Story of Florence Nightingale

This account tells some of the main events in Florence Nightingale's life. It aims to show the children why Florence wanted to work with the sick and with wounded soldiers, and how that interest arose. It suggests possible religious reasons, but does not emphasis this point for such a young audience. The story aims to show some of the problems she faced, both at home where her parents did not want her to work as a nurse, and in the Crimea, where she was not accepted by the army and those in charge of the hospitals. It outlines her achievements following the Crimean War, her relationship with Queen Victoria, and the invalidity she suffered later in life, possibly because of the nature of her work in nursing. Finally, it suggests why it is that we still remember her.

The story is probably best read to the children as part of a shared reading session, going through any of the unfamiliar vocabulary such as *better-off* and *Commission of Inquiry*. One way of reading the story with the class is to set up a slide show (see page 4) using the following resources from the CD: 'Battle of Balaclava, 1854', 'Hospital at Scutari', 'The Lady with the Lamp' and 'Portrait of Florence Nightingale'. Read the text in conjunction with the slide show as well as the timeline of her life.

Discussing the story

▶ Who can remember from the story how long ago Florence was born?
▶ Discuss why her parents gave her the name Florence.
▶ Ask the children why Florence got angry with people on account of the poor cottagers she had seen.
▶ Why do the children think that Florence's parents did not want her to become a nurse?
▶ What kind of family did she come from? What were her parents probably like?
▶ Why do the children think that Florence worked so hard that she became an invalid?
▶ Why do they think the Queen wanted to meet her?
▶ How is it that today we still know about what Florence did, nearly 200 years later?

Activities

▶ Ask the children to talk about the important things Florence Nightingale did, or to recount the story in their own words. The more able writers, with support, could write their own story of Florence.
▶ Ask for volunteers to find in the story all the things that they can see on the timeline from photocopiable page 21. Ask the children if they can add any more important events to the timeline.
▶ Ask the children to write a letter from Florence Nightingale to her parents upon her arrival in the Crimea. Start them off with the first few sentences, for example *How is everyone at home? I am writing to tell you… I can do much good by…*
▶ Compare Florence's work with that of other famous nurses, such as Mary Seacole, or with famous doctors, like Dr Albert Schweitzer, known for his pioneering medical work in Africa.
▶ Ask the children to find out about Mother Teresa.
▶ Make small topic booklets for the children to complete with their work about Florence Nightingale.
▶ As an extension activity for the very able children, suggest they write an imaginary story about the work of a nurse in the future.

A foot soldier's journal

This extract, rewritten from an actual journal by Charles Usherwood, enables children to imagine what the Crimean War was like from the perspective of an ordinary foot soldier. These soldiers were given orders which they had to obey, although they must have realised the stupidity of leaving behind their kit, food and the tents. The extract shows some of the effects that orders and mistakes like these had on the British army during this war. It could be linked with work on the Charge of the Light Brigade (see the poem on photocopiable page 25 and the picture provided on the CD), another example of terrible mistakes being made which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people.

This text is probably best read to the children or shared with them during a whole class shared reading session during the Literacy Hour. It is important that the children have time to discuss the context of the journal extract, since it begins after the soldiers have travelled