

## Civilisation anglophone | Florence Nightingale

### The Lady with the Lamp

Florence Nightingale, byname Lady with the Lamp, (born May 12, 1820, Florence [Italy]—died August 13, 1910, London, England), British nurse, statistician, and social reformer who was the foundational philosopher of modern nursing. Nightingale was put in charge of nursing British and allied soldiers in Turkey during the Crimean War. She spent many hours in the **wards**, and her night rounds **giving personal care to the wounded** established her image as the “Lady with the Lamp.” Her efforts to formalize nursing education led her to establish the **first scientifically based nursing school**—the Nightingale School of Nursing, at St. Thomas’ Hospital in London (opened 1860). She also was instrumental in **setting up training for midwives** and **nurses** in workhouse infirmaries. She was the first woman awarded the **Order of Merit (1907)**. **International Nurses Day**, observed annually on May 12, commemorates her birth and celebrates the important role of nurses in health care.



Although primarily remembered for her accomplishments during the Crimean War, Nightingale’s greatest achievements centred on **attempts to create social reform in health care and nursing**. On her return to England, Nightingale was suffering the effects of both **brucellosis** and **exhaustion**. In September 1856 she met with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to discuss the need for reform of the British military establishment. Nightingale kept meticulous records regarding the running of the Barrack Hospital, causes of illness and death, the efficiency of the nursing and **medical staffs**, and difficulties in **purveyance**. A Royal Commission was established, which based its findings on the statistical data and analysis provided by Nightingale. The result was marked reform in the military medical and purveyance systems.

Nightingale improved the health of households through her most famous publication, **Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It Is Not**, which provided direction on how to manage the sick. This volume has been in continuous publication worldwide since 1859. Additional reforms were financed through the Nightingale Fund, and **a school for the education of midwives was established at King’s College Hospital in 1862**. Believing that the **most important location for the care of the sick was in the home**, she established training for **district nursing**, which was aimed at improving the health of the poor and vulnerable.

**Florence** Nightingale was honoured in her lifetime by receiving the title of Lady of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem and by becoming the first woman to receive the Order of Merit. On her death in 1910, at Nightingale’s prior request, her family declined the offer of a state funeral and burial in Westminster Abbey. Instead, she was honoured with a memorial service at St. Paul’s Cathedral, London.