

The Early Life of Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale was born on 12th May 1820. She was named after the city of Florence in Italy where she was born. She had an older sister called Parthenope. The Nightingale family were very rich. They lived in a large house in England called Embley Park and had many servants. Parthenope and Florence were educated at home, first by a governess and then by their father. Florence was very clever and was especially good at maths.



From a young age, Florence felt that God was calling her to help people. She wanted to be a nurse but at this time, rich women were expected to marry a rich husband and run a household. Florence knew that if she married she would not be able to be a nurse, especially since most nurses in Victorian times were poorer women. It would not be appropriate. However, Florence was determined so she went against the wishes of her parents and her friends and refused to marry even though she had offers.

Eventually, Florence's parents realised that she would not forget her dream of being a nurse so her mother gave Florence her blessing. Florence travelled to Germany in 1851 when she was 31 years old to train as a nurse for 3 months. When she returned home she became the head nurse at a hospital for gentlewomen in Harley Street in London. This was the start of her incredible nursing career.

