The greatest! Who?
Assessing the greatness of a prime minister
I n 2004, a committee on public understanding of science (COPUS) surveyed the public and asked them to rate the top 10 scientists of all time. The top five were Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin, Isaac Newton, Stephen Hawking, and Galileo Galilei. The top three were Einstein, Newton, and Darwin. The top two were Einstein and Newton.

So when I asked my students which scientists I should study, they had a hard time deciding. They said, “You should study all of them!”

I resisted their advice. I decided to study only one scientist: Albert Einstein. I chose Einstein because he was the greatest scientist of all time.

In order to assess the greatness of a prime minister, I turned to the experts. I asked my students to rate the top 10 prime ministers of all time. The top five were Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Vladimir Lenin, and Nelson Mandela. The top three were Churchill, Gandhi, and Lincoln. The top two were Churchill and Gandhi.

So when I asked my students which prime ministers I should study, they had an easy time deciding. They said, “You should study all of them!”

I resisted their advice. I decided to study only one prime minister: Winston Churchill. I chose Churchill because he was the greatest prime minister of all time.