

Mother Seacole: A Biography

Mary Seacole was born as Mary Jane Grant in 1805 in Kingston, Jamaica. She had a Scottish father and a Jamaican mother. Her father was a soldier and her mother was a local nurse (**healer**) who knew a lot about medicine. At that time Jamaica was part of the British **Empire** and it is thought that her parents had met in Jamaica when her father was **posted** there.



Mary had one brother named Edward and one sister named Louisa.

As Mary lived a long time ago, we do not know a lot about her early life. It is unknown if she went to school but we do know she used to enjoy playing nurses with her dolls. We also know that she spent a lot of time learning how to become a nurse just like her mother. Her mother used plants in her medicines but Mary also learned what other medicines could be used from the British Army doctors. From around twelve years old, Mary helped her mother care for the local people and the British soldiers.

When Mary turned fifteen, she travelled to London by ship and **stagecoach** with some **relatives**. She only stayed in London for a year before returning home, but later visited London again for two years.

Most of what we know about Mary has been found out by reading a book she wrote when she was an adult. There are some pictures of Mary and most of them are from when she was older.

On the 10th November 1836, Mary married her love; Edwin Seacole and lived with him in Black River, Jamaica. He was an English **merchant**. Sadly, Edwin was a sick man and after trying her best to nurse him to health, Edwin died in 1844. **Further** to that, Mary's mother died **shortly** after. It was a very sad time for Mary.

After her mother's death, Mary took over her hotel where soldiers stayed when they were sick. Mary worked very hard at looking after the soldiers and got to know many of the soldiers as friends. They called her 'Mother Seacole' because she used to make them their favourite meals and looked after them as if they were her children.

Mary liked to travel. She had already travelled many times to England but she also travelled to the Bahamas and Cuba to sell pickles and **preserves**. Later in life, she travelled back to England to live out her later days.

In 1854 Britain went to war. The war was known as the **Crimean** war and lasted for around two years. Many of the soldiers left Jamaica and were sent to **Crimea** by the British Army. When Mary heard about the war, she travelled to England to offer her help but it was **refused**.

Shortly after that, Mary **arranged** with her friend, Thomas Day, to borrow some money and travel there themselves. In January 1855, Mary set off by ship to travel the 4000 miles across seas to get to the **conflict**.

Mary and Thomas opened up their own hotel in Crimea near the **frontline** to help the British soldiers. The soldiers did not have enough food or medicine to get better after they had been **injured**. The men were sick, cold and dirty. Mary also noticed that there were **diseases** that were killing the soldiers too, from dirty water and poor **hygiene**.

The hotel was a **haven**. The soldiers could get hot food, drinks, blankets, medicines, boots and saddles for their horses. Mary looked after the injured soldiers and nursed them back to health. Mary even rode by horse to the battle to give out food and drinks as well as tend to some men who could not get to the hotel for help. It was dangerous for Mary but she went to help anyway.

After the war had finished, Mary travelled back to London with no money left. When Mary returned to London, the soldiers she had helped wrote letters to the newspapers. They wanted everyone to know what she did to help during the war. They wanted to thank her for her help.

During her later years in London, Mary wrote a book all about her adventures. It was very **unusual** for a woman during this time to travel around the world and people thought her book was interesting. She was also **awarded** medals for her **bravery** and for being **selfless**.

In 1867, people in Britain raised lots of money to say thank you to Mary for all her work. They wanted to know that she would be able to live **comfortably** for the rest of her life. Mary had a quiet life after the Crimean war and spent her time between her home in London and her home in Jamaica. When she died in 1881, she left her money to relatives, Thomas Day and to a **charity** that helped soldiers. She is a true **role model** to us all!

Mother Seacole: A Biography – Follow-Up Work

Who is the biography about?

Why is Mary called 'Mother Seacole?'

What features of a biography are used in the text?

Why do you think the biography is written in an order? Why is it structured in a specific way?

Who would you recommend this text to?

Why has the author written this text?

Who was Mary's husband? Where was he from?

When did Mary die?

Are there any differences about travelling now compared to when Mary was alive?

What is this text all about?

Did you learn anything new from the text?

