

Florence Nightingale

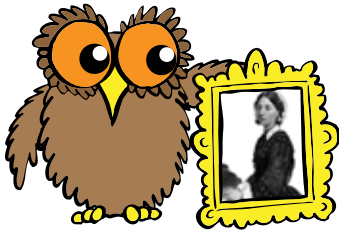


The Florence Nightingale fact pack

Full of interesting information and stories
with help from me, Athena the Owl.



Florence Nightingale



Who was Florence Nightingale?



Embley Park (drawing by Parthenope Nightingale)

Florence Nightingale was born in Italy on 12th May 1820. She was named after the city of her birthplace, Florence. Her parents, William Edward and Frances Nightingale came from wealthy families and had two large country estates, Embley Park in Hampshire and Lea Hurst in Derbyshire. Florence had an older sister called Parthenope.

In Victorian times, young girls from wealthy families did not go to school, they were often taught at home by governesses. Florence and Parthenope were taught at home by their father. Florence was a very good pupil and was eager to learn lots of subjects, especially mathematics.

When Florence was sixteen she began to help the local poor and sick and began to realise that she wanted to become a nurse.

When Florence told her parents this they were very upset, they expected Florence to become a wife and mother and not to go to work. At this time a nurse was considered a very low position in society; they were usually old, uneducated and often drunk.

Florence persisted in her ambition and secretly read all the books and reports she could about health and hospitals. She became an expert on how to nurse the sick. In 1851 and 1853 Florence visited hospitals around Europe. Her first real job came when she was 33 and went to work in an institution for sick women on Harley Street in London.



Florence as a child



Why did Florence Nightingale go to the Crimea?

In 1854 Britain and France joined Turkey in the Crimean War by declaring war on Russia. The battles being fought were fierce and bloody and many wounded soldiers needed to be sent to military hospitals. For the first time, journalists of British newspapers were close to the action. William Howard Russell became one of the first professional war journalists and his dispatches caused a sensation. He wrote about the appalling conditions of these hospitals and the sufferings of the sick troops. An appeal was launched in The Times newspaper on behalf of the sick and wounded.



The Scutari Barrack Hospital

On 14th October 1854 Florence asked to leave her job in the Harley Street hospital, to lead a private expedition to the Crimea. On 15th October the Minister

at War, Mr Sidney Herbert had written to Florence asking if she would go to the Crimea on behalf of the Government and be responsible for the introduction of female nurses into the army hospitals.

Thirty eight nurses were chosen to accompany Florence to Scutari in Turkey to help the soldiers. The nurses travelled to Marseilles in the South of France, where they boarded a ship called the Vectis.

The journey was long and hard and many of the nurses suffered seasickness. They eventually arrived at Constantinople in Turkey on 4th November 1854.



Embarkation of the sick at Balaclava, from an engraving by William Simpson



What was it like working in the Crimea?

The work that Florence and the nurses did when they first arrived at the hospitals was not what they were expecting. Many of the army doctors did not approve of having ladies in the wards. The nurses' duties were restricted to sewing, washing and checking the stores. After the Battle of Inkerman many more wounded soldiers arrived at the hospitals and the doctors were forced to ask Florence and the nurses to help.



