Florence Nightingale: The Lady with the Lamp

Learning objective: To understand the significance of Florence Nightingale's work in nursing and hospital reform during the Crimean War.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below using evidence from the passage.

In 1854, Florence Nightingale travelled to Scutari to work in a military hospital during the Crimean War. She was shocked by the appalling conditions she discovered. Wounded soldiers were often left in unhygienic, overcrowded rooms, and there was a severe lack of basic medical supplies. Nightingale believed that the environment in which a patient recovered was just as important as the medicine itself. She worked tirelessly to improve sanitation, insisting on clean bedding, fresh air, and proper nutrition for the soldiers.

At night, she moved through the dark wards carrying a small lantern to check on the men, earning her the famous nickname, 'The Lady with the Lamp'. Beyond her bedside manner, Nightingale was a brilliant mathematician. She used data and statistics to prove that improved hygiene drastically reduced death rates. After the war, she returned to England and used her findings to campaign for sweeping reforms in hospital design and nursing training. Her dedication changed the profession of nursing forever, transforming it into a respected, skilled career based on scientific principles rather than just kindness.

Word bank: sanitation · hygiene · nursing · Crimean War · Scutari · reform

1. Identify two specific improvements Florence Nightingale made to the military hospital in Scutari. (2 marks)

2. What was the original source of Florence Nightingale's nickname, 'The Lady with the Lamp'? (1 mark)

3. Why do you think Florence Nightingale used statistics to support her campaign for hospital reform? (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, explain why the author describes nursing as a 'skilled career' rather than just an act of kindness. (2 marks)

5. In your opinion, which of Florence Nightingale's contributions was most important for the future of medicine? Justify your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of a 19th-century hospital ward, showing the improvements Florence Nightingale might have insisted upon, such as clean windows for fresh air and tidy beds.

Extension challenge: Max the monkey has found a set of hospital data! If 100 soldiers were in a ward and Nightingale's hygiene improvements reduced the death rate from 40% to 5%, how many lives were saved by her changes?