

The Story of Florence Nightingale

Resource sheet 2.1

Section 1

Florence Nightingale was a British nurse, who was born in Italy on the 12th of May, 1820. She was called Florence after the city in which she was born. The Nightingales were a rich family.

When Florence was little, she loved looking after her sick dolls. Her first patient was her dog, who was called Cap. Florence did not go to school. Instead, her father gave her lessons at home. Some people in Victorian times thought that girls should only be taught reading, music and sewing. Florence was lucky because her father gave her lessons in many different subjects. However, one subject she was not taught was mathematics. Florence really wanted to learn mathematics and begged her father to let her learn. Finally he said yes, and she had a tutor (her own private teacher) to teach her.

Florence came from a very religious family. One day she was walking in the gardens of her house, when she believed that God spoke to her. For a little while she did not know what she was to do. She began to visit the sick, hungry and poor people who lived near her home. She decided then that she wanted to be a nurse. Her parents were very unhappy when they heard what she wanted to do. It was very different in those days, and they did not think it was a good job for a lady. They sent her off on a long holiday and hoped she would forget all about it. **Do you think she did?**

No, of course not!

While she was on holiday, she saw a hospital where she could train to be a nurse. She begged her parents to let her go to this hospital, and finally they agreed. After Florence had finished her training, she took her first job in London in Harley Street, where she helped in a centre for ill women.

Section 2

In March 1854, a war began. It was called the Crimean War. Britain, France and Turkey were fighting Russia. Many soldiers were being killed and injured. Florence was asked if she would go and help nurse the soldiers. **What do you think she said? Yes, of course!** She took 38 nurses with her and they travelled by boat on the long and difficult journey to Scutari.

When she got there she found that many of the soldiers were dying because of the filthy conditions. Some soldiers were lying on the dirty floors without any blankets. There was no clean water, no proper food to eat, and there were no toilets. Florence and her nurses worked very hard to make the conditions better. Every night Florence would take her lamp and go around the rooms to check on the patients. The soldiers gave her the nickname **'Lady of the lamp'**.

Section 3

News of Florence Nightingale's good work reached London, and when she returned to England at the end of the war, she was very famous. She was invited to visit Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. She didn't want her work to stop, so she wrote an important book called *Notes on Nursing* and set up a special school for nurses at St Thomas's hospital in London. **Can you guess what it was called?** It was called The Nightingale School for Nurses. There is a statue of Florence Nightingale in St Thomas's Hospital and in Waterloo Place in London.