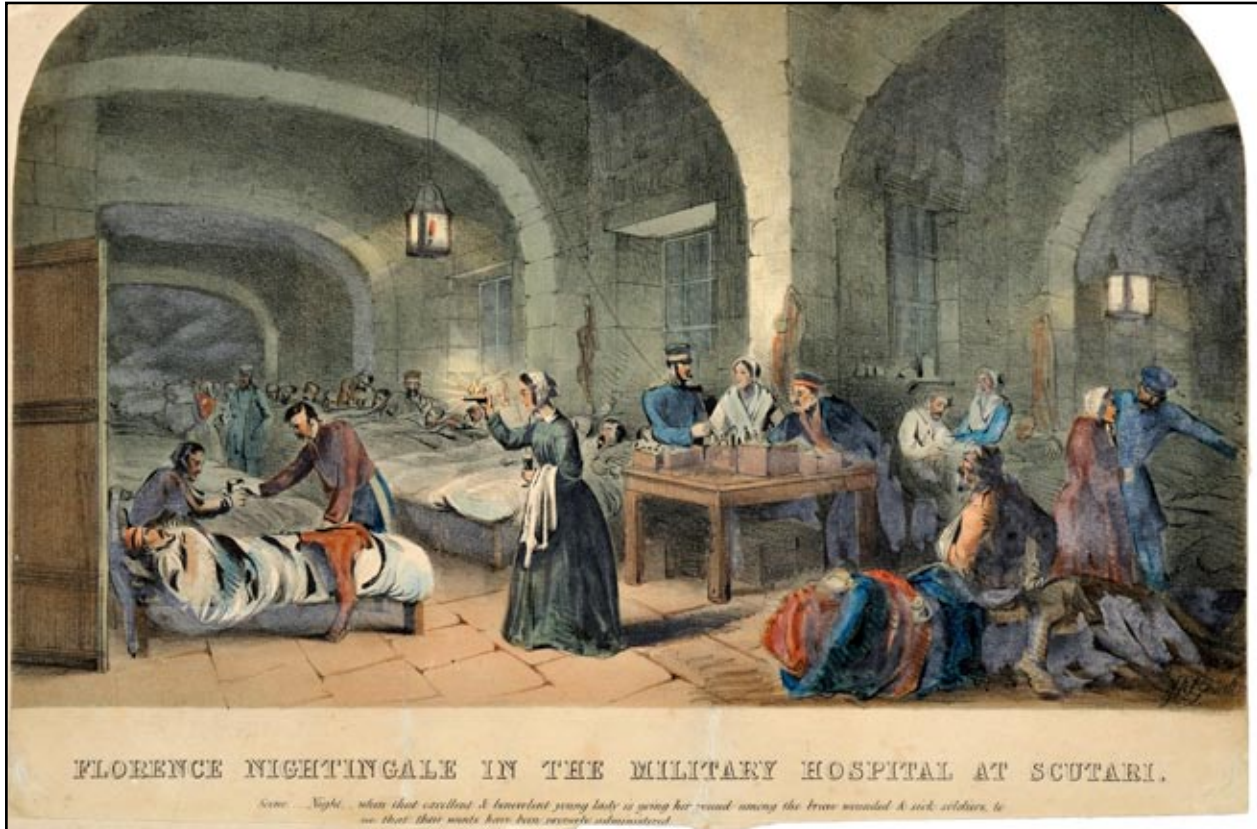
A painting of one of the wards at the Barrack Hospital at Scutari

Florence was then able to begin her real work. She began making improvements to the cleanliness of the hospitals and providing the soldiers with clean clothes and sheets.

She also worked to improve the hygiene of the buildings. With the help of a chef called Alexis Soyer, she also improved the soldiers' diet by giving them healthier and better cooked food. Florence used money raised from donations at home to buy extra food and supplies, taking over control of them to ensure they were issued efficiently.

Florence Nightingale

Florence famously walked the wards at night with a Turkish lantern. The soldiers gave her the nickname the 'Lady with the Lamp'. Many artists drew pictures of how they believed the famous nurse to look! Their images dominate how we imagine her today.

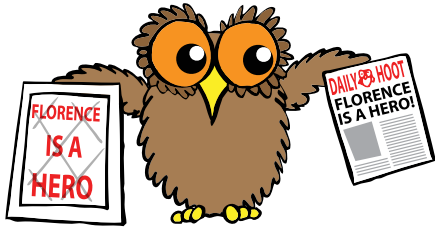


Florence on the ward with her lamp

Florence greatly admired the common soldier, calling them her 'children'. She extended their privileges, introducing reading rooms and other activities for the recuperating men. When soldiers died Florence often wrote letters back to their families to comfort them.

Florence became very ill with 'Crimean Fever' and nearly died. The doctors recommended that she go back to England to recover, but she refused, wanting to carry on with her work in Scutari. The symptoms of this disease recurred throughout her life and she often felt ill.

Florence wrote back to her friend Sidney Herbert in the Government, to tell him what she had done and what was still needed. The problems Florence identified during the Crimean War, were also improved after the war with her help.