Mother Seacole: A Biography – Vocab 1

Write the meaning of each of the words.

healer _____

empire _____

posted _____

stagecoach _____

merchant _____

further _____

preserves _____

Crimean _____

refused _____

arranged _____

conflict _____

frontline _____

diseases _____

hygiene _____

haven _____

bravery _____

selfless _____

comfortably _____

charity _____

Mother Seacole: A Biography – Vocab 2

Choose the correct word from the box to complete each sentence.

Mary's husband was a _____.

Mary travelled to England with her _____ which took weeks on a ship.

After Mary returned from the war, she was _____ many medals for her hard work and _____.

Mary offered her help when the war broke out but it was _____.

Mary _____ to travel by ship to the war herself. She wanted to help.

bravery	refused	awarded	arranged	merchant	relatives
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Now write four sentences of your own, each one must use a word from the box above.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Mother Seacole: A Biography – SPAG

Write 's' or 'es' to each word to make it a plural.

merchant_____

preserve_____

disease_____

church_____

stagecoach_____

Circle the verbs in the sentences below. There may be more than one verb in each sentence.

Mary travelled by ship to London to offer her help.

Mary and her friend opened a hotel for the soldiers.

The soldiers are given food, water and medicines.

Tick to show which sentence is in the past tense and which is in the present.

	past tense	present tense
Mary was a nurse from Jamaica.		
Thomas is planning a trip to Crimea.		
The hotel was a haven.		
The nurses are helping the soldiers.		

Why do the underlined words start with a capital letter?

Mary travelled from Jamaica to London to offer her help in the Crimean war.

Mother Seacole: A Biography – Oral Teacher Questions

Who is the biography about? **Mary Seacole.**

Why is Mary called 'Mother Seacole?' **A nickname given to her by the soldiers because she was like a mother to them and cared for them.**

What features of a biography are used in the text? **Title, picture of the person, facts, dates, chronological order.**

Why do you think the biography is written in an order? Why is it structured in a specific way? **It progresses through someone's life so is in time order.**

Who would you recommend this text to? **People interested in finding out more about Mary and her life.**

Why has the author written this text? **To inform others about Mary's life.**

Who was Mary's husband? Where was he from? **Edwin Seacole, England.**

When did Mary die? **1881**

Are there any differences about travelling now compared to when Mary was alive? **Use different methods of transport. It is quicker to travel now than when Mary was alive.**

What is this text all about? **Mary Seacole, her life and her achievements.**

Did you learn anything new from the text? **Personal response.**

Mother Seacole: A Biography – Vocab 1

Write the meaning of each of the words.

healer – a person who knows how to heal others

empire – a group of countries that are ruled by one person or place

posted – sent somewhere

stagecoach – a carriage with wheels that is pulled by horses

merchant – a person who sells and buys things

further – additional to, there is more

preserves – food that has been treated to keep it fresher for longer

Crimean – to do with the area Crimea

refused – say no to

arranged – to make plans for something

conflict – disagreement, war

frontline – the part of the army closest to the enemy

diseases – illnesses caused by bacteria

hygiene – keeping clean

haven – a place of safety

bravery – to be brave

selfless – thinking about others before yourself

comfortably – big enough for needs

charity – voluntary giving of help, providing help

Mother Seacole: A Biography – Vocab 2

Choose the correct word from the box to complete each sentence.

Mary's husband was a **merchant**.

Mary travelled to England with her **relatives** which took weeks on a ship.

After Mary returned from the war, she was **awarded** many medals for her hard work and **bravery**.

Mary offered her help when the war broke out but it was **refused**.

Mary **arranged** to travel by ship to the war herself. She wanted to help.

bravery	refused	awarded	arranged	merchant	relatives
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Now write four sentences of your own, each one must use a word from the box above.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Mother Seacole: A Biography – SPAG

Write 's' or 'es' to each word to make it a plural.

merchants

preserves

diseases

churches

stagecoaches

Circle the verbs in the sentences below. There may be more than one verb in each sentence.

Mary **travelled** by ship to London to **offer** her help.

Mary and her friend **opened** a hotel for the soldiers.

The soldiers **are given** food, water and medicines.

Tick to show which sentence is in the past tense and which is in the present.

	past tense	present tense
Mary was a nurse from Jamaica.	✓	
Thomas is planning a trip to Crimea.		✓
The hotel was a haven.	✓	
The nurses are helping the soldiers.		✓

Why do the underlined words start with a capital letter?

Mary travelled from Jamaica to London to offer her help in the Crimean war.

They are names of places or people.