderful thing happened to Eleanor. She met a handsome young man named Franklin Roosevelt, and she found that she cared about him in a very special way. What's more, he cared about her too.



"Do you really like me," asked Eleanor, "even though I'm not as pretty as the other girls?"

"I like you best," he answered.

In fact, Franklin fell in love with Eleanor and asked her to marry him.



Their wedding was beautiful. Eleanor's uncle came to see them get married, and everyone stared at him. That's because her uncle was Teddy Roosevelt, president of the United States.

Eleanor didn't care how people stared at her uncle. She was too happy. She was marrying Franklin, and she knew that their life together would be wonderful.



It was, too. It was very wonderful -until the sad time when Franklin got polio.

"Oh Granny," said Eleanor, as she remembered her joyful wedding day. "We've been so happy together. Now I'm afraid that Franklin will have so many problems because of his illness. I've got to find a way to help him."



Franklin did have problems. Even after he was well again, his legs remained paralyzed. Eleanor was sad, but she remembered how caring about others had helped her with her own problems.



"Why don't you run for public office?" Eleanor asked Franklin. "I think you'd be happier if you were doing something to help others."

"How can I run for office?" he said. "I can't even walk properly."

"You can do everything that's really important," she told him.

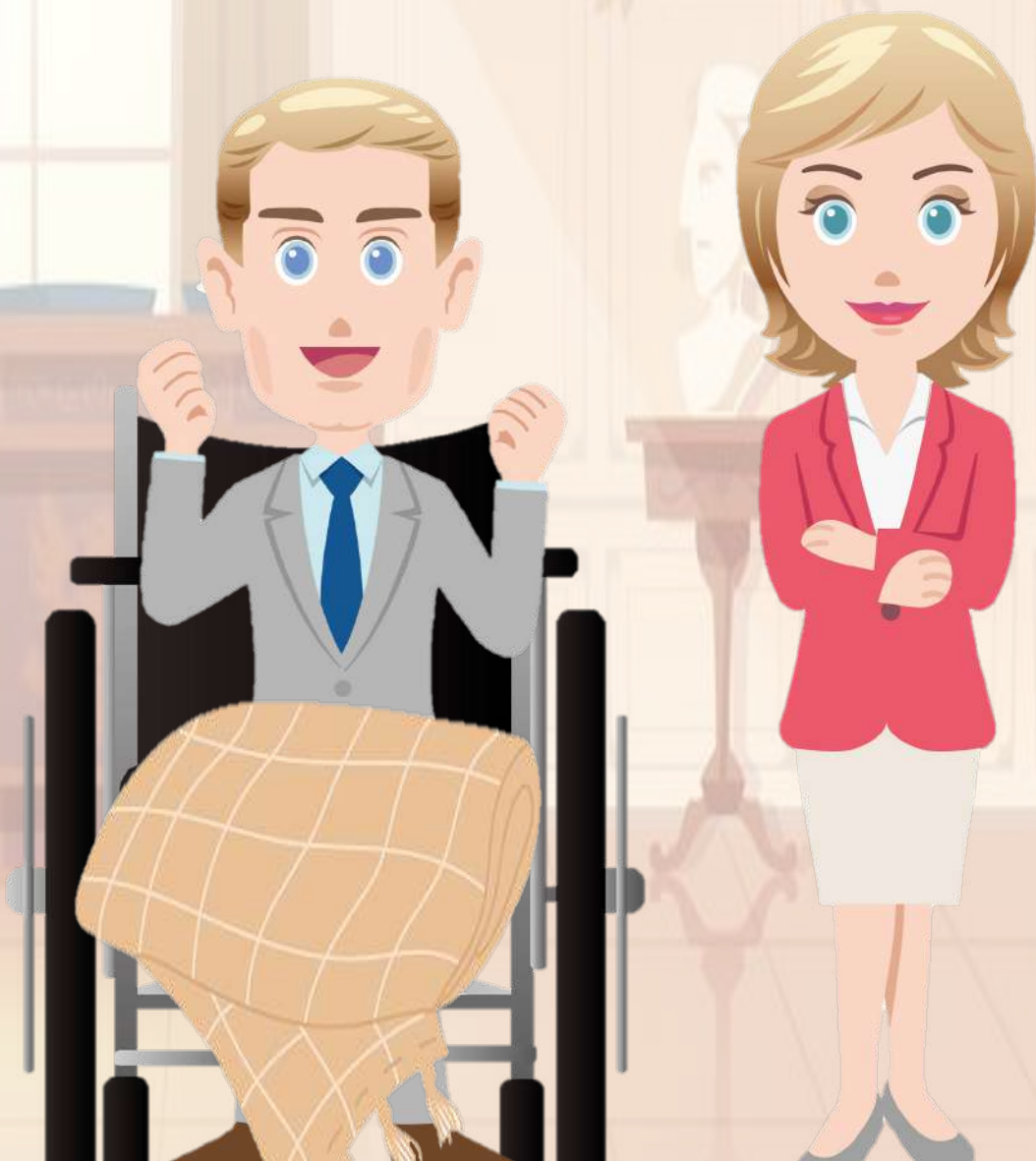
"Don't worry. I'll help you, and you'll be the next governor of New York state!"

