

<p>Who was Mary Seacole?</p>	<p>Mary Seacole was a businesswoman and a skilled doctress from Jamaica, a pioneering woman who broke social, cultural and gender barriers to do things that she thought were important to help other people.</p> <p>She was a brave, determined and charismatic woman. In her pursuit of caring for other people she showed little consideration for her own safety. Her contribution to the field of medical and social care during the Crimean War was recognised by the soldiers she worked with and also by wider Victorian society.</p>
<p>Her background</p>	<p>Mary Seacole was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1805. Mary was British because Jamaica was part of the British Empire during that period. Her father was Scottish and her mother was Jamaican. Her mother owned a boarding house where she treated injured soldiers using traditional herbal medicine. Mary learnt about medicine and herbal cures from her mother and developed her caring nursing and doctress skills.</p> <p>Mary enjoyed travelling, which was an unusual pursuit for any woman at the time and especially unusual for a black woman, as most were not free to travel at their own will or could not afford to.</p> <p>In 1851 she helped her brother to open a hospital with restaurant and general store in New Granada (now Panama), where she encountered and helped her first Cholera patients. Such was her reputation that upon her return to Jamaica in 1853, she was asked to help with the Yellow Fever epidemic.</p>
<p>Her work in the Crimea</p>	<p>In 1855 Mary travelled to the Crimea. She brought medicines and supplies with her and opened her first general store/restaurant and hotel in Balaclava. Contemporary sources name her as ‘Mother Seacole’ as she immediately began to care for and treat the sick, injured and battle-weary.</p> <p>Some army doctors were very sceptical of the work she did, whilst others admired her for working so close to the front line and during very difficult circumstances.</p> <p>Mary helped many soldiers and people of different nationalities and was described positively by her contemporaries</p>

Information about Mary Seacole for teachers

Why do we remember her?	<p>Mary Seacole heard about the plight of the soldiers in the Crimean War and wanted to help. Her application to work as a nurse in the Crimea however, was refused by the War Office, even though she had excellent referees. She also knew many of the regiments that were fighting there. Mary asked herself:</p> <p><i>'Was it possible that American prejudices against colour had taken root here? Did these ladies shrink from accepting my aid because my blood flowed beneath a somewhat duskier skin than theirs?'</i> (Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands by Mary Seacole)</p> <p>Mary persevered and eventually at the age of 50 she was able to work in the Crimea on her own initiative and at her own expense. By the end of the war, she was bankrupt and upon her return to England, many of the soldiers aided her through a fundraising campaign.</p> <p><i>'All the men swore by her and in case of any malady would seek her advice and use her herbal medicines in preference to reporting themselves to their own doctors. That she did affect some cures is beyond doubt'</i> (Eye witness account: Mary Seacole by Jane Robinson)</p>
The effect Mary Seacole had on medicine	<p>Herbal remedies were widely used during this period and could be very effective. Some of these herbal remedies are still used in medicine today, for example aloe vera cream is used to treat frost bite and dry skin, ginger is still used in tea to sooth sore throats and colds and settles nausea and lemongrass can be used to help sooth a fever. Many medicines today are manufactured synthetically, but are based on ingredients originally derived from plants.</p>

Information about Mary Seacole for teachers

Similarities between Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole	Differences between Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole
They both possessed strong organisational skills	Mary worked closer to the front line whereas Florence was based in a hospital away from the battlefields.
Both were strong-willed, determined women who believed that women should have a role in medicine	Mary administered herbal remedies to people whereas Florence established the traditional role of a nurse as assisting the doctors.
They both transformed the hospital environment	Florence was very concerned with improving conditions and hygiene whereas Mary was more focussed on providing food, products and comfort alongside administering her herbal remedies.
They were both pioneering women who challenged the Victorian establishment and especially the role of women in society	Mary was a flamboyant and lively personality whereas Florence was a more typically restrained, middle-class Victorian woman.
Both had a strong desire to help people	Florence was asked to go help in the Crimea whereas Mary was refused when she asked to help as a nurse so she funded her own business instead.