

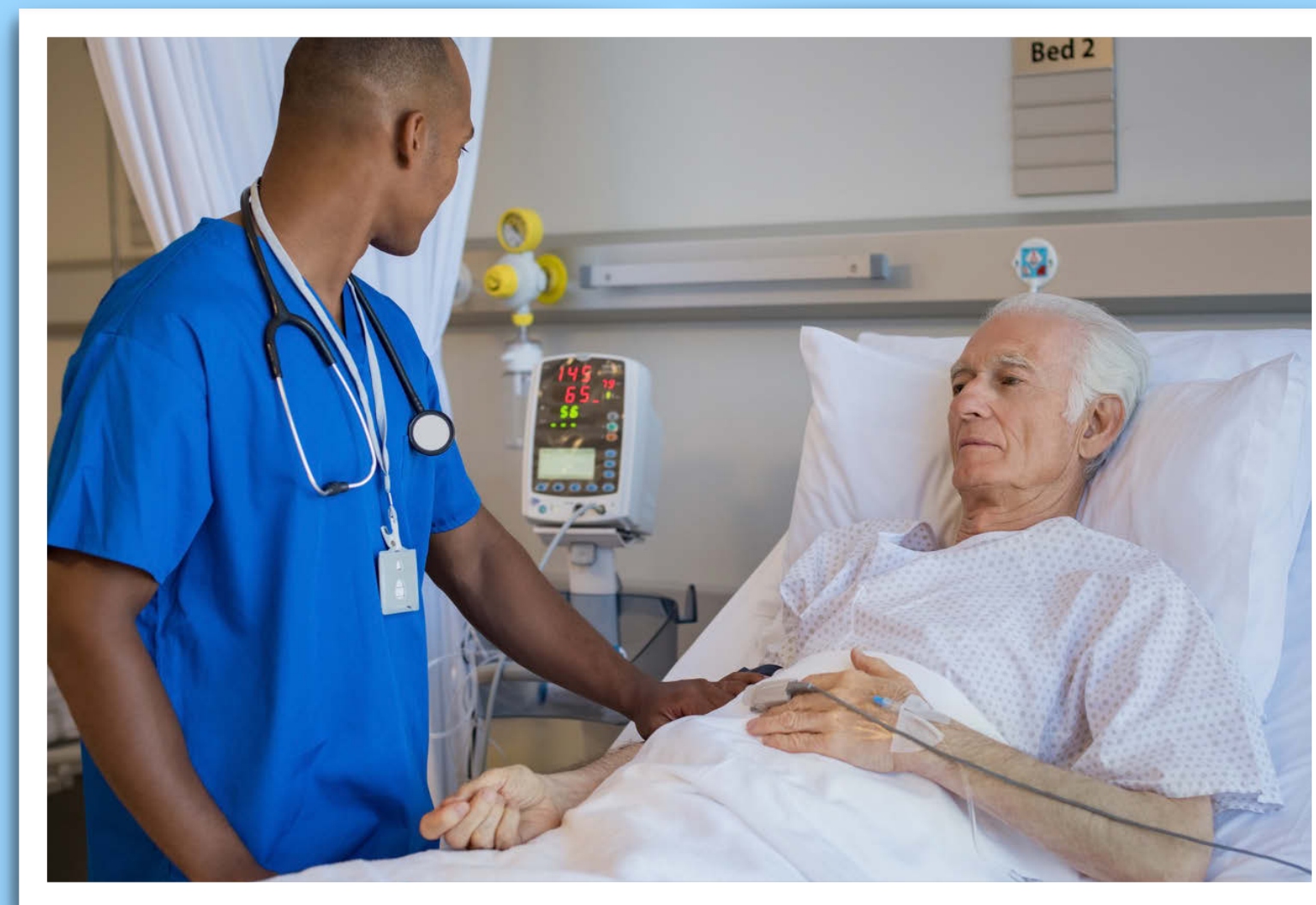
Florence Nightingale



Learning Objective: To understand the influence of Florence Nightingale on modern-day nursing

These are pictures of modern-day hospitals.

What words or phrases would you use to describe them?



Back

Next

Did you think of any of these?

clean

bright

caring

helpful

ordered

organised

a place to go to feel better

friendly

However, hospitals have not always been as clean and organised as they are today, and nurses have not always been as knowledgeable and well-trained.



Do you know who played a huge part in transforming hospitals and nursing?

