

Florence Nightingale – The Lady with the Lamp

Read the following text and then do the tasks which follow.

Before the 1850s nursing in England was classed with the lowest kind of work. Women who worked in public hospitals were regarded as rough, ignorant and dirty. Florence Nightingale was brought up in a wealthy family. In those days girls like her were expected to marry well and produce children. Of course the ladies in this type of family often looked after relatives and even servants who were ill but they would never dream of visiting a public hospital, let alone work in one. Not surprisingly, Florence's parents were horrified when she told them that she wanted to become a professional nurse. No respectable girl would dream of such a thing. It simply was not done.

There were bitter arguments but in the end Florence got her own way. Since there was no training in England she had to go abroad. She spent three months in Germany and a short time in Paris observing their methods. This was the full extent of her formal training. To gather information about hospital administration she devoted a lot of time writing to institutions in various European countries. In 1853 she took over the administration of a women's hospital in London and, using her expert knowledge of hospital administration, reorganised it with great success.

The following year England went to war with Russia. The British army sent to fight in the Crimea in the south of Russia, won a victory almost straight away. People at home were thrilled. This new war in a far away land was



like an exciting game. But then disturbing news began to get through; wounded soldiers were in agony and living under appalling conditions. Florence Nightingale was asked to help and in the autumn of 1854 she sailed for the Crimea with a party of 38 other nurses.

The hospital was a crumbling old building. Miss Nightingale arrived with her nurses to find the place crammed with men recently wounded in battle. Many were lying on the bloodstained floors because there were not enough beds. There was a shortage of everything including bandages, medicine, blankets, even soap and the wards were rat-infested—there was filth everywhere. Once again Florence Nightingale could make good use of her administrative talents.

Together with her team she set to work. Her nurses scrubbed the wards,

corridors and lavatories. She reorganised the kitchens and set up a laundry. For months she worked up to twenty hours a day, ending each day by visiting the wounded soldiers, carrying a lamp in her hand. She achieved something very close to a miracle. Within six months the death rate among her patients had fallen from 420 in every thousand to only 22.

Florence Nightingale became one of the most admired and respected women of her time. Queen Victoria offered her a reward for the work she had done. Instead Florence Nightingale asked people to give money to set up schools to train nurses. The money

poured in. In 1860 a nursing school was opened in London and similar training schools were soon set up in other places. The student nurses were carefully chosen. They had to be literate, honest, hard working and willing to live under strict discipline. Even their personal diaries were regularly inspected to see how they were behaving themselves.

Florence Nightingale opened up a whole new field of work for women. By 1900 Britain had 64,000 skilled nurses, ensuring that their hospitals were efficient and hygienic. Florence Nightingale lived to the age of 90 and died in 1910.



Show that you have understood the story by completing the statements below with information from the text. Sometimes one or two words are enough.

1 Before the 1850s ladies would never consider...

2 Florence Nightingale's parents did not want her to become a nurse because it

was not _____

3 Florence's aim in travelling to Germany and France was to...

4 In order to learn how to run a hospital, Florence...



5 The English were thrilled about the war until they heard the news about...

6 Florence and her nurses managed to make the conditions better for the soldiers

by _____

and _____

7 Florence and her staff worked miracles, as shown by the fact that...

8 Instead of a reward Florence wanted people to give money to...

9 Florence's contribution to women was that she created...

