Many business experts believe that in the twenty-first century, women will rise to the top of the commercial world. They say women are better at working with people and are more sympathetic to the needs and feelings of their staff.

In *Women in Business*, we see how five women made it to the top in the twentieth century. These women are famous all over the world. They are each from very different cultures and backgrounds but they all have one thing in common – success.

Coco Chanel started her working life as a dressmaker. She started up in business just at the time when women’s lives were changing dramatically. Because of the war, women in northern France suddenly needed clothes for a new kind of lifestyle – an active, working life outside of the home. And Coco Chanel designed them. Throughout her long career, she understood that fashion was not just about clothes but about the way people live their lives.

Hanae Mori, by contrast, was married to a rich businessman before starting her own business. However, life as a housewife did not satisfy her. Inspired by Coco Chanel, she started making designer dresses for Japan’s film stars. Eventually she had more than 70 shops around the world, selling her designs that mixed ideas from East and West.

Anita Roddick’s opportunity came when her children were young and the family needed an income. Selling only natural products, Anita created a market for cheap cosmetics in reusable bottles. Soon her small shop became a big company, but she stuck to her principles. She proved that big companies could help poor communities around the world by buying their products at a fair price.

Oprah Winfrey started her career as a TV newscaster before becoming America’s most well-known chat show host with her own production company. She has become the first black billionaire businesswoman in the United States.

As a 19-year-old Madonna knew that she was going to be a superstar, and only a few years later she became the biggest female rock star of the century, with films, books, records and videos selling millions of copies around the world.

Chapter 1: *Coco Chanel*

Coco Chanel didn't have much money but many of her friends were rich and successful. She borrowed money from a rich friend and started her first hat shop in Paris in 1910. Women were happy to buy her stylish hats and asked her to design clothes for them.

In 1913, Coco borrowed money to open a second shop in the French seaside town of Deauville. Women from all over Europe were soon buying her clothes. With the arrival of the First World War in 1914, women were doing various jobs and Coco designed clothes for them.

In 1915, Coco opened another shop in Biarritz in the south of France. Rich people went there to escape from the worries of war and women were looking for beautiful clothes that allowed them to enjoy themselves.

In the 1920s, Coco expanded her clothing business around the world. She also began dealing with jewellery and cosmetics. Coco's Chanel No. 5 became the most successful perfume of the past hundred years.

While many people suffered from the stock market crash of 1929, Coco continued to design expensive products. In the mid 1930s, some of the workers in her factories stopped work and demanded better treatment. In 1939, with the start of the Second World War, Coco closed her factories. After the war, she moved to Switzerland. However, in 1953, she returned to the fashion business. By the late 1950s, she was back at the top. She designed clothing until her death in 1971 at the age of 87.

Chapter 2: *Hanae Mori*

Hanae Mori was in university in Tokyo when the Second World War started. She went to work in a factory during the war. Then she met and married a man whose family owned a factory that made cloth. Soon after, she decided...
to enter the clothing business. Her clothes caught the attention of a Japanese film producer who asked her to make stylish clothes for his films.

In 1961, after meeting with Coco Chanel in Paris, she knew she wanted to be a designer. She had her own design company in Tokyo in two years. She mixed Eastern and Western ideas in her designs and sold her clothes around the world. She also turned to other businesses, such as perfume, children’s clothes, books, magazines and restaurants.

Chapter 3: Anita Roddick
Anita Roddick grew up in a small English town called Littlehampton in the 1940s and 1950s. She went to university where she studied to become a teacher. After that, Anita travelled to many countries. She met her husband Gordon (a writer) and they had two daughters. They opened a small hotel and a restaurant.

After a few years, they decided the hotel and restaurant were too much work. Gordon decided to travel for two years. Anita borrowed money from the bank to open The Body Shop, a shop that sold cosmetics made from natural products.

A few months later, Anita opened a second shop with financing from a local businessman. More people became involved in The Body Shop and began opening shops that sold the products in England and abroad.

Anita tried to run a business that was responsible towards society and the earth. By the late 1990s, she became more involved in political campaigns and in 2006, she sold control of The Body Shop to the large French company L’Oreal. Anita died in 2007.

Chapter 4: Oprah Winfrey
Oprah Winfrey started her working life as a newsreader for small radio and TV stations in the early 1970s. She got a job at a larger TV station in Baltimore in 1976 and was given a job on that station’s morning talk show.

In 1983, Oprah took over the morning show at a large TV station in Chicago. Then she acted in Steven Spielberg’s movie The Color Purple and became noticed around the country. Oprah, who wanted more control of her career, started her own company (Harpo Productions) in 1986 and bought a TV and film production centre in Chicago. The Oprah Winfrey Show now plays throughout the world. In 2004, at the age of 50, Oprah became America’s first black millionaire.

