



MARY SEACOLE - VIDEOS

The content relating to Mary Seacole consists of three video episodes, each about 5 minutes long, which can be watched individually or sequentially. Below is a synopsis of each episode.

Lesson plan:

Learning intention 'We are learning to...'

We are learning to understand the life of a key historical character from the Victorian era.

Assessment criteria 'What I'm looking for...'

As an outcome I am looking for a labelled timeline diagram describing key features of the life of Mary Seacole.

Share and discuss a listening focus for each episode by asking the key question and instructing the children to make the following notes.

Resources needed: note-making paper and pencil.

1. Journey to the Crimea

Before watching: one key fact to discuss

- **The Crimea.** The Crimean peninsula is an outcrop of land that extends into the Black Sea, a large body of water to the east of Europe north of Turkey and close to Russia.

Discussion question: 'Who was Florence Nightingale?' (A famous nurse who organised help for soldiers during the Crimean War.)

During watching: one question to focus on

- **Key question:** 'What obstacles did Mary Seacole overcome to serve in the Crimean War?'

- **Instruction:** 'Write down the things Mary Seacole overcame to fulfil her ambition.'
- (Answers: Racism preventing travel to England from Jamaica; not allowed to serve as a nurse in the army; had to make the dangerous journey to the Crimea on her own.)

2. The Crimean War

Before watching: one key fact to discuss

- **The Crimean War.** In the Victorian era Britain and some other countries were at war with Russia over who would be in charge in that part of the world.

Discussion question: 'What do soldiers need if they are injured fighting in a war?' (To be cleaned, bandaged, kept warm, brought food, given medicine.)

During watching: one question to focus on

- **Key question:** 'How did Mary Seacole help the British soldiers?'
- **Instruction:** 'Write notes to explain what Mary Seacole did to help the British soldiers.'
- (Answers: Providing shelter and food for injured soldiers; running the British Hotel in a dangerous area close to where the battles took place.)





3. After the War was over

Before watching: one key fact to discuss

- **After the war.** The British soldiers and Florence Nightingale's nurses were all brought home by the British army.

Discussion question: 'How do you think Mary Seacole should have been treated after the Crimean War?'

During watching: one question to focus on

- **Key question:** 'What happened to Mary Seacole after the Crimean War?'
- **Instruction:** 'Write a list of the things that happened to Mary Seacole after the War was over.'
- (Answers: The 'British Hotel' cost money to maintain and could not be sold; Mary Seacole had no money to live on; a reporter told her story and organised collections to reward her for her service.)

After watching

Activity: draw and label a timeline of events in the life of Mary Seacole. Make sure you mark and label:

- Born 1805
- Crimean War begins 1853
- How she managed to travel to the Crimea in 1854, travelling to England from Jamaica and then finding a ship to take her to the Crimea on her own
- What she did to help during 1854 to 1856: setting up the British Hotel and helping soldiers
- What happened to her after the War: ignored at first then written about and rewarded for her work in 1857
- Died 1881

Differentiation and teacher support for SEN / Focus group / Whole class

Teacher to demonstrate laying out a timeline horizontally across a blank page and placing dates and notes on the timeline to represent events.

Challenge for gifted and talented learners

Can you locate the Crimea on a map and create an illustration to show its position compared to Britain and Jamaica?

Plenary and assessment

In table groups or as a class, share and compare labelled timelines. Give the children an opportunity to improve their drawings or after making comparisons.

Episode synopses

This programme covers three important episodes in the life of Mary Seacole: her unsuccessful attempt to enlist as a nurse to help Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War leads to her decision to travel to the Crimea and set up her own hospital there; her courageous work on the battlefield tending to wounded soldiers; and finally, how she spent the years after the end of the war impoverished and unappreciated.

1. Journey to the Crimea

Mary tells of her early life in Jamaica, and how her mother, a famous healer, taught her all her healing skills.





In 1854, when war broke out in the Crimea, Mary travelled to England to volunteer her services to Florence Nightingale, who was setting up a hospital in the Crimea.

On the journey to England Mary encountered prejudice; as a Creole (with a white father and a black mother) she was considered of inferior status.

When she applied to the War Department in London to join Florence Nightingale as a nurse, she was turned away on the grounds that 'no more nurses were needed', although Mary was under no illusion that she was being rejected because of her colour. So Mary decided to travel to the Crimea and build her own 'hospital', and in spite of hearing stories about the harsh conditions she would encounter in the Crimea, she was determined to carry out her plans.

2. The Crimean War

Mary has built the 'British Hotel', which is closer to the battlefield than Florence Nightingale's hospital (which was in Scutari - in the city now called Istanbul). She describes how she treated the wounded soldiers who needed her help. One day in 1856 a journalist called William Howard Russell from *The Times* newspaper arrived at the British Hotel, wanting to write an article about Mary. Rather grudgingly she agreed, and he discovered how well-loved Mary was by the soldiers - they called her 'Mother Seacole' - and how she would put aside fears for her own personal safety in order to treat wounded soldiers on the battlefield itself, and how she would treat *any* wounded soldiers if they needed her help, including enemy troops.

When the Russians surrendered Sebastopol to the British, Mary marched into the city with the British troops and was cheered by soldiers lining the road into the city.

3. After the War was over

After the war had ended Mary describes how she couldn't sell the British Hotel, so just had to pack up and leave.

Back in London, she and Sally, her faithful maid, were very poor. Mary had debts that she couldn't pay and she couldn't afford to keep Sally on. Sally was devastated by this and was angry that everyone seemed to have forgotten how much Mary had done during the war.

Then, fortuitously, they received a surprise visit from William Howard Russell, the journalist who had written about Mary during the Crimean War. When he heard about Mary's plight, he determined to remind the British people of her work in the Crimea. He wrote a story in his newspaper and asked his friends to raise money to help her.

Finally there was a huge party to honour her and celebrate her work, with a message of congratulation from Queen Victoria.