Do you think that's what happened?



"I'm glad I won," he told Eleanor, "but I've taken on a tough job.  
A lot of people are depending on me."

"Let me help," she said. "Together we can do it."



Eleanor and Franklin did work together, and they were a perfect team. Franklin stayed in his office, while Eleanor went out to talk with the people, to find out what they needed most.



She went places and did things that few women had ever done before.

Granny went with her, but even Granny was a bit nervous the first time they got on an airplane.

"G-g-gee this is exciting," said Granny. "Most people have never ridden in an airplane. Are you sure we should try it?"

"I'm sure as can be," laughed Eleanor, and away they went.



With Eleanor's help Franklin solved many problems for the people of New York. But then the hard times called the Great Depression came to America.

Factories shut down and stores went out of business. Farmers stopped growing food and banks had no money. All over the country people lost their jobs.



Everyone was frightened and worried. When the time came to elect a new president, the people wanted to vote for someone who cared about those who were out of work and out of money.

Whom did most of them vote for?



Why they voted for Franklin Roosevelt, of course.

Franklin gave the people new hope. On the day he became president he told them, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

He meant that no matter how bad things were, it did no good to be afraid. Eleanor had helped him to believe in himself, so that he could work to overcome his polio. He wanted the people to have faith that they could work to solve their problems, too.



Because Franklin became president, Eleanor was now known as the first lady. She greeted guests who came to the White House, and she appeared at many public events.



"Is this all you're going to do?" said Granny. "Aren't you going to go out and see people and find out what they need?"

Why naturally I'm going to do that," said Eleanor.



She did more than see the people. She let the people know that she and Franklin really cared about their problems. There was no television in those days, but there were lots of newspapers.

Eleanor talked with reporters every chance she got.

Eleanor didn't just talk. She did things, and she went places where no other first lady had dreamed of going. Granny went along and always had a very good time.



At least she did until the day she and Eleanor went down into a dark, dangerous coal mine.

"This is very thrilling," said Granny. "I think perhaps it's too thrilling. We could be home in the nice, safe White House, you know. We don't really belong here."

"Certainly we belong here," said Eleanor as she shook hands with the miners. "We belong wherever we're needed."



When Franklin ran for a second term as president, Eleanor helped all she could.

"The people want a president who will work with them to help solve their problems," she told Franklin. "You want to keep on doing everything you can for as many people as possible."



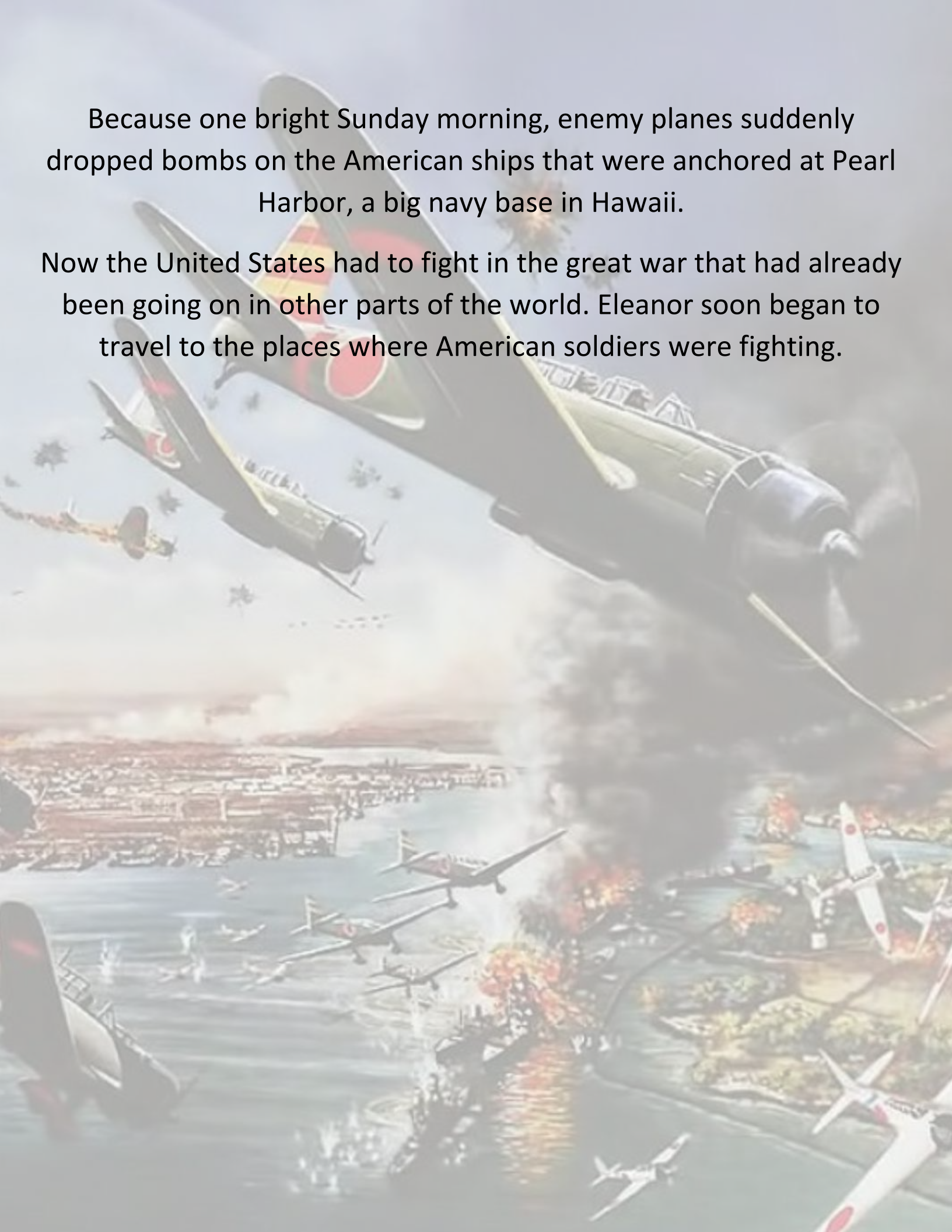
Eleanor and Franklin travelled all over the country on a special campaign train, so that even people in little towns could see that the president and the first lady cared about them.

