

Mary Seacole

Mary Seacole was a Jamaican healer, nurse and businesswoman who is remembered for helping soldiers during the Crimean War. She was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1805. Her father was Scottish and her mother was Jamaican.



Mary's mother ran a boarding house where she also cared for sick people, including soldiers and their families. As a child, Mary watched her mother work and later helped with patients. She learnt nursing skills and how to prepare traditional remedies using plants.

As an adult, Mary travelled to different countries. In Jamaica and Panama, she treated people during outbreaks of serious diseases, including cholera. These experiences helped her learn how to care for patients in difficult conditions. Medical knowledge was different from today, and many illnesses were difficult to treat.

When the Crimean War began, Mary wanted to help British soldiers. She travelled to Britain in 1854, but her attempts to join the nursing team were unsuccessful. She wondered whether prejudice against her skin colour had contributed to this rejection.

Mary did not give up. In 1855, she paid for her own journey to Crimea. With her business partner, Thomas Day, she opened the British Hotel near the army camps. Despite its name, it mainly sold meals and supplies rather than offering bedrooms. Mary also provided medicines and care for sick soldiers. She showed courage by carrying food, bandages and medicines close to the fighting to help wounded men. This work could be dangerous. Many soldiers affectionately called her "Mother Seacole" because of her kindness.

After the war ended in 1856, Mary was left with unpaid bills and unsold goods. Supporters organised a fundraising festival to help her. In 1857, she published *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*, a book describing her life and travels.

Mary died in London in 1881. Her story is remembered today as an example of courage, determination and care for others.



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Questions

1. Where and in which year was Mary Seacole born?
2. Who were some of the people Mary's mother cared for?
3. How did Mary begin learning nursing skills?
4. Which serious disease did Mary help treat in Jamaica and Panama?
5. Why did Mary travel to Britain in 1854?
6. What did Mary wonder about when her attempts to join the nursing team were unsuccessful?
7. How did Mary pay for her journey to Crimea?
8. What did the British Hotel mainly sell?
9. Why was Mary's work dangerous?
10. How did supporters help Mary after the war?



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Answers

1. She was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1805.
2. Her mother cared for sick people, including soldiers and their families.
3. She watched her mother work and later helped with patients.
4. She helped treat people suffering from cholera.
5. She wanted to offer her help to British soldiers during the Crimean War.
6. She wondered whether prejudice against her skin colour had contributed to her rejection.
7. She paid for the journey herself.
8. It mainly sold meals and supplies.
9. She carried food, bandages and medicine close to the fighting, where she could be hurt.
10. They organised a fundraising festival to help with her money problems.



bravery	care	charity	determination	discrimination	herbal	hygiene
illness	injured	nurse	remedies	supplies	treatment	volunteer

1. A person who looks after people who are ill or hurt.
2. Medicines or other things used to help someone feel better when they are unwell.
3. What you demonstrate when doing something that might be dangerous or frightening.
4. Unfair treatment of someone because of things such as their skin colour or where they come from.
5. Continuing to work towards a goal, even when there are difficulties.
6. Keeping yourself and your surroundings clean to help prevent disease.
7. Hurt or harmed, for example during an accident or a battle.

8. A health problem that makes someone feel unwell.
9. Made from plants, often used in cooking or in some medicines.
10. The help or medicine given to someone to make them better.
11. Looking after someone and helping to meet their needs.
12. Useful things that people need, such as food, blankets and medicines.
13. A person who chooses to help without being paid.
14. Help given to people in need, often through gifts of money, food or other useful things.



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Timeline Challenge

Mary Seacole cared for sick and wounded people and used her knowledge of nursing and medicines to help others. During the Crimean War, she travelled to Crimea and set up the British Hotel near the fighting. She became well known for her courage, kindness and care for wounded soldiers.



Can you put these key events from Mary's life into chronological order?

Mary travels to Crimea during the Crimean War. She wants to help care for British soldiers who are sick or wounded.	Mary is born in Kingston, Jamaica. Her mother runs a boarding house and teaches Mary about caring for sick people and using medicines.	Mary writes a book about her life and travels. It is called <i>Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands</i> .	Mary travels to Panama, where she runs a hotel and helps care for people during an outbreak of cholera, a dangerous illness.
Mary dies in London at the age of 76. She is remembered for her courage and for caring for people in need.	Mary sets up the British Hotel near the fighting in Crimea. She provides food, supplies and care for soldiers.	Mary marries Edwin Seacole in Jamaica. Sadly, he dies a few years later, and Mary continues her work and travels.	Mary returns to Britain after the Crimean War. Many people raise money to help her because she has spent much of her own money helping soldiers.

Link each event with one of the dates below. Use the information to make a timeline.

1805	1836	1850	1855	1855	1856	1857	1881
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Crimean War: a war fought from 1853 to 1856.

