Trailblazers of History: Mary Seacole

Learning objective: To understand the significant contributions of Mary Seacole to nursing and history.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions using full sentences where appropriate.

In the 1800s, a remarkable woman named Mary Seacole travelled across the world to help others. Born in Jamaica, Mary learned traditional herbal medicine from her mother, who ran a boarding house for injured soldiers. When Mary heard that soldiers were suffering during the Crimean War, she knew she had to help. She applied to the government to work as a nurse, but they turned her down. Undeterred, Mary used her own money to sail to the Crimea. She set up the ‘British Hotel’, a place where soldiers could find warm food, a bed, and medicine. Mary was often seen on the battlefield, bravely carrying a bag of bandages and remedies to treat soldiers on the front line. She became famous for her kindness and dedication. Even though she faced many challenges, Mary Seacole remained resilient. Today, she is remembered as a pioneer who showed that one person’s courage can make a massive difference to many lives. Ellie the elephant loves learning about Mary because her story proves that helping others is a truly noble adventure.

Word bank: nursing · medicine · compassion · contribution · resilient · hospitality

1. Where was Mary Seacole born and what did she learn there? (2 marks)

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

3. Why do you think Mary decided to go to the Crimea even after the government said no? (2 marks)

4. What does the text suggest about Mary’s personality when it describes her as 'undeterred'? (2 marks)

5. Why is it important for us to learn about people like Mary Seacole today? Give a reason for your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of Mary Seacole at the 'British Hotel'. Include items like bandages, herbal medicines, and a warm meal to show how she helped the soldiers.

Extension challenge: Imagine you are a soldier in the Crimean War. Write a short diary entry (3-4 sentences) describing how Mary Seacole helped you feel better after a long day.