The people trusted Franklin and he was re-elected. But before long his job became harder than ever. Do you know why?



Because one bright Sunday morning, enemy planes suddenly dropped bombs on the American ships that were anchored at Pearl Harbor, a big navy base in Hawaii.

Now the United States had to fight in the great war that had already been going on in other parts of the world. Eleanor soon began to travel to the places where American soldiers were fighting.



She visited the wounded and tried to make them feel better.

"You've certainly changed," said Granny. "Do you remember how shy and fearful you used to be? You aren't a bit shy anymore."

"I guess not," said Eleanor. "I don't really have time to be shy. I'm too busy talking to people. Besides, when I'm caring for others I forget to be afraid or to worry about myself."



Eleanor didn't just visit the troops and then forget about them. When she got home from her trips, she wrote or telephoned the families of the men she'd seen.

"I saw your son," she told one family on the phone. He's fine but he wants you to send him some chocolate chip cookies."

"Say, ask them to send me some too," whispered Granny.



Millions of men and women worked in factories making things to help win the war. Eleanor visited them too, and Granny always tagged along.

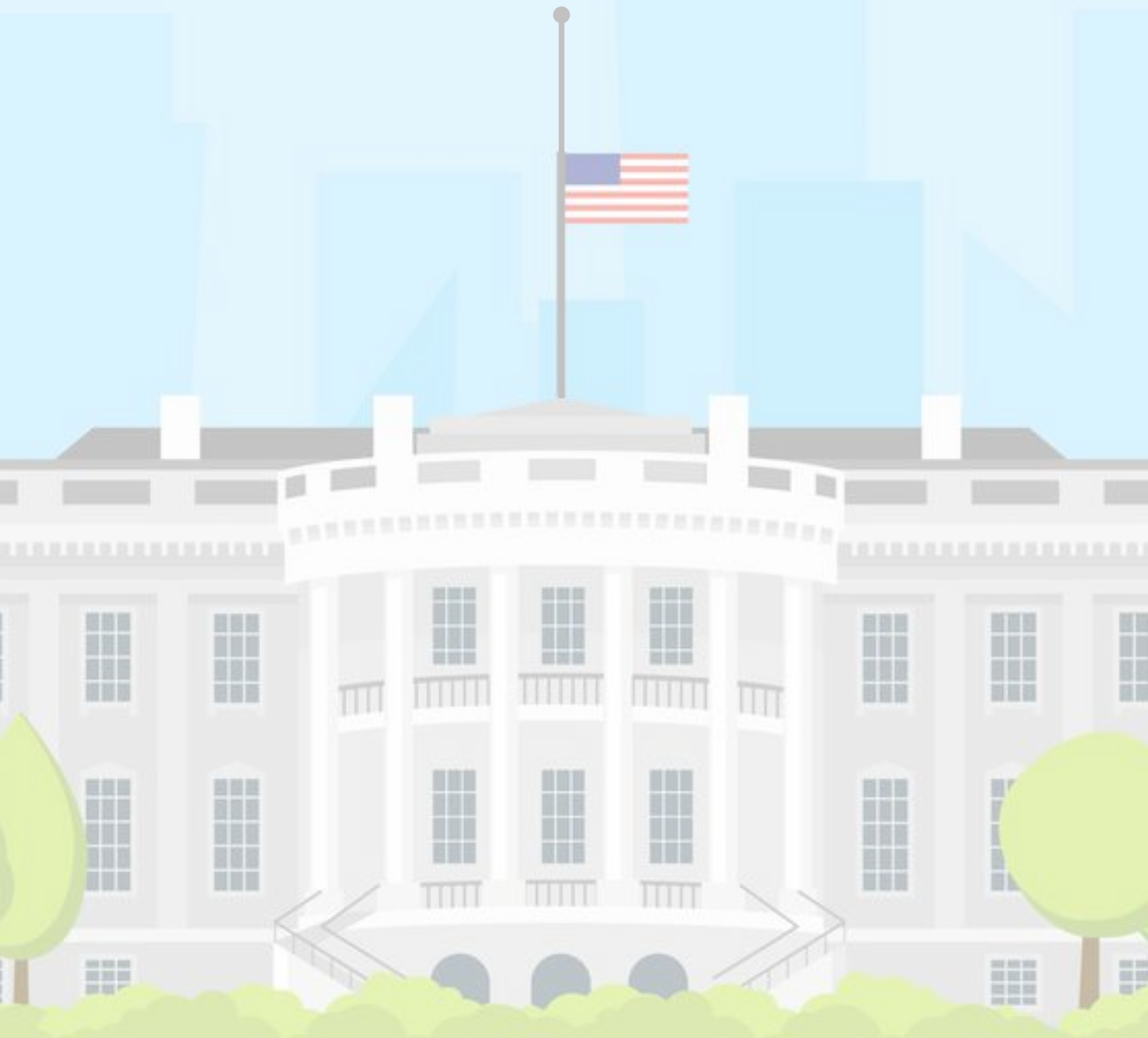
The people who worked in the factories were happy to see Eleanor when she came.

