Jonas Salk was born in New York City in 1914, the son of Russian immigrants. His father, Daniel, worked in the garment district, and was ambitious for his children. Two years after Jonas’s birth, a terrible poliomyelitis (polio) epidemic hit our East Coast. Polio, caused by a virus, was also called infantile paralysis because it particularly affected young children. This terrifying illness, causing breathing problems, paralysis, crippling, and sometimes death, struck Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) at the age of 39. FDR, although paralyzed, was elected President in 1932. He promoted the March of Dimes to benefit the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP) and fund research. In 1918, there was a worldwide outbreak of another virus, influenza, which killed 22 million people. These tragic events and the NFIP had a big impact on the direction Jonas’s life would take.

Jonas’s mother, Dora, was a perfectionist. So was Jonas. This is a good trait to have if you’re a research scientist, because in science, everything has to be very precise. Extremely confident, Jonas said, “Someday I shall grow up and do something in my own way, without anyone telling me how.” He entered college when he was 15. After being introduced to science, he decided to go to medical school. Salk became very interested in research when he learned about different types of vaccines. A vaccine can make someone immune or protected from a particular disease. He chose to work for Dr. Thomas Francis Jr., at the University of Michigan, to develop a vaccine against the influenza virus.

Salk and his work caught the attention of NFIP, which asked him to work on a polio vaccine at the University of Pittsburgh. Salk’s colleague Dr. John Enders figured out how to grow the viruses they were experimenting on, which made their work much easier. Once they’d learned how to kill the virus, the doctors injected the resulting vaccine into patients to prevent them from getting polio. (Dr. Albert Sabin developed an oral vaccine, which is also used.) For his lifesaving work, which virtually eliminated polio from the globe, Dr. Salk received many awards. In his later life, he worked to develop a vaccine to stop the AIDS virus. At the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, Salk worked on this project until his death. Now, other scientists continue his fight to eradicate (end) this dreadful disease.
1. Dora Salk and her son, Jonas, were both ________.
2. ________ stands for the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.
3. In 1918, ________ killed 22 million people all over the world.
4. Franklin Roosevelt got polio when he was 39 years old.
5. President Roosevelt supported the March of ________ to benefit NFIP.
6. The Salk polio ________ protected people from getting the virus.
7. ________ was an infectious viral disease that mainly attacked children.
8. Jonas Salk’s parents were immigrants from ________.
9. Dr. Albert ________ developed an oral polio vaccine, which is also in use.
10. ________ means an inherited, acquired, or induced protection from a germ.
11. Dr. Salk was ________ years old and still working when he died.
12. The Salk Institute is in La Jolla, ________.
13. Dr. Salk was working on a vaccine for ________ when he died.
14. Jonas Salk started college when he was ________ years old.
15. At the Salk ________, a vaccine was being developed to prevent AIDS.
16. Polio was also called ________ paralysis.
17. When Jonas was young, he dreamed of the day when he wouldn’t be ________ what to do.
18. In college, Salk, interested in science, decided to go to ________ school.
19. Polio is caused by a ________, and so is AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).
20. Dr. John ________ figured out how to grow viruses in test tubes.
Answer Key

DR. JONAS SALK
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Down:
1. perfectionists
2. NFIP
4. President
5. Dimes
6. vaccine
8. Russia
10. immunity
11. eighty
14. fifteen
17. told

Across:
3. influenza
7. poliomyelitis
9. Sabin
12. California
13. AIDS
15. Institute
16. infantile
18. medical
19. virus
20. Enders