Pioneers of Change: Mary Seacole

Learning objective: To understand the contributions of significant individuals in history and develop comprehension skills.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions below in full sentences.

Mary Seacole was a remarkable woman born in Jamaica in 1805. Her mother ran a boarding house for invalid soldiers, where Mary learned traditional Caribbean herbal medicine and nursing skills. When the Crimean War began in the 1850s, Mary was eager to help the British soldiers fighting overseas. Despite being turned away by official organisations because of her background, she refused to give up. Using her own money, she travelled thousands of miles to the Crimea at her own expense. There, she established the 'British Hotel', a sanctuary where she provided food, shelter, and comfort to wounded soldiers. She often rode out to the battlefields, carrying a bag of medicine and bandages to tend to men in need. Because of her kindness and bravery, the soldiers affectionately called her 'Mother Seacole'. Today, she is remembered as a pioneer of nursing who showed incredible resilience and compassion. Her story reminds us that one person’s determination can make a huge difference to the lives of many, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Word bank: pioneer · nursing · contribution · resilience · compassion · medicine

1. Where did Mary Seacole learn her initial nursing and medicine skills? (2 marks)

2. What was the name of the place Mary established in the Crimea to help soldiers? (1 mark)

3. Why do you think the soldiers gave Mary the nickname 'Mother Seacole'? (2 marks)

4. How did Mary demonstrate that she was determined to help, despite being rejected by official organisations? (2 marks)

5. In your opinion, why is it important for us to learn about Mary Seacole today? Give a reason for your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of Mary Seacole at the British Hotel, showing her helping a soldier with a kind expression on her face.

Extension challenge: Research another historical figure who showed great bravery. Write a short paragraph explaining how their actions changed the world for the better.