



The National Archives

Education Service



# Florence Nightingale

Why do we remember her?

This resource was produced using documents from the collections of The National Archives. It can be freely modified and reproduced for use in the classroom only.

# Introduction

On 4 November 1854, Florence Nightingale arrived in Turkey with a group of 38 nurses from England. Britain was at war with Russia (the Crimean War 1854-1856) and the conditions in the hospitals were very bad. Hundreds of soldiers were injured in the fighting. In those days, hospitals were very basic and the soldiers were not given good food and medicine to help them get better.

When Florence Nightingale got to the hospital, she saw that wounded men were sleeping in overcrowded, dirty rooms without any blankets. Wounded soldiers often arrived with diseases like typhus, cholera and dysentery. More men died from these diseases than from their injuries.

When she arrived at the hospital, the army doctors who worked there did not want the nurses helping. Soon after they arrived, however, there was a very large battle and the doctors realised they needed the nurses' help. Florence Nightingale realised that if the doctors were going to allow her nurses to work then they had to do a very good job.

# Tasks

## 1. Look at Source 1

This is a picture of one of the wards at Scutari Hospital.

- What jobs are the two nurses in the picture doing?
- What other jobs seem to have been done in this ward?
- Who do you think the men in the picture are?
- Do you think this would this have been a comfortable place to stay? Why?
- What do you think are the differences between this hospital and a modern one?

## 2. Look at Source 2

This report describes what happened in the hospital.

- Think about the nurses you have seen when you have visited a hospital or the doctor. Write down a list of all the things you have seen the nurses do, and what kind of people they are.
- This source describes the work that Florence and her nurses did at the hospital at Scutari. Write a list of the jobs the nurses had to do, and the kind of person you think they would have needed to be to do them.
- What do you think are the differences between nurses in Florence Nightingale's time and now?

### 3. Look at Source 3

This is a map of where the fighting took place.

- Look at the map of the war area and see if you can find the following:
  - Where the fighting took place
  - Where the hospital was
  - The United Kingdom
- Why do you think the soldiers' hospital was so far away from where the fighting was?
- How do you think Florence and her nurses got to Scutari?
- Do you think it would have been an easy journey?
- How long do you think it would have taken them to get there from England?

### 4. Look at Source 4

This list is part of a booklet given to all the nurses who travelled to Scutari with Florence Nightingale.

- Think about the nurses you have seen again. What kind of uniform do they wear?
- Look at the document. Why do you think the nurses would need so many different types of clothing?
- How easy do you think it would have been to move around and work wearing these clothes?
- Why do you think that the nurses weren't given all their clothes at once?

### 5. Now you are going to take part in a role-play.

It is late September 1854. Florence Nightingale and Elisabeth Herbert (the wife of Sidney Herbert, the Secretary of War) are interviewing a woman who wants to go to the Crimea as a nurse. First you will have to decide what questions you want to ask the woman. You can ask no more than eight. Use your observations from the exercise in section 2 to help you choose the ones that will be most effective in deciding whether the woman is suitable.

Now get into a group of three. One person should play the part of the woman who wants to go to the Crimea as a nurse. The other two play Florence and Elisabeth and ask the questions. At the end you must decide, do we offer the woman a job as a nurse?

## Background

Florence Nightingale was born on 12 May 1820 to a wealthy couple. As she grew up, she decided that she had a calling to help the sick and poor and decided she wanted to

become a nurse. When Florence told her parents what she wanted, they were not happy. Being a nurse was not respectable and was not thought to be a proper profession. Therefore they did not want this for their daughter. Eventually, her father gave his permission for her to go to Germany where she gained some nursing experience at the Deaconess Institution Hospital for the poor and sick. When she returned she became the lady superintendent (manager) of a hospital for gentlewomen in Harley Street, London.

