

Florence Nightingale



*“The very first requirement in a hospital is that it should do the sick no harm.”
Florence Nightingale*

Early Life

Florence Nightingale was born in the city of Florence, Italy, on 12 May 1820. Her parents loved Italy so much they decided to name their second daughter after their favourite city. Florence's parents were called William and Fanny Nightingale. Her older sister was called Frances Parthenope but they nicknamed her 'Pop'.

William Nightingale was a wealthy banker and was able to provide his family with a very privileged life. They had servants and two lovely houses – a winter home in Hampshire and a summer home in Derbyshire. Florence and her older sister Pop were taught at home by a governess and also by their father. The girls were clever and could speak many languages. Florence was good at maths, too. She was one of the first people to use graphs like pie charts, to share her knowledge with others. Although Florence never married, her sister married Sir Harry Verney, a soldier and politician. Sir Harry had proposed to Florence first, but she refused him!

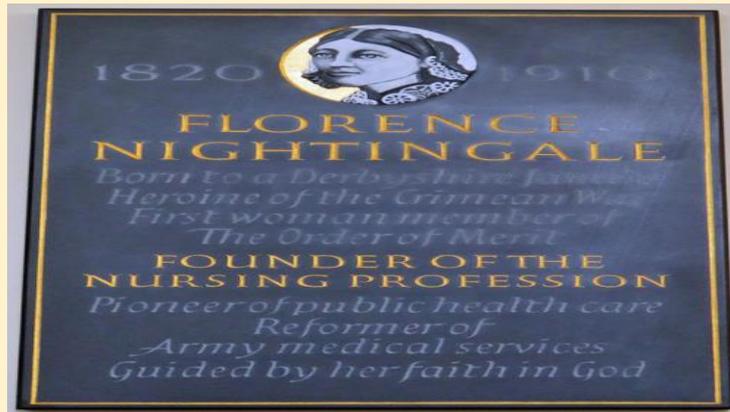


Lady with the lamp

Many men wanted to marry Florence, but she thought becoming a wife would interfere with her work. Instead, Florence worked hard at her studies. Her father eventually agreed to her plans and she trained as a nurse. Florence began working at a hospital in London, but a year later she was sent to Turkey to train nurses during the Crimean War (1854 – 1856). Here, she found the hospitals were horrible places—overcrowded, dirty and full of rats. There were no proper toilets, the food was bad and some patients were left to lie on the floor. Florence could see that more soldiers were dying in hospitals than on the battlefields, so she set about improving conditions. She introduced hand washing and campaigned for proper food, safe water, clean beds and bandages.

Florence and her nurses changed these awful conditions of the hospital. They set up a kitchen, fed the wounded from their own supplies, dug latrines for sanitation, and asked for help from the wives of the wounded. They were then able to properly care for the ill and wounded and the death rate among the soldiers dropped.

Florence was very dedicated to her job. She would often visit the soldiers at night when everyone was asleep just to make sure they were ok. She was then referred to as “The Lady with the Lamp” because she hardly took time off to sleep. Florence became a true hero to the soldiers and everyone back home in England.



Florence Nightingale's work

After the war, Florence campaigned for better conditions in hospitals in Britain, too. In 1859, she published 'Notes on Nursing' to help train other nurses, and in 1860 she set up the Nightingale Training School for Nurses at St Thomas's Hospital in London. She also wrote documents to educate poor people about sickness and disease in the home. Florence received some important awards for her work. She was given the Royal Red Cross in 1883 by Queen Victoria and became the first woman to receive the Order of Merit (in 1907, from King Edward VII).

Legacy

Florence died peacefully in her sleep at the age of 90. Thanks to her work, many lives were saved. But Florence left an even greater legacy: nursing was now an important and respected job for women, and the standard of healthcare in Britain had improved beyond measure.

Did you know?

Florence Nightingale has her own museum named after her. Here is the link to her museum. It is a great place to find out more about her inspirational life's work

<https://www.florence-nightingale.co.uk/>

12th May 2020 is Florence Nightingale's 200th birthday! Given how important our nurses are - especially this difficult year - it's a wonderful excuse to learn about this nursing pioneer and celebrate everything she achieved. Florence Nightingale was born on 12th May, which is why that day was picked for International Nurses Day! She instigated 'Wash your hands and cleanliness regimes' something that we are all hopefully following at the moment.