They were even happier when at last the war came to an end.



It was a glad time in America, but it was a sad time too. For Franklin himself did not live to see the end of the war.

He died just before peace came again. All over the country flags flew at half-mast to show how the American people would miss their president.



Eleanor was no longer first lady. She was alone again. She had lost the one she cared about the most.

"Now I must decide what I'll do with the rest of my life," she said to Granny and to Fala, Franklin's little dog.



First she went to be with her grandchildren.

"Oh, boy!" they cried, for they loved her very much. "Now you have time to play with us."

But when she saw her own happy, healthy grandchildren, Eleanor knew that there was still work for her to do. "It would be nice to stay with you," she said, "but there are boys and girls in the world who have no place to live and not enough to eat. I must try to help them. Many of them have no one else who cares about them."



The refugee children were not the only ones who needed help. In some lands there were thousands of youngsters who didn't have enough to eat. Eleanor set her mind to finding ways to help them.

And then she had a wonderful idea.

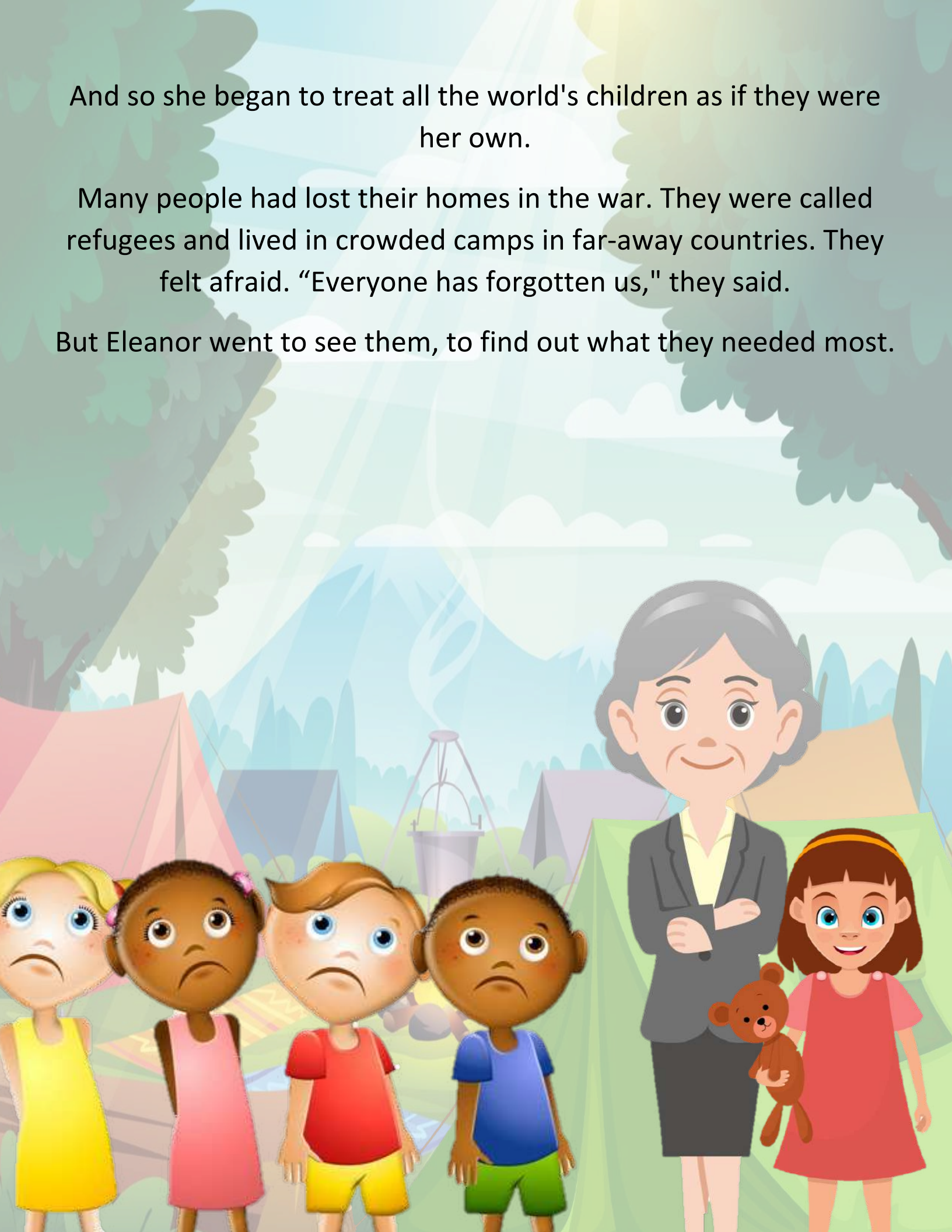
She began to work in the United Nations to help the sad, poor, and hungry people everywhere.



