

## Florence Nightingale's 200th Birthday!

Florence Nightingale was born two hundred years ago, on 12th May 1820. When she was a child she loved books and learning as well as her pets, including her little owl called Athena.



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About three years after this picture of Florence and Athena was painted, Florence decided that she must travel out to Turkey to help wounded British soldiers, who were fighting in the Crimean War (1853–1856). She took a team of 38 nurses with her to help.

Soon newspapers started writing story after story about Florence and the amazing work she was doing in the military hospital at Scutari in Turkey. She became really famous and was known as 'the lady with the lamp' because of her habit of walking the wards at night, stopping to offer kind words or attend to the soldiers' needs.

Have a look at this painting of Florence at the hospital. The artist had to use his imagination to draw the picture as he was working in London, not Turkey.



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Can you find Florence and her lamp?

In fact the lamp Florence used was more of a lantern. It had waxed cloth sides which folded down, concertina-style. The soldiers' beds are very close together in the packed wards. Florence is holding her apron over her arm. The other women in this picture might have been soldiers' wives as Florence banned her nurses from the wards after 8.30 pm.

Now look at the picture of the hospital, painted in 1856, on the next page. Compare it to the painting above. What do you notice? Florence is wearing a dark blue dress, standing talking to a doctor.



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As you can tell from comparing the two pictures, Florence and her team of nurses cleaned up the hospital and made the soldiers much more comfortable. At first soldiers still died in huge numbers as the drains were blocked under the hospital, causing lots of diseases to spread. But after they were sorted out, many more soldiers started to recover from illnesses and wounds.

After the Crimean War, Florence returned to London. She was often ill as she'd caught an awful illness while she was abroad. This didn't stop her from doing an incredible amount of work to set up a training school for nurses, advise on the design of hospitals, write several books and thousands of letters, all trying to improve the lives of the people of Britain. She helped improve hospitals in workhouses and set up the system of district nurses – trained nurses who went into people's homes to help them recover.

Florence lived to the age of 90 in a house her father had bought for her after the Crimean War. She had servants to look after her and cats to keep her company.

If you want to know more about Florence Nightingale, you can read about her in: *Florence Nightingale: Social Reformer and Pioneer of Nursing* by Sarah Ridley (Franklin Watts, 978 1 4551 6863 0).