When war broke out, the government only expected it to last until Christmas. It actually lasted two years. They were not ready for how many soldiers would be injured, and this was one of the reasons why the hospitals were in such a bad state. A reporter for the Times newspaper sent back several reports about the hospitals, and people in Britain started demanding something was done about them. This was when the Minister for War, Sidney Herbert, stepped in and asked Florence Nightingale to arrange and take charge of nurses to send to the war.

Florence returned after the war as a national heroine. She had been shocked by the conditions in the hospital and began to campaign to improve the quality of nursing in military hospitals. Importantly, she gathered a lot of information about food, death rates, and doctors' training in these hospitals. In October 1856 she met with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and in 1857 she gave evidence to a Sanitary Commission. This helped with the setting up of the Army Medical College in Chatham in 1859.

In 1859, Florence published a book called 'Notes on Nursing' which is still in print today. She also founded the Nightingale School and Home for Nurses at St Thomas' Hospital in London. Up until her death, Florence encouraged the development in nursing in Britain and abroad. The main reason we remember her is that she did a lot of work educating people about the importance of keeping hospitals clean and free from infections, and this work is carried on today in modern hospitals.

Something which is less well known is that she was also very gifted with numbers and reports, and because of this, she became the first female member of the Royal Statistical Society in 1858.

## Teacher's notes

Florence Nightingale is best known for her work at Scutari hospital, Turkey, during the Crimean War and then afterwards for her role in developing nursing as a profession. She is also known as 'the lady with the lamp' and this quotation relates to an article published about her in the Times newspaper on Thursday 8 February 1855, which reads: 'She is a "ministering angel" without any exaggeration in these hospitals, and as her slender form glides quietly along each corridor every poor fellow's face softens with gratitude at the sight of her. When all the medical officers have retired for the night, and silence and darkness have settled down upon these miles of prostrate sick, she may be observed alone, with a little lamp in her hand, making her solitary rounds.' The mention of the miles of sick relates to contemporary reports that the wards at Scutari stretched for four miles.

It took Florence and her nurses 13 days to reach Scutari. They travelled by ship to Boulogne, then overland to Marseilles where they had a break in the journey. From Marseilles, they took the mail steamer 'Vectis' to Scutari.

Other women who nursed during the Crimean war were Mary Seacole and Elizabeth (Betsy) Davis.

The documents are designed for use in key stage 1 as part of an enquiry into Florence Nightingale and are intended to be read to pupils by their teacher. They can also be designed for use in key stage 2 as part of a study of the Victorians.

### **Glossary**

You may need to help with some of the language in this document:

**Derry Wrapper** : A wrapper is a type of dressing gown.

**Linseywoolsey** : A coarse fabric made from linen or cotton with a wool filling

**Alpaca** : A glossy black woollen fabric

**Stays** : Flat strips of steel or plastic used for stiffening corsets. The word was also often used to refer to corsets in general.