Back

Next

Florence Nightingale was born in 1820 into a wealthy family. She was named after the city she was born in - Florence, in Italy. Her family moved back to Britain in 1821. Growing up, she led a very privileged life, having servants to attend to her needs, and going to frequent parties.

In the Victorian era, girls from rich families like the Nightingales were expected to get married, and spend their days looking after the home and children, with some occasional charity work.

However, Florence had other ideas...

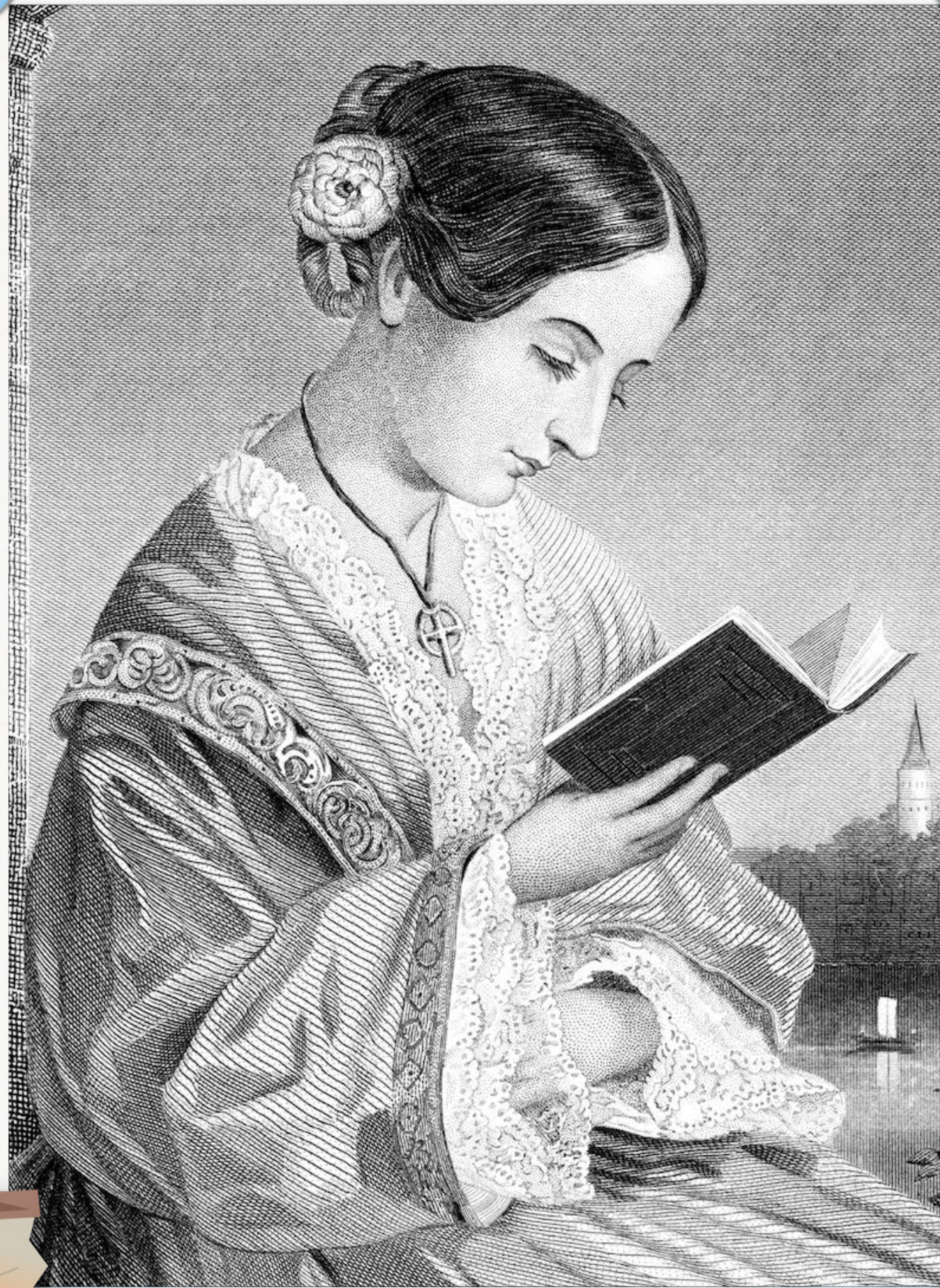


A young Florence Nightingale

Back

Next

Florence decided not to get married. She was deeply religious, and believed that God wanted her to do important work. In 1844, she announced she was going to become a **nurse**.



