

Contents and background information

# Florence Nightingale



# Florence Nightingale Trunk 1

## Clothing:

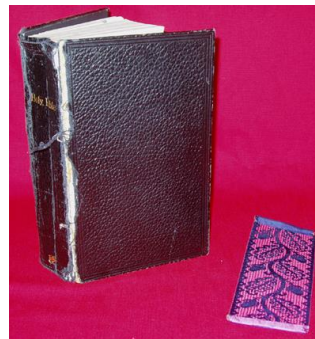
Black skirt and jacket with lace jabot and bonnet



Writing case, with bone dip pen, traveling inkwell, brass seal and stick of sealing wax



Bible and bookmark



Bloomers



Smelling salts, pocket watch ceramic owl and wick trimmer/ candle snuffer



## Personal items:

Carriage warmer

Several small personal items and the feeding cup will be packed in this upon receipt of the trunk



Vanity case and boot puller



Chamber Pot and round metal bedwarmer



**Nursing items:**

Nursing apron and bonnet



Porcelain Feeding cup (packed in carriage warmer)

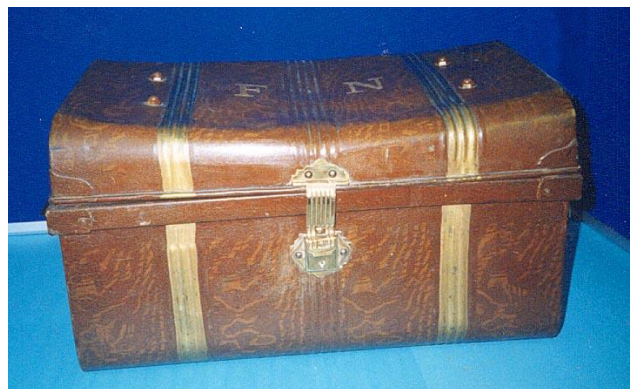


Glove box **containing:** eye bath, tongue depressor, marrow scoop, magnifying glass, medicine bottles and nit comb



**Clinching items:**

Monogrammed tin trunk



Turkish lamp (replica)

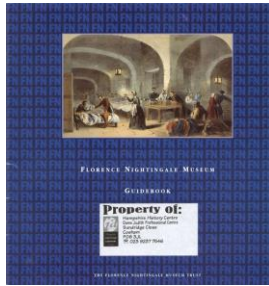
**Important: do not reveal until everything else has been unpacked**





## Paper Resources

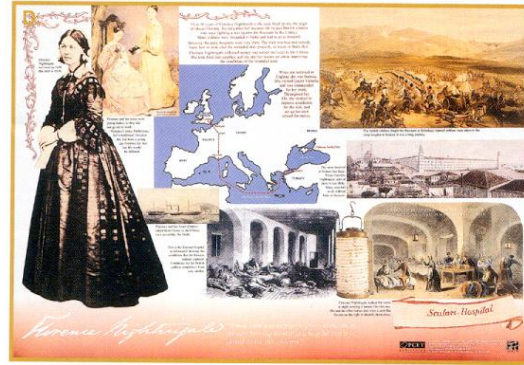
Florence Nightingale information book



Transcripts/illustrations from contemporary journals – 6 x A4 laminated



- PCET Florence Nightingale poster and accompanying teachers' notes (2 x A4 laminated)



- Portrait of Florence Nightingale  
A4 laminated



## Using the Florence Nightingale Collection in a mystery owner activity

**Please note:** For protection during transit the trunk is packed in a particular way and some items are packed inside other items e.g. within the Carriage warmer. You will need to familiarize yourself fully with the artefacts and these guidance notes and repack the artefacts more appropriately in order to use them in the way described here.

We suggest you **reveal the items from the trunk roughly in the order that follows** to gradually build a picture of the trunk's owner and delay the denouement until the final item is revealed (clothing items are not mentioned here as many schools choose to use them for adult in role as Florence, rather than as part of the Mystery Owner activity). N.B. **Make sure the initials on the lid of the trunk are hidden** before starting to remove items from it e.g. by having the lid open.

### Personal items

These items give clues as to how long ago the owner of the trunk lived and the sex, age and class of the trunk's owner. From them children should deduce that the trunk is from a long time ago, and belonged to a well-off female who they will probably view as quite old, although Florence was only 34 when she went to Scutari.

**Bedwarmer** - In Victorian times beds would have been warmed or aired, particularly in the winter, using bedwarmers like this one as homes were largely unheated. They were filled with hot water or coals and were removed from the bed when the occupant got into it. Being made of metal they could also survive journeys, so may have been taken when richer Victorians travelled anywhere. **Suggests the owner lived a long time ago.**

**Carriage Foot Warmer** - Florence would have travelled by horse drawn coach and in later years by train. In Victorian times travel by these means was often cold and uncomfortable. Carriage warmers like these would have been filled with hot coals and the passenger could then place their feet on them for extra warmth. Florence travelled by coach across the Russian countryside when she went to investigate conditions for the soldiers at the front line, and conditions were very uncomfortable and the climate was extremely cold. **Another item that suggests the owner lived a long time ago but could also be used as a mystery object to play Call My Bluff.**

**Writing case with dip pen, travelling inkwell, brass seal and stick of sealing wax-** Florence Nightingale was well known as a compulsive letter writer. She constantly scribbled notes and jottings to herself and family and throughout her life it was not unusual for her to write at least eight letters a day. Indeed it is largely her writings that brought about the changes she is known for by rallying others, making the facts known to a wider audience and proving, via statistics that she displayed as pie charts, that disease was in fact killing more soldiers than combat. The writing artefacts are the kind that would have been used by wealthier Victorians. **Offers clues that the owner is well educated, probably wealthy and maybe female.**

**Chamber Pot** - At the time indoor toilets were rare even in wealthy homes in Britain and there would certainly not be any at Scutari. When Florence arrived at the hospital in Scutari she was shocked to find that there were barely 25 chamber pots to serve the hundreds of soldiers who were accommodated in the wards. She quickly set about trying to rectify the situation and to trying to improve the appalling sanitation arrangements.