### **Sources**

Illustration - COPY 1/11

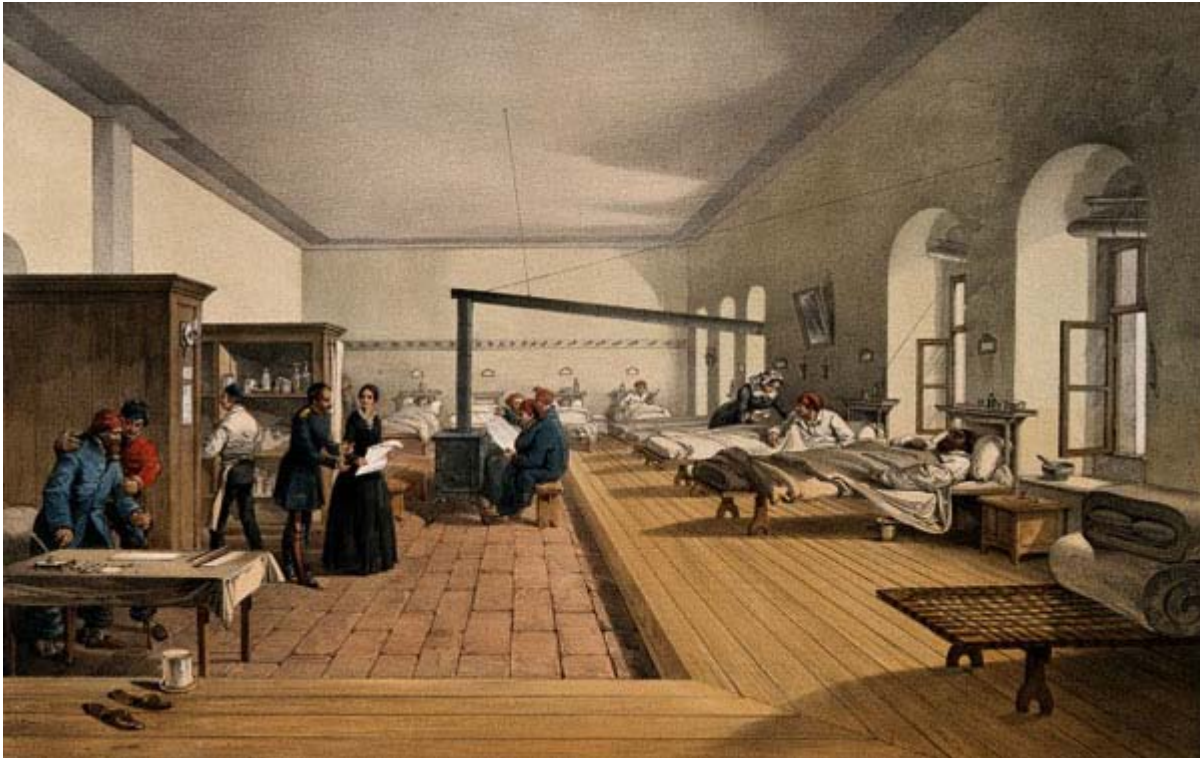
Source 1 - 'One of the wards of the hospital at Scutari', an illustration published 21 April 1856 by Paul & Dominic Colnaghi & Co, by kind permission of the Wellcome Library, London

Source 2 - WO 33/1 An extract from the 'Report upon the state of the hospitals of the British Army in the Crimea and Scutari'

Source 4 - WO 43/963 Extract from Rules and Regulations for the Nurses Attached to the Military Hospitals in the East.



Source 1: One of the wards of the hospital at Scutari - illustration published 21 April 1856 - Wellcome Library, London



Source 2 : An extract from the 'Report upon the state of the hospitals of the British Army in the Crimea and Scutari' (WO 33/1)

Besides the above hospital attendants, we have to notice the staff of nurses under the superintendence of Miss Nightingale. That lady arrived at Scutari on the 4th November, accompanied by thirty-eight nurses. These are employed to attend to such cases as the medical officers in charge, and the staff surgeons

of their divisions, concur in considering cases requiring such attendance. They are employed chiefly, according to Miss Nightingale's evidence, among the wounded, the operation cases, and the severe medical cases. Their duties consist, in surgical cases, in washing, and preparing for the morning visits of the medical officer, such wounds as they are directed by that officer to treat in this way; to attend upon him in dressing the wounds; and to receive, and take to Miss Nightingale, his directions as to diet, drink, and medical comforts. In surgical cases, a corridor and two wards are generally assigned to four nurses. In medical cases, their duties consist in dressing bad sores, seeing that the food of the patients is properly cooked and properly administered, and that cleanliness, both of the wards and of the person, is attended to. We have reason to believe that the services of these hospital attendants have been extremely valuable.