Her parents were horrified at this decision. At that time, hospitals were dirty, horrible places. Doctors performed operations with no **anaesthetic** (a substance that doctors now use to stop a patient feeling pain). Most people who went to hospital died there. Nurses were rarely trained, and it was not seen as a respectable profession.

Despite the anger and distress of her family, Florence did not change her mind, and worked hard to educate herself about nursing. In 1851, she attended a Christian nursing school in Germany for three months. It was hard work, but she loved it.

What can we tell about Florence's character from her actions?

Back

Next



In 1853, she was asked by a friend to run a hospital in London that cared for sick 'gentlewomen'. Florence received no money for doing this, but was able to put the nursing skills she had learnt into practice, and made lots of useful changes to the way the hospital was run.



Why do you think Florence agreed to run the hospital even though she wasn't getting paid?

In the same year, the Crimean War began. Great Britain, France and Turkey were at war with Russia in a dispute over land.

Reports in the papers told of appalling conditions in the hospitals of Turkey, where those wounded in battle were sent to be treated. More soldiers were dying from the diseases they caught in the hospital than in the battles they were fighting.



Scenes from the Crimean War

Back

Next

Sidney Herbert, who was the Minister of War, but also a friend of Florence, asked her to take a team of nurses to Turkey to try to improve the conditions there. In 1854, she and 38 volunteer nurses travelled to Scutari Hospital.

The conditions that they found there were terrible. There were not enough beds for all of the soldiers, and many lay on the dirty floor. Their bandages were filthy, they had no clean water and only mouldy bread to eat. There were no proper toilets, and rats were everywhere. A horrible smell hung in the air. The soldiers were hungry, cold and in pain.



An artist's impression of the conditions at Scutari hospital when Florence arrived.

How do you think Florence and her nurses felt when they saw these conditions at the hospital?

Back



Next

Florence and her team immediately set to work. They cleaned the kitchens, and Florence hired a chef to cook better meals for the patients. She began a laundry to ensure that clothes and bedding were kept clean. The patients were washed, and their bandages were clean and changed regularly. She made sure that everyone washed their hands frequently.



Florence worked for up to 20 hours a day. At night, she walked around the wards with a lantern, making sure that the men were comfortable, and helping them to write letters home.

Due to all of her interventions, Florence helped to reduce the death rate in the hospital dramatically, from 40% to just 2%. When the war was over in 1856, she returned home a national hero.

Florence became known as 'the lady with the lamp'.

When travelling home on the train, Florence gave her name as 'Miss Smith', so no one knew who she was - she didn't want a fuss.

Back

Next

Florence had been shocked by the conditions in Scutari, and once home, began a campaign to improve the quality of nursing in all military hospitals. She conducted lots of research about food, death rates and doctors' training, and wrote lots of letters to important people trying to persuade them that change was needed.

In 1856 she met with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, discussing with them her time in Scutari, and her ideas for improving the military hospitals in Britain.

In 1857 she presented her research to the Sanitary Commission, which led to the Army Medical College being set up in Chatham in 1859. As a result of Florence's work, the army began training doctors, hospitals became cleaner, and soldiers received better food and clothes.



Back

Next



Unfortunately, during her time in Scutari, Florence had contracted an infection from which she never fully recovered. By the time she was 38, she was bedridden for most of her days. However, this did not stop her - she continued her work from her bed.

In 1859 she published a book called *Notes on Nursing*. At 76 pages long, it was full of hints and tips on nursing, for both nurses and the 'ordinary woman'.

In 1860, with the money she received from the government for her services during the Crimean War, she helped to found the Nightingale School and Home for Nurses in London. It was one of the first places to teach nursing as a formal profession. Thanks to Florence, nursing was now seen as a respected and honourable career.

Back

Next

In 1907, Florence was awarded the **Order of Merit** (this is a special award given by the ruling King or Queen) for her work and services in the development of nursing. This was the first time a woman had received the honour.

Florence Nightingale died on 13th August in 1910, aged 90. Respecting her wishes, her family held a small, quiet funeral for her, despite the offer of an official burial in Westminster Abbey.

Here is a quote from Florence Nightingale:

'I attribute my success to this - I never gave or took any excuse.'



What do you think she means?



A photograph of Florence aged 86, taken in 1906.

Back

Next



Now it is time for you to do some independent work on the changes Florence Nightingale made to modern-day nursing.

Back

Next

If Florence Nightingale were alive today, what do you think she would do? Why?



Think, pair, then share your ideas.

Back