And so she began to treat all the world's children as if they were her own.

Many people had lost their homes in the war. They were called refugees and lived in crowded camps in far-away countries. They felt afraid. "Everyone has forgotten us," they said.

But Eleanor went to see them, to find out what they needed most.



Then she returned home and spoke about the problems of these homeless people and their lonely, uncared-for children.

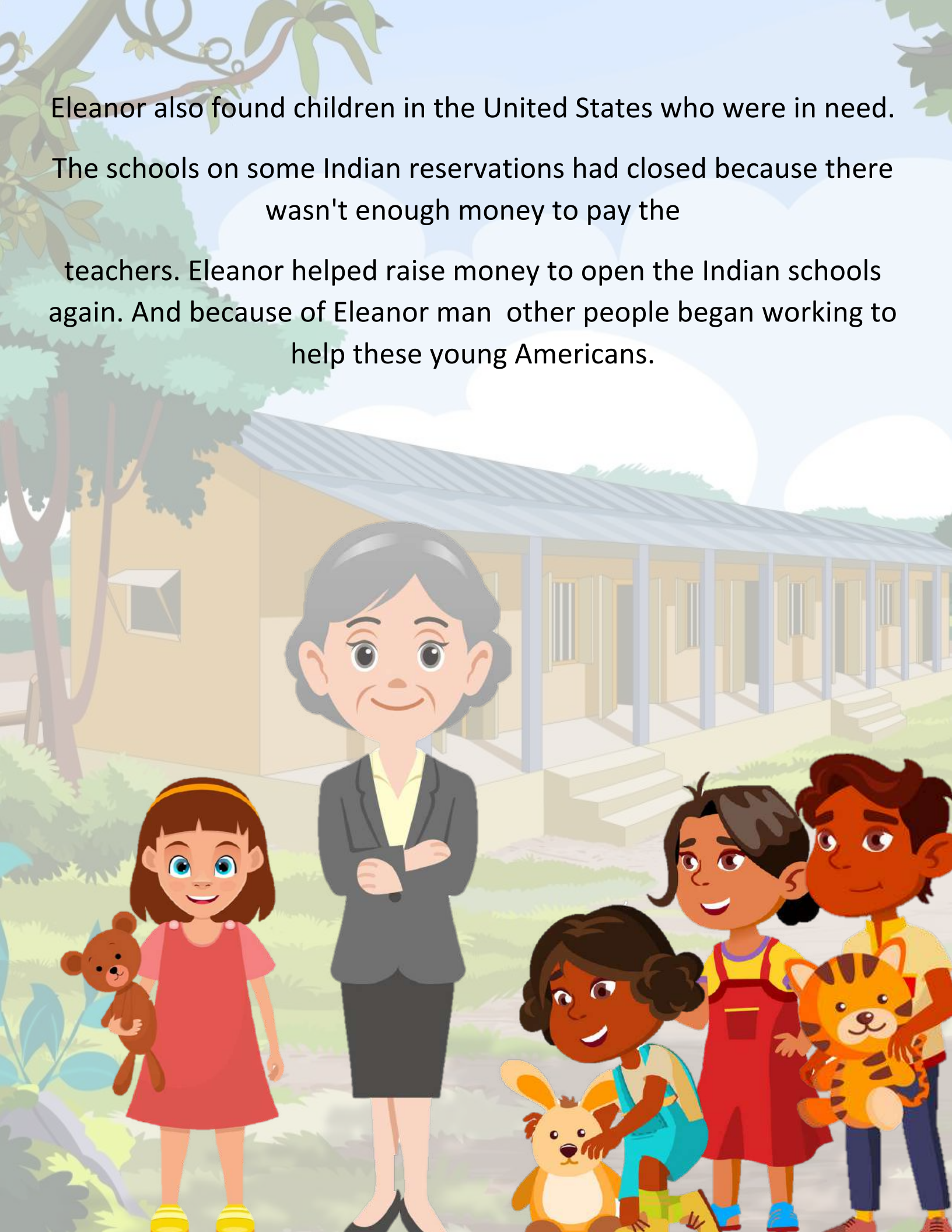
"You may not be first lady of the United States anymore," said Granny happily, "but now everyone knows that you're first lady of the world."



