

Florence Nightingale: Founder of Modern Nursing

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Florence Nightingale was born in Florence Italy on May 12, 1820 into a wealthy family. Florence was tutored by her father in languages, mathematics and history. Florence had a very strong personality and her whole life she rebelled against the idle, sheltered existence of her family. She achieved an influential position in a masculine world, driving and directing her male allies with the same hardnosed force she applied to herself. Though she was tempted by the idea of a brilliant social life and marriage, Florence also wanted to achieve independence, importance in a profession and obedience to God through service to society.

In 1844, Florence decided that she wanted to work in hospitals. She received permission from her parents to spend a few months at Kaiserswerth, a German training school for nurses and female teachers. When the Crimea War broke out, Florence was one of many nurses who chose to work in the staff hospital on base and take care of sick and wounded soldiers. This was very controversial at the time because female nurses had not served in such wartime hospitals before. Over time, the efforts of Florence and her team of nurses were greatly appreciated by the soldiers. Gradually positive news reports filtered back home, that told of their service. By the time she had returned home she had become a national heroine and received numerous awards for her dedicated care for wounded service men.

After the war, she continued to work for the improvement of hospital conditions, writing to influential people encouraging them to improve hygiene standards in hospitals. Her outspoken *Notes on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army* (1857) and *Notes on Hospitals* (1859) helped create changes in hygiene and overall treatment of patients. She also founded a training school for nurses at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. Florence was awarded the Royal Red Cross by Queen Victoria in 1883, and in 1907 became the first woman to receive the Order of Merit. Florence Nightingale died at the age of 90 in 1910.

To this day, the term "Florence Nightingale" is used to describe a caring and compassionate person.