Chapter 5: Madonna
Madonna moved to New York at 19 with the goal of being a star. She did various jobs and also learned to sing, play instruments and write and record her own songs. She approached Freddy Demann, who had worked with Michael Jackson. He helped make her song Holiday a hit on MTV and also got her into films. Madonna married and divorced actor Sean Penn and faced controversy when some religious people spoke out against her videos.

Madonna took charge of her own company (Maverick) in 1992 (which she later sold). With this company, Madonna produced a controversial book of photographs and helped discover new talent, while still remaining at the top of the pop charts.

Background and themes
For women in business in the twentieth century there was a ‘glass ceiling’ – an invisible line that women had to break through to succeed. It meant they had to be not just as good as men but better than men to succeed. The women in this book crashed through the glass ceiling by building their own businesses when they were in charge.

Women in Business raises interesting questions about what makes people successful. The common link between them seems to be vision – they all had an idea that was bigger than just running a business.

A good education does not seem to be a key to business success as many top entrepreneurs have left school early. Coco Chanel, Oprah Winfrey and Madonna all came from deprived or ordinary backgrounds, yet all found success and found it through sheer focus and determination.

Taking a career break to have children can be a problem for women. Coco Chanel didn’t have children and Oprah Winfrey still doesn’t. Anita Roddick already had her children when she started her business. And Madonna didn’t have children until she was already a superstar.

One important point within the book is the way in which world events had an effect on the business careers of some of these women. The First World War was important in providing Coco Chanel with a new market for her fashion ideas. For Hanae Mori, the impact of the Second World War on Japanese society was important – it created a need for a new way of dressing.
Discussion activities

Before reading
1 Discuss: Give students five minutes to think of a few things to say about a successful businesswoman or man from their own country. For example, think about what type of business they do and what makes that business successful. Have them work on their own or in pairs and then present their information to the class. Encourage other students to ask questions to get more information.

Chapter 1: Coco Chanel

Before reading
2 Guess: Look at the picture of Coco Chanel on page 2. Do students know anything about her? What words would they use to describe her (based on the picture)?

After reading
3 Pair work: On page 1, have students read about the role women usually played in society at the start of the twentieth century. Then discuss the types of clothes they wore. List how Coco was able to adapt her designs to meet the different needs and interests of women in 1910, 1913, 1914, 1915 and in the 1920s.
4 Role play: Have students imagine the conversation between Coco Chanel and Boy Capel in 1910 as she describes the type of shop she wants to open. 
   Student A: You are Coco. You want to borrow money from Boy Capel. Tell him your plans.
   Student B: You are Boy Capel. You are surprised about Coco's plans and her request for money. Ask questions about her shop and designs.

Chapter 2: Hanae Mori

Before reading
5 Guess: In groups, have students look at the picture of the woman on page 17. Have students describe the person they see and guess what she does.

After reading
6 Role play: Have students imagine the conversation between Hanae Mori and her husband, Ken, as they discuss the future. 
   Student A: You are Hanae Mori. You are bored with your life as a housewife. Talk to your husband about your ideas to start a business.
   Student B: You are Ken Mori. You are interested in your wife's future plans. Ask her questions.
7 Write: Ask students to imagine that they are Hanae Mori. Have them write a paragraph describing an important event and how it affected her life. This could involve: deciding to start her own business; designing clothes for a film producer; meeting with Coco Chanel, etc.
   Example: I'll never forget the time I …

Chapter 3: Anita Roddick

Before reading
8 Guess: Have students look at the picture of Anita Roddick on page 25. Have them imagine what she might say about success in business (based on her appearance). Have students complete a quote from Anita: ‘To succeed in business, you need to …’ Have them share their ideas.

After reading
9 Role play: Have students work with a partner and look at page 28. Anita wants to borrow £4,000 from the bank to open a second shop.
   Student A: You are Anita. Explain why you want the money.
   Student B: You are the bank manager. Explain why you can’t loan Anita the money.
10 Discuss: Write this statement on the board: The job of business is to make money, not to save the environment. Take a class vote. How many agree and how many disagree? Divide the class in two. One half prepares arguments to support the statement. The other half prepares arguments against. Have the debate. Take a second class vote. Has anybody changed their mind?

Chapter 4: Oprah Winfrey

Before reading
11 Discuss: Have students look at the picture of Oprah Winfrey on page 36. Oprah became famous by hosting a TV talk show. Have them discuss the kind of person that succeeds as a talk show host. Then have them list words that they think describe the person they see on page 36.

After reading
12 Discuss: Have students discuss why Oprah is so popular in the United States and around the world. Then have students discuss why she is so successful in business. What did she do to become so powerful?

Chapter 5: Madonna

Before reading
13 Discuss: In groups, have students discuss what they might know about Madonna. Then have them list words they think of when they hear ‘pop star’.

After reading
14 Group work: Have students discuss what made Madonna such a successful pop star and businessperson. List her accomplishments. Then have students discuss their favourite pop star. What do they know about that person? What makes that person successful?

Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.