Florence Nightingale was born on 12th of May 1820 in Florence, Italy. She was known to her family as Flo.

Florence and her sister Frances Parthenope were very well educated. They were taught a range of subjects by their father and a governess.
When Florence was 17, she believed that she heard God speaking to her, telling her that he wanted her to carry out some special work.

In 1850 Florence travelled all the way to Alexandria in Egypt to study nursing at the Institute of Saint Vincent de Paul.
Florence's family was very wealthy and they had two homes. One was a winter home in Hampshire and the other was a summer home in Derbyshire.

Florence got her first job in 1853 as Superintendent of a hospital for invalid gentlewomen in Harley Street, London.
Florence was able to go to the Crimea because she was friends with Sidney Herbert, the Minister for War.

When Florence arrived in Turkey, the Army doctors refused to work with her. However, they soon saw that they needed her help.
Florence is known as "The Lady of the Lamp" because she often went around the wards at night carrying a lamp, to check on the soldiers.

Florence became so famous that when she travelled back from the Crimean war, she called herself Miss Smith to avoid publicity.
After the Crimean War, Florence worked with a Royal Commission which found that many more soldiers died from infection or disease than died from their wounds.

When the findings of the Royal Commission were published, Florence designed a "Rose Diagram" as a way to clearly show the information to the public.
When Florence first arrived in the Crimea, the death toll rose. It turned out that the hospital was built on a sewer, so the drinking water was contaminated.

In 1860 Florence founded a nursing school at St Thomas's Hospital in London. The school still exists as part of King's College London today.
It is thought that Florence may have caught chronic brucellosis in the Crimea, which made her ill for the rest of her life.

Florence received many awards for her work. She was the first woman to be given the Order of Merit.
After the Crimean War, Florence campaigned for better sanitary conditions in India for forty years.

At the Scutari military hospital, there was a pet tortoise called Jimmy. His shell is at the Florence Nightingale museum in London.
The International Red Cross was founded by Henry Dunant, who was inspired by Florence's work. They still award the Florence Nightingale medal every year.

Florence wrote over 19,000 letters in her campaigns to improve health care. They have been put online for everyone to read.