**Source 2 : Transcript of an extract from the 'Report upon the state of the hospitals of the British Army in the Crimea and Scutari' (WO 33/1)**

Besides the above hospital attendants, we have to notice the staff of nurses under the superintendence of Miss Nightingale. That lady arrived at Scutari on the 4th November, accompanied by thirty-eight nurses. These are employed to attend to such cases as the medical officers in charge, and the staff surgeons

of their divisions, concur in considering cases requiring such attendance. They are employed chiefly, according to Miss Nightingale's evidence, among the wounded, the operation cases, and the severe medical cases. Their duties consist, in surgical cases, in washing, and preparing for the morning visits of the medical officer, such wounds as they are directed by that officer to treat in this way; to attend upon him in dressing the wounds; and to receive, and take to Miss Nightingale, his directions as to diet, drink, and medical comforts. In surgical cases, a corridor and two wards are generally assigned to four nurses. In medical cases, their duties consist in dressing bad sores, seeing that the food of the patients is properly cooked and properly administered, and that cleanliness, both of the wards and of the person, is attended to. We have reason to believe that the services of these hospital attendants have been extremely valuable.

**Source 3 : Map of Europe and the War area**

**Source 4 : A list of all clothing provisions and requirements (WO 43/963)**

*Clothing.*

I.

Uniform upper clothing will be provided by Government comprising, in the first year, the following articles :

- 1 cloak with hood.
- 1 Derry wrapper.
- 1 pair of Indian-rubber goloshes.
- 6 check aprons.
- 6 collars.
- 4 caps.
- 2 best caps.
- 2 badges.
- 1 white straw bonnet.
- 1 dark straw bonnet.
- 3 print gowns.
- 2 linseywoolsey gowns.
- 1 cape or light shawl.

27

- 1 woollen jacket.
- 2 pairs of sleeves.
- 1 alpaca gown.
- 1 flannel wrapper.

The above articles will not be supplied all at once, but in such manner as may be deemed expedient with reference to the season of the year. A box for these articles will also be furnished to each Nurse.

Each Nurse may take with her as much under-clothing as her box will hold. She is expected to have in good condition the following articles :

- 1 dark stuff or cotton gown,
- 2 flannel petticoats,
- 2 upper petticoats,
- 2 pairs of stays,
- 6 shifts,
- 6 pairs of stockings.
- 2 night shifts,
- 4 pocket handkerchiefs,
- 3 night caps,
- 3 pairs of boots or shoes,

and all other necessary articles ;

- 1 brush and comb,
- 1 small-tooth comb,
- 1 tooth brush,
- 1 umbrella ;

also a carpet bag, to contain all that is wanted for the voyage. After one year's service, 2*l.* worth of regulation clothing will be provided every six months.

No Nurse is to expect any gift of clothing beyond this.



**Source 4 : Transcript of a list of all clothing provisions and requirements (WO 43/963)**

Clothing.

I.

Uniform upper clothing will be provided by Government comprising, in the first year, the following articles:

- 1 cloak with hood
- 1 Derry wrapper
- 1 pair of Indian-rubber goloshes.
- 6 check aprons.
- 6 collars,
- 4 caps,
- 2 best caps,
- 2 badges,
- 1 white straw bonnet.
- 1 dark straw bonnet.
- 3 print gowns.
- 2 linseywoolsey gowns.
- 1 cape or light shawl.
- 1 woolen jacket.
- 2 pairs of sleeves.
- 1 alpaca gown.
- 1 flannel wrapper.

The above articles will not be supplied all at once, but in such manner as may be deemed expedient with reference to the season of the year. A box for these articles will also be furnished to each Nurse.

Each Nurse may take with her as much under-clothing as her box will hold. She is expected to have in good condition the following articles:

- 1 dark stuff or cotton gown,
  - 2 flannel petticoats,
  - 2 upper petticoats,
  - 2 pairs of stays,
  - 6 shifts,
  - 6 pairs of stockings,
  - 2 night shifts,
  - 4 pocket handkerchiefs,
  - 3 night caps,
  - 3 pairs of boots or shoes,
  - and all other necessary articles;
  - 1 brush and comb,
  - 1 small-tooth comb,
  - 1 tooth brush,
  - 1 umbrella;
- also a carpet bag, to contain all that is wanted for the voyage. After one year's service, 2/. worth of regulation clothing will be provided every six months.

No Nurse is to expect any gift of clothing beyond this.