Eleanor also found children in the United States who were in need.

The schools on some Indian reservations had closed because there wasn't enough money to pay the

teachers. Eleanor helped raise money to open the Indian schools again. And because of Eleanor many other people began working to help these young Americans.



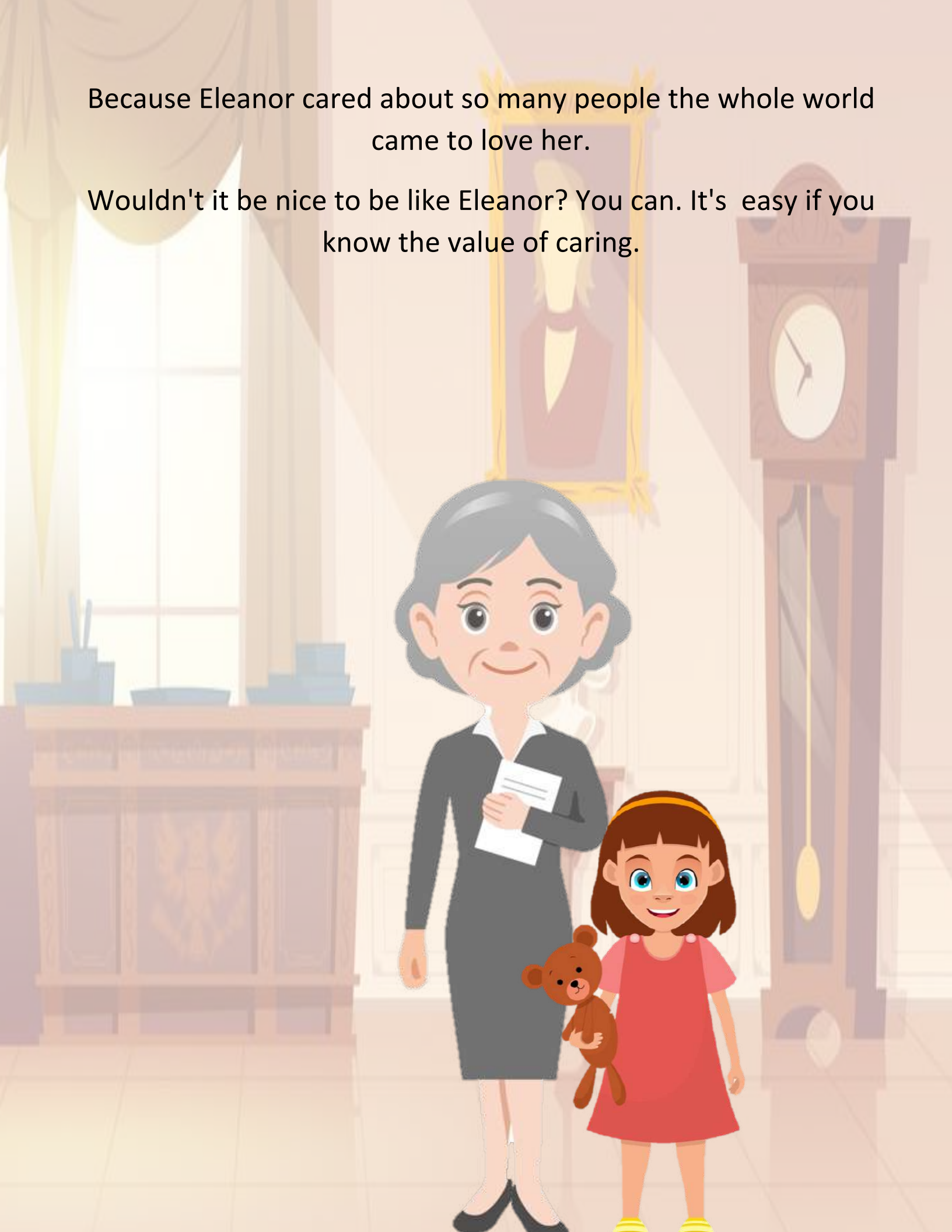
Eleanor also realized that black children weren't treated as well as white children, so she spoke out. She called for new laws so that all children would have an equal chance.

"Slow down!" cried Granny as Eleanor ran up the steps of the Capitol building on her way to talk with the lawmakers. "Wait for me!" "Sorry," said Eleanor, "but the rights of children are very important. I have to make the congressmen see that. I can't slow down."



Because Eleanor cared about so many people the whole world came to love her.

Wouldn't it be nice to be like Eleanor? You can. It's easy if you know the value of caring.



Show that you care for others by doing loving things to make them happy, and they will return your love. Then you can be happier too, like our wonderfully caring friend Eleanor Roosevelt.