After the Crimean War

Florence returned from the Crimea a national heroine. British newspapers had described to the public what wonderful things Florence had been doing and returning soldiers praised her. People have continued to tell the story of Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War and this is what she is most famous for. However, Florence went on to achieve many other things which we should also remember today.



The song that was specially composed for Florence's return



Why do we remember Florence Nightingale?

Horrified by the shocking conditions that the wounded soldiers had been forced to live in during the war, Florence was determined that it should never happen again. She kept detailed accounts of the number of casualties and what they died from, in order to see where improvements needed to be made. She created pie charts to illustrate the statistics. In 1858 Florence became the first woman to be elected a member of the Statistical Society.

In a famous meeting with Queen Victoria, she asked that a Royal Commission be set up to investigate the health of the British Army. The report proved that men had been dying in the military barracks due to filthy living conditions that spread disease, even in times of peace! The Commission called for many changes to take place. The improvements saved the lives of many soldiers.

In 1860 Florence wrote a small book on the experiences she had learned about nursing, for ordinary women to read. Florence recognised that they too played an important part in the care of the sick. 'Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It Is Not' was an instant success. It remains her most famous work and is still in print today.



Florence and Athena, her pet owl

After the Crimean War, Florence used money raised from donations to establish a professional training school for nurses at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. Discipline at the School was strict because Florence wanted her nurses to be well behaved and be known for their skills. Soon the Nightingale Training School's reputation was spreading and hospitals all over the world were asking for Nightingale nurses to start new schools. They went to Australia, America, Europe and Africa. Florence's nurses are credited with raising the respectability of the profession from its bad reputation in the early 1800's.

Florence Nightingale

Florence was also concerned about the health of the general public. In Victorian times people did not live for as long as today. Bad living conditions and fewer medicines meant that poor people were often ill. Many of the very poor would end their days in workhouses because they were too ill to work and could not afford to keep their houses. Workhouses were often horrible places with terrible conditions. Florence worked to bring wide-ranging changes to the workhouse and sent Nightingale Nurses to help care for the sick.

Florence Nightingale was very influential in improving sanitary conditions in India, then part of the British Empire. Although she never visited India, Florence's reports, statistics and guidelines were key to improving not only the health of the British Army there, but also the local population. Her work led to the establishment of a Sanitary Department in the Government's India Office.



Florence Nightingale and a group of Nightingale Nurses

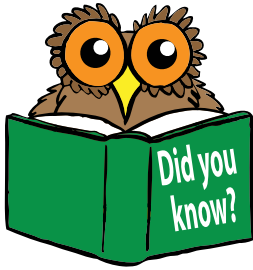
The experience Florence had gained led her to realise that hospital buildings themselves could affect the health and recovery of patients. Her ward designs, known as Nightingale Wards were first used at St. Thomas' Hospital and then copied all over the world. Florence supported the idea of nurses visiting the sick in their homes.

Florence established a School of Midwifery nursing at King's College Hospital in 1861. Florence wanted women to train purely as Midwifery Nurses. Within six months the School had become the model for the country.

In 1907 Florence was the first woman to receive the Order of Merit, Britain's highest civilian decoration.

Florence died on August 13th 1910, she was 90 years old. She had refused to agree to be buried at Westminster Abbey in London and wanted to be buried with her family in East Wellow, Hampshire, England. After her funeral, a memorial was held for her at St Pauls Cathedral, London.

Florence Nightingale



Did You Know?

- Florence kept lots of pets, one of which was an owl called "Athena"
- Florence was seasick during the entire boat journey to the Crimea
- Florence rode in a carriage around the Crimea visiting hospitals and advising on conditions
- Florence made all of her nurses wear a sash over their uniforms to distinguish them from the other women at the hospital in Scutari and to encourage the soldiers to treat them with respect
- During her lifetime, Florence became a national icon and people could buy ceramic figurines of her to decorate their houses. There were also Florence Nightingale songs, poems and portraits
- Florence did a lot to change hospitals after she left the Crimea
- Florence wrote around 200 publications and 13,000 letters
- The activities of the nurses working for Florence ranged from treating wounds and applying leeches to baking cakes and trimming bonnets



Florence in bed in her last few years.

- Florence's work still has an important influence on nursing today

Florence Nightingale



Time to colour Florence Nightingale in

