



# MARY SEACOLE

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



### Overview

**Mary Seacole** was a British-Jamaican lady who helped many people who were injured or dying in war.

As a black woman at the time, she faced unfairness and discrimination when she tried to volunteer to be a nurse during the **Crimean War (1854-56)**

When the British turned down her offer of help, she decided that she would go to Crimea herself. She set up the '**British Hotel**', a place near the frontline helped to provide comfort and support to those in the army.

Every day, she **rode towards the battle front** to give medical support to those who were injured.

She is remembered as a hero – in 2004 she was voted number 1 in a poll of the **Greatest Black Britons**.

A portrait of Mary Seacole from around 1869.



### Answers to Important Questions and Key Vocabulary

**Where did Mary Seacole travel to?**



-At the time, it wasn't common for women to travel, but Mary loved to travel!  
-When she was just a teenager, she took two trips to England - she spent 3 years there!  
-Even though she spent most of her upbringing in Jamaica, Mary grew deeply fond of Britain.  
-She later journeyed to the islands of Bahamas, Haiti and Cuba – where Mary bought lots of spices for her medicines.

#### Key Vocabulary

Healer

Health

Disease

Infection

Racism

Hotel

Crimea

Medicine

Herbal

Discrimination

Front Line

Remedies

Cholera

**What did she do in Panama?**



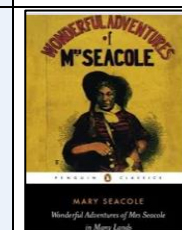
-In 1853, Mary went to Panama, where she and her brother ran a hotel and store.  
-They sold goods to people working in the gold mines. However, she never stopped practicing medicine.

**What were conditions like in the Crimean War?**



-The Crimean War was a bloody war, which was made worse by lots of the illnesses and diseases that plagued the soldiers who were fighting.  
-Of the 1,650,000 soldiers who fought in the war, 900,000 died. Most died of disease.  
-Diseases such as typhus, typhoid, cholera and dysentery were common, due to the terrible living conditions that the soldiers faced.  
-Therefore, Mary's 'British Hotel' was very welcome!

**Why do we remember Mary Seacole now?**



-Most of what is now known about Mary Seacole is because of her 1857 autobiography, called *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in many Lands*.  
-After she died, Mary was completely forgotten about for around 100 years. It wasn't until the 1970s that people started to read about her again.

### Times in Her Life

#### Early Life



-She was born Mary Jane Grant in Kingston, Jamaica to a Jamaican mother and Scottish father.

-Her mother ran one of the top hotels in Kingston, and also worked as a healer. She passed her knowledge to Mary.

-Mary used to practice her remedies on her dolls and toys!

#### Marriage and Panama Hotel



-Mary married Edwin Seacole in 1836. He was a sickly man, and so she spent a lot of time nursing him.

-At the age of 45 she opened a hotel in Panama. There was an outbreak of cholera there, and Mary's remedies worked wonders!

#### The Crimean War



-During the Crimean War (1853-1856) many more British soldiers were dying from diseases than in battle. Mary wanted to help them!

-When the British authorities turned her down, Mary set up the British Hotel close to the front line. There, she could provide them with comforts, and also use it as a base for her nursing practice.

-In the hotel there was a restaurant and a general store. Mary used all of the profits that she made to find buying medicines to help the stricken soldiers. She also rode to the battlefields to help the soldiers in battle.



#### Popularity and Funding



-Mary returned to London without much money – she had used it all to help people.

-However, the soldiers that she had helped decided to raise money for her. They had several events, including big galas to help Mary have money to live off.

#### Later Life



-Mary remained a high-profile figure in London during her lifetime.

-She died in 1881 at her home in Paddington in London. She would have been about 76 years old. She is buried in Kensal Green, London.

### Top 10 Facts!

1. After the death of her husband, Mary had many marriage offers, which she turned down.
2. Her British Hotel cost 800 pounds to build.
3. She was middle-aged when the Crimean War began, and so was known as 'Mother Seacole.'
4. Even Queen Victoria herself donated 50 pounds to the fund helping Mary Seacole.
5. Mary wrote an autobiography – possibly the first free black woman in the British Empire to do so!
6. When Mary was born, many black people were slaves. Mary was proud of her skin colour, and wanted everyone to be treated equally.
7. She loved the British army because her father was a Scottish soldier.
8. She received four medals from the UK government.
9. Mary loved to travel – she went to many places around the Caribbean.
10. Mary is compared to Florence Nightingale. They both helped soldiers in Crimea.

### Mary Seacole Timeline

1805: Was born in Kingston, Jamaica.    1822: Mary visits England for the first time.    1830: 'People of colour' granted equal rights in Jamaica.    1836: Mary marries Edwin Horatio Hamilton Seacole.    1851: Moves to Panama and opens a hotel.    1854: Start of Crimean War, Mary wants to volunteer.    1855: Sets up British Hotel only 4 miles from the front line.    1856: The Crimean War ends and Mary returns home.    1857: 80,000 people raise money for Mary.    1867: Mary is given a charity fund as a pension.    1881: Mary dies in London.