# *The End*

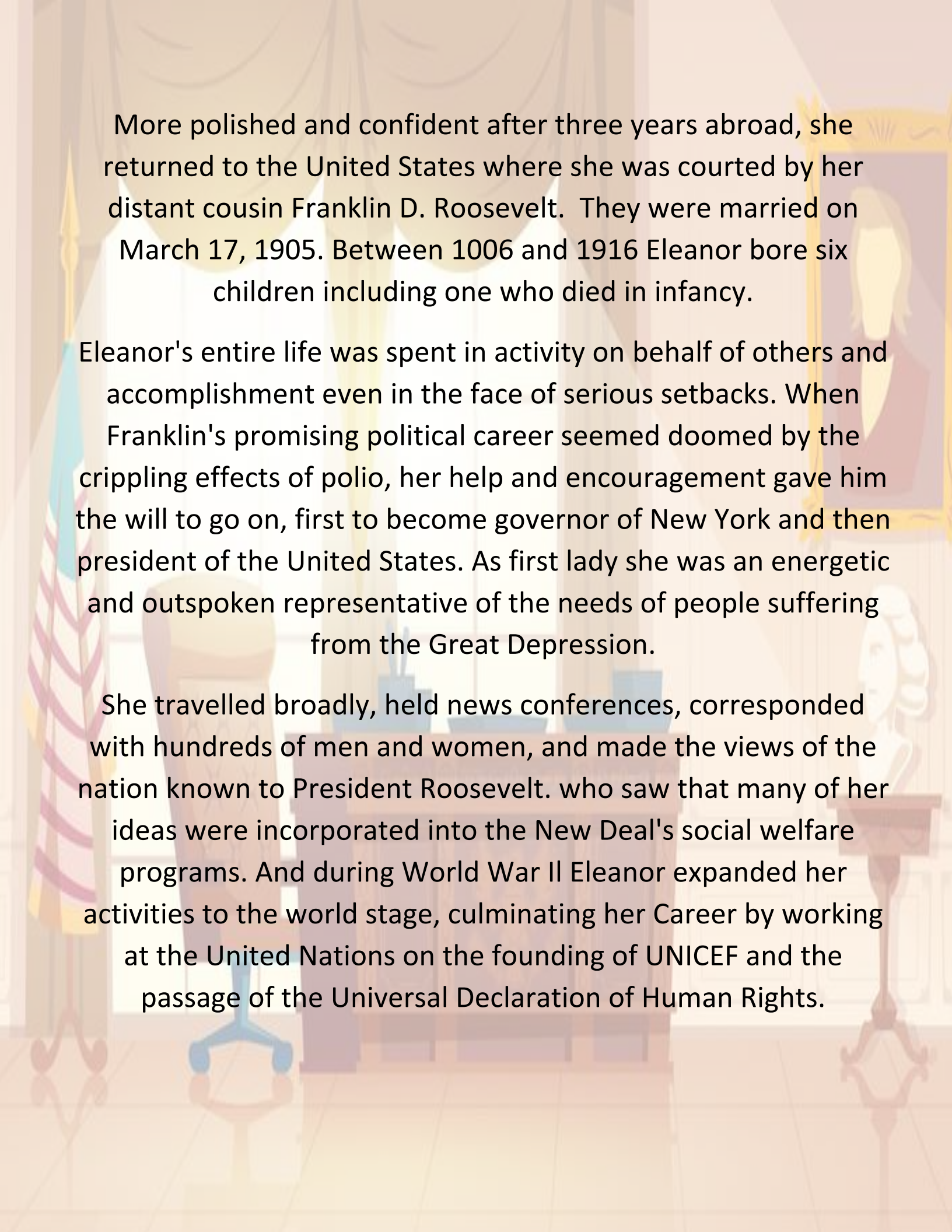


# *Historical Facts*

Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the most widely known and admired women of the twentieth century. Her humanitarian efforts on behalf of children, the oppressed, the poor, and the hopeless earned her the love of millions in many countries. She was justly known as the first lady of the world. One major historian characterized her as "a great and gallant--and, above all, a profoundly good-lady."

She was born on October 11, 1884 to a wealthy and influential New York family. Her father's ancestors had settled in New York City in the 1640s and her mother's forebears included a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Her father's brother was President Theodore Roosevelt.