**Holy Bible** - Florence held deeply religious beliefs all her life and relied on her faith a great deal. She spoke of her *calling* although she was unsure at the time of the exact nature of the work she thought God had planned for her. In most Victorian homes religion played a major role and Florence's home was no exception. It is recorded that Florence often gave Bibles or rosaries as gifts to friends, family members and colleagues. **Shows the owner was Christian/religious.**

**Smelling salts bottle** - Smelling salts were particularly popular in Victorian times as many ladies were prone to a sudden attack of the 'vapours' (fainting fits), the reason for this often being due to the tight

lacing of their corsets which were worn as part of their underclothing, but in this case could be for medicinal use. *Whichever is the case, this item suggests the trunk owner is female.*

**Vanity case, and clothing** – *confirm that the owner is female.* The bonnet is typical of the type worn by someone from a wealthy Victorian family. The majority of Victorian clothing would have been *handmade* by a seamstress. After the death of Queen Victoria's husband Prince Albert the Queen took to wearing nothing but black and many women followed suit or wore black items to show their respects.

## Nursing and feeding items

Florence Nightingale was horrified at the conditions she found at the main hospital at Scutari. The patients had not had clean clothes and many of them had not been washed for two months. There were no washing facilities, no soap, no towels and conditions were appalling. Florence set to and organised the cleaning of the wards which were scrubbed clean. Florence wrote to England requesting shirts, cotton, flannel and other requirements for the patients.

*Children could imagine they are Florence Nightingale and write to Sidney Herbert in England telling him of the conditions and what supplies need to be sent.*

*The following items should lead to children deducing that the owner of the trunk might be a doctor or nurse, with the apron pointing more strongly to nursing.*

**Ceramic eye bath** – pupils may recognise it as similar to plastic glass versions they have at home

**Bone tongue depressor** – for holding the tongue down to examine the mouth/throat.

**Feeding cup** – This is designed to give a drink/broth etc to someone who is lying in bed.

**Medicine bottles** - In Florence's medicine box, which was discovered after her death, small medicine bottles and bandages were evident. In Victorian times medicines were much less specific and the range was small. Whilst Florence was in Scutari she put pressure on the government in Britain to send extra medical supplies as they were in such short supply. Poisons bottles were (and still are) distinguished by their blue hexagonal, or ridged, design so that people with poor or no sight would be able to recognize their contents simply by feeling them.

**Marrow scoop** - Florence was very concerned that the soldiers were not getting the balanced diet they needed in order to make a full recovery from their injuries. She was joined at Scutari by a top London chef, Alexis Soyer, who improved the diet of the soldiers enormously. Such scoops would have been used to remove the nourishing marrow from inside the meat bones so it could be added to soup or stew for extra goodness.

**Nit comb** - for de-lousing the infested heads of the poor soldiers.

**Apron** - The only signs that Florence's nurses were nurses were the banners they wore with the word Scutari embroidered on them in red and their good strong aprons. It was not until later that a special uniform was designed for them and for all other nurses who followed in their footsteps.

In a later session, make banners from strips of sheeting with the word 'Scutari' written on them in red felt-tip and role play life in the hospital in the Crimea. Have 'soldiers' carried into the 'wards' and Miss Nightingale's nurses minister to them. Use some of the appropriate artefacts to bring realism to the action.

## Clinching items

**Model of an Owl** - Before Florence went out to the Crimea she kept a small owl as a pet. She brought it back from one of her trips abroad and named it Athena. She was extremely attached to the owl and carried it around in her pocket. When it eventually died some four years later she was heartbroken. As she was a quiet and reserved person the owl had become her friend and confidante. If children have already done some work on Florence they may deduce her as the owner from this item.

**Tin trunk** - This type of trunk is typical of the time. A person of Florence's standing would have travelled with several trunks for all her belongings. The importance of the item here is as *a vital clue to the mystery owner since it has her initials on the lid.* These should be concealed until only the lamp remains in the trunk (by keeping the lid open). When you remove the wrapped lamp from the trunk

close the lid and 'notice' the initials. Could these be another clue? Who could it be? – the lamp will, of course, be the final clincher.

**Turkish Lamp** - Florence Nightingale is depicted as carrying a variety of candle lamps as she walked the wards at Scutari hospital. This is because Victorian artists who tried to record her life during the war had only their own experience to draw upon and therefore described her carrying the lamps they were familiar with. In reality the lamp she most likely used was a Turkish style candle lamp, made of brass with a concertina effect cloth shade. A candle would have been placed in the bottom and the light diffused through the concertina of linen. They were sold locally in the markets in Turkey at the time of the Crimean War.

### Follow-up activities you could use this collection for

Teacher goes into role as Florence wearing the clothing provided. Children devise questions they wish to ask beforehand.

Turn your class home corner into Scutari hospital and use some of the **more robust** artefacts as role-play items. Remind pupils of the roles and jobs they are to role play when in the home corner:

- Nurses, injured soldiers, doctors, Florence herself.
- Cleaning floors etc, making beds, bandaging wounds, feeding the injured