

What do my late grandma, my mum, my history teacher Miss Morton and Baroness Thatcher have in common? They shaped and inspired me to be the woman I am today.

My grandma divorced in the sixties; it was a time when divorce was unusual if not frowned upon. She moved several hundred miles away with her three children and started a new life. She worked hard to ensure that my mum and her siblings got the best education, food on the table and the support they needed at home. She never lost her compassion for the vulnerable and worked in the community until her retirement.

Two decades later my mother divorced my father and as a single parent did all she could to provide for my sister and I. Not once did I ever think my mother was weak. Even when she cried with despair or mourned the car she sold to put cheap meat cuts on our table she was still the strongest person I knew.

When Miss Morton bounced around the classroom teaching girls the history or politics of this country she captivated her audience. She inspired us to learn. I hope she is somewhere in Kent proud of her former student.

And there in the background, while I was riding my bike, reading the beano, being grounded for letting my sister fall out of a tree, was Britain's first and only female Prime Minister. She was not from a privileged background. She worked hard. She had conviction. And if I may be so crass, she had balls.

The four women who shaped me have a lot in common. They were brave, bold, worked hard and, even in the face of adversity, they were principled. But most importantly and in very different ways they all taught me to believe the world is my oyster. They inspired me to be who I am today.