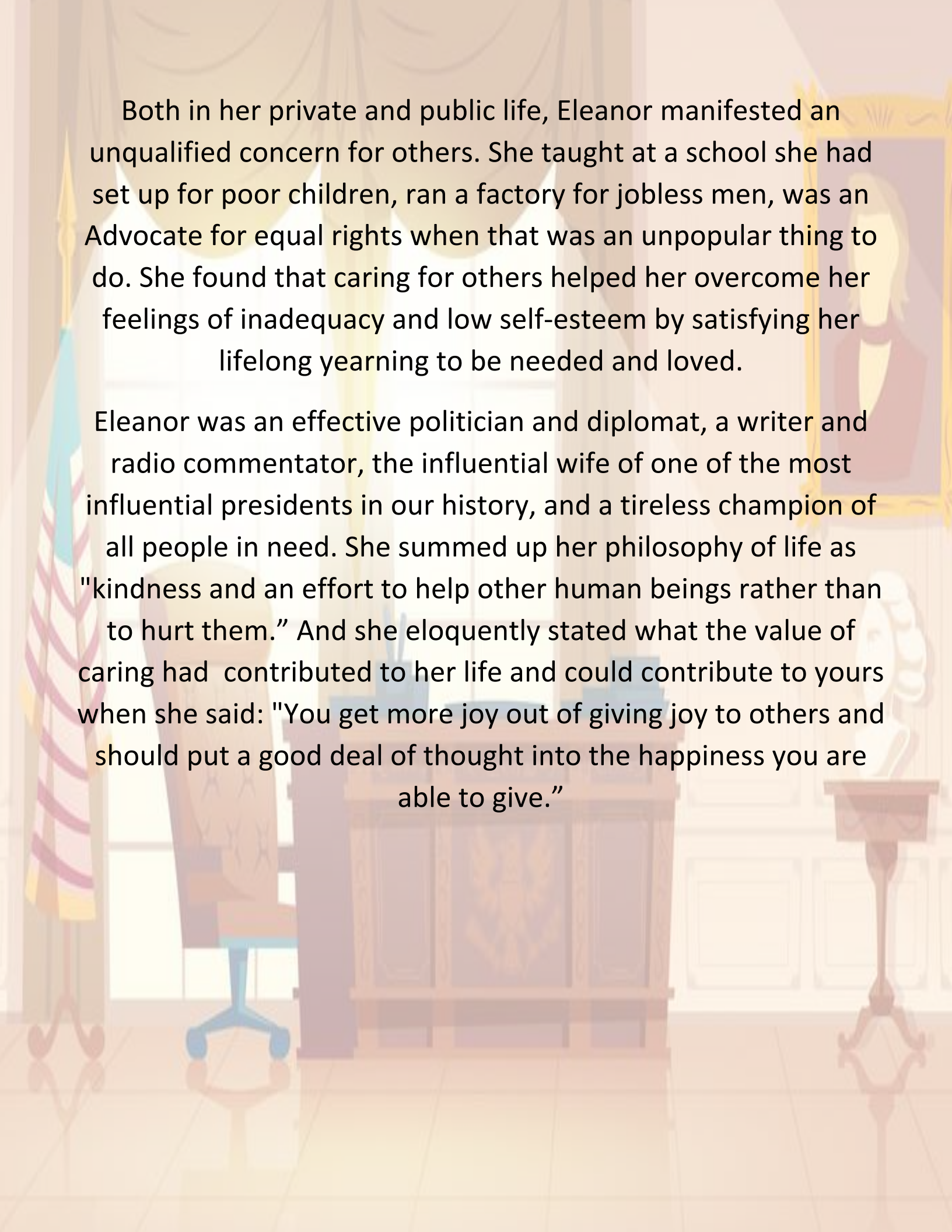
Despite her family's secure position, Eleanor was a very timid and shy little girl. Unattractive and withdrawn, she always felt inadequate around her beautiful mother. And her insecurities were only heightened when her mother died when Eleanor was just eight years old and when her father—who loved her deeply, but who was an alcoholic—died two years later. She grew up in her grandmother's home, with few friends her own age, and was schooled by private tutors. Not until she was fifteen years old did she start her formal education, at Allenswood School in England.



More polished and confident after three years abroad, she returned to the United States where she was courted by her distant cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt. They were married on March 17, 1905. Between 1906 and 1916 Eleanor bore six children including one who died in infancy.

Eleanor's entire life was spent in activity on behalf of others and accomplishment even in the face of serious setbacks. When Franklin's promising political career seemed doomed by the crippling effects of polio, her help and encouragement gave him the will to go on, first to become governor of New York and then president of the United States. As first lady she was an energetic and outspoken representative of the needs of people suffering from the Great Depression.

She travelled broadly, held news conferences, corresponded with hundreds of men and women, and made the views of the nation known to President Roosevelt. who saw that many of her ideas were incorporated into the New Deal's social welfare programs. And during World War II Eleanor expanded her activities to the world stage, culminating her Career by working at the United Nations on the founding of UNICEF and the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Both in her private and public life, Eleanor manifested an unqualified concern for others. She taught at a school she had set up for poor children, ran a factory for jobless men, was an Advocate for equal rights when that was an unpopular thing to do. She found that caring for others helped her overcome her feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem by satisfying her lifelong yearning to be needed and loved.

Eleanor was an effective politician and diplomat, a writer and radio commentator, the influential wife of one of the most influential presidents in our history, and a tireless champion of all people in need. She summed up her philosophy of life as "kindness and an effort to help other human beings rather than to hurt them." And she eloquently stated what the value of caring had contributed to her life and could contribute to yours when she said: "You get more joy out of giving joy to others and should put a good deal of thought into the happiness you are able to give."



  
**THINK**  
DIGITAL ACADEMY