

Florence Nightingale



Florence Nightingale was born in a city in Italy called Florence. She is a famous British nurse who lived from 1820-1910.

When she was older her family returned to London to live. Her family were rich and her daily life was spent seeing to servants, entertaining guests, reading, sewing and attending social events. Florence was also very religious and believed in God and saw something very different for her future.

Sewing



Entertaining



At the start of the 19th century, nurses usually had no training at all, and they weren't even paid for the 'menial' work they did. When Florence was 16 years old, she believed she heard a voice from God calling for her to "carry out important work to help those suffering". She wanted to be a nurse. When Florence broke the news to her parents, they weren't too happy! Nursing was not a respectful profession and, hospitals were filthy, horrible places where sick people died - certainly no place for a wealthy girl like Florence! William tried hard to change his daughter's mind, but Florence was determined. In 1851, he gave in, and allowed Florence to study nursing at a Christian school for women in Germany. There, she learned important skills in caring for patients and the importance of hospital cleanliness.

It wasn't long before Florence put her new skills to the test. By 1853 she was running a women's hospital in London, where she did a fantastic job improving the working conditions as well as patient care. In 1854, the **Crimean War** broke out - a war with Britain, France and Turkey on one side, and Russia on the other. British troops went off to fight in the Crimea - an area in the south of Russia, now part of Ukraine. News soon reached home of soldiers dying from battle wounds, cold, hunger and sickness, with no real medical care or nurses to treat them. Help was needed fast, and the Minister for War - called Sidney Herbert - knew just the person... He asked Florence to lead a team of nurses to the Crimea!





A battle in the Crimean war.

When they arrived, the nurses found the Army hospital in **Scutari** (the area where wounded soldiers were sent) in a terrible state. It was overcrowded and filthy, with blocked drains, broken toilets and rats running everywhere. There weren't enough medical supplies or equipment, and wounded soldiers had to sleep on the dirty floor, without blankets to keep warm, clean water to drink or fresh food to eat. Not surprisingly, disease spread quickly and most of the soldiers died from infection.



Hospitals were dirty, rat infested and unhygienic places to be!



Florence knew that the soldiers could only get well again if the hospital conditions improved. With funds from back home, she bought better medical equipment and decent food, and paid for workmen to clear the drains. And together with her team, she **cleaned the wards**, set up a **hospital kitchen** and provided the wounded soldiers with **quality care** - bathing them, dressing their wounds and feeding them. As a result of all the improvements, far fewer soldiers were dying from disease.



The hospital in Scutari after Florence and her team of nurses cleaned up the ward.

Florence Nightingale truly cared for her suffering patients. At night, when everyone was sleeping, she'd visit the soldiers to make sure they were comfortable. She'd also write letters home for those who could not write themselves. Since Florence carried a lantern with her on her night visits, the soldiers would call her '**The Lady with the Lamp**'.





The Lady with the Lamp, checking the patients at night time.

What did Florence Nightingale do after the Crimean War?

By the time Florence returned to England in 1856, she'd made quite a name for herself. After newspapers wrote about her work in the Crimea, people thought of her as a heroine. **Queen Victoria** wrote her a letter to say thank you for everything she had done.

But Florence didn't want to be famous, and even though the war was over, there was still work to be done. She set about writing letters to important people telling them what was wrong with Army hospitals, and in September 1856 she met with **Queen Victoria** to discuss ways to improve military medical systems. Huge changes took place - the Army started to train doctors, hospitals became cleaner and soldiers were provided with better clothing, food and care.



In 1860, the **Nightingale Training School for Nurses** opened at St Thomas's Hospital in London. Not only did the school provide excellent nurse training, it made nursing a respectable career for women who wanted to work outside the home.



The Nightingale Training School for Nurses

Florence suffered from illness for much of her later life, largely because of all her hard work helping sick people. In fact, during her final 40 years she spent many days confined to her bed. But she was greatly appreciated for everything she did for nursing, and for **saving the lives of thousands of people**.

In 1907, Florence became the first woman to receive the **Order of Merit**, an award given by the Queen for super-special work.

Sadly, Florence Nightingale died on 13 of August 1910, but she will forever be recognised as the founder of modern nursing.



The Order of Merit award

Ethnic Minority Gypsy Roma Traveller Achievement

