

Who was the most significant Victorian reformer?

Aimed at Key Stage 4

1805-1881

Mary Seacole

Dr John Snow

1813-1858

Joseph Bazalgette's
sewers completed

1875

Florence
Nightingale

1820-1910

1805/1881



War breaks
out in Crimea

Cholera outbreak,
Broad St. London

1853

1854



1820-1910

National Curriculum subject links

- AQA – *Health and the people c. 1000 to the present day*
- Edexcel – *Medicine in Britain, c. 1250 to the present*
- OCR SHP – *The People's Health, c. 1250 to the present*
- EDUQAS – *Changes in Health and Medicine in Britain, c. 500 to the present day*

Coverage and links

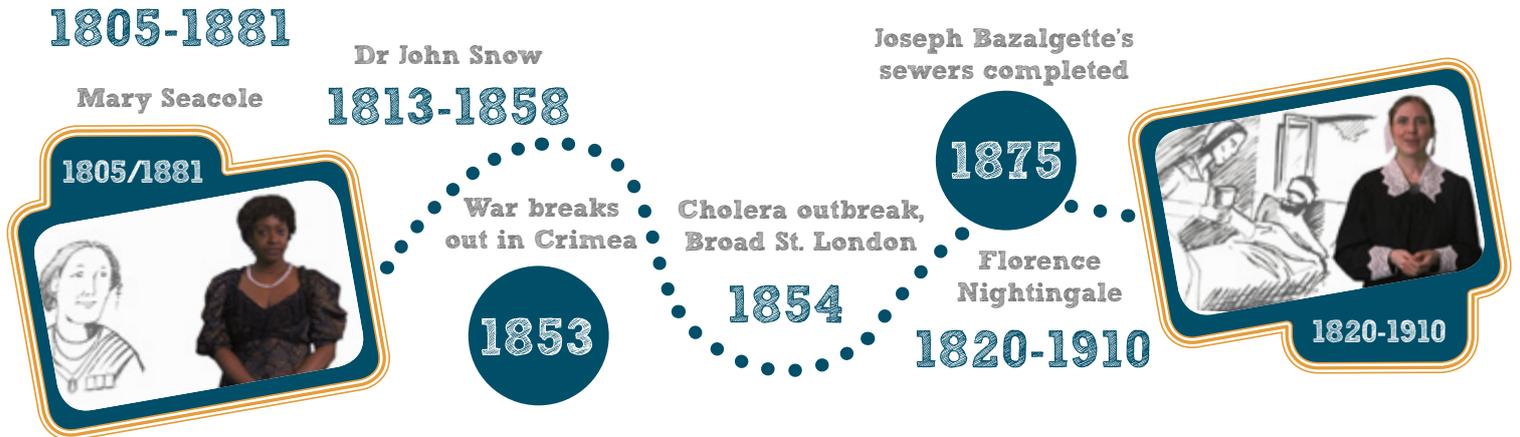
A study of the history of medicine has been at the heart of GCSE Schools History Project specifications for many years and it has certainly pleased many teachers to see it back in one form or another in all the reformed GCSE History specifications. Whatever the starting point – Ancient Rome, the Anglo-Saxons or a moment in the Middle Ages – the story of medicine in Britain is the story of people, of their relationship with the Church, of the development of science and industry, all through the lens of humans at their most vulnerable: when we are sick.

And yet, arguably, little happened to improve medicine until the 19th century and then only in the second half, after Louis Pasteur proposed the germ theory. This unit of work investigates some of those involved in that great Victorian reform project, working in hospitals and in public health. Pupils are asked to consider which of the four individuals in the films – and others that are introduced towards the end of the unit – is the most significant. That concept will need some explaining before and during the unit, and some of your pupils should come up with their own criteria for making their judgement. However, for ease, you might ask what the reformers did in the short term and in the long term. What impact did they have?

Before starting to teach any unit on medicine, you will probably already have a set of textbooks or other resources appropriate to the specification you have chosen. The notes will indicate where it might be useful to use them with your pupils.

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Suggested learning outcomes

By the end of these lessons, pupils will be able to...

- Describe the work done by key Victorian reformers: Nightingale, Seacole, Snow and Bazalgette
- Make a tentative judgement about which of the reformers made the biggest impact on medicine and health
- Begin to devise criteria for judging the significance of historical figures.

Pre-lesson homework

This unit might well follow others on public health in the Medieval and Renaissance periods. If so, pupils might be given homework to make a timeline on developments in this area up to the Industrial Revolution. It would also be important for pupils to have a grounding in the diseases of the period, especially cholera, and the reasons why infectious disease was widespread at the time. These reasons include rapid urbanisation leading to overcrowding, as well as a lack of knowledge about the true causes of disease and thus a lack of good hygiene.

Lesson 1 – How significant was Florence Nightingale?

Films to use

- **Florence Nightingale: Early years**
- **Florence Nightingale: Training**
- **Florence Nightingale: The Crimea**
- **Florence Nightingale: Scutari Hospital – part 1**
- **Florence Nightingale: Scutari Hospital – part 2**
- **Florence Nightingale: After the Crimea**

Open the lesson by showing a familiar image of Florence Nightingale – you will find one in the Appendix – and ask your pupils what they already know about her that you can see in the picture. Suggest ideas about the ‘lady with the lamp’ and the fact that she was a nurse

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Lesson 1 – How significant was Florence Nightingale? ...continued

in an army hospital. Beyond that, you might explore the title of the painting – in this case Angel of Mercy – but you might use another. What impression does this give about Nightingale and nurses in general?

Now look at pictures or descriptions of hospitals before Florence Nightingale. You might have one in your medicine textbook, but if not you could talk about what it might have been like – a hospital would be quite a dirty place and the nurses untrained. They would not provide much care and were often in the job because there was nothing else they could really do.

Now explore the word 'significant'; what are the criteria against which you are going to start making judgements? You might now start thinking about what we might tentatively say based on the picture of Nightingale and the picture or description of the earlier hospital.

Then show the first film, Florence Nightingale: Early years. Pupils do not need to make any notes at this stage, but it should lead to a short discussion. Why was Florence Nightingale the person who might have led reform of Victorian hospitals? Why might it be her, rather than one of the doctors or nurses who worked in a hospital as it was then? Pupils should now write the question down – Why Florence Nightingale? Over the next few minutes they will record details about her story that tell us about why she was the person to make the difference in hospitals.

Show the film, Florence Nightingale: Training. At the end, your pupils should add notes about her overcoming the difficulty in getting proper training, her mission to care for the poor rather than the rich and her knowledge of the importance of good hygiene.

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Lesson 1 – How significant was Florence Nightingale? ...continued

After that watch the next few films, all with the same aim – to gather evidence about what Nightingale actually did and why she, particularly, was important. In **Florence Nightingale: The Crimea**, pupils will note that she had by now got a reputation so was asked by the Secretary of War to organise nurses. **Florence Nightingale: Scutari Hospital – part 1 & part 2** shows her complete focus on hygiene.

In the last film, Florence Nightingale: After the Crimea, pupils will record that she helped set up a training school for nurses, so that it now became a much more professional job.

At the end, return to your tentative criteria for judging significance. What did Nightingale achieve? Where has she met the criteria? Where has she not met them? At the end, you might want to talk about when she did her work in the Crimea: before Pasteur published his germ theory. Does that make her work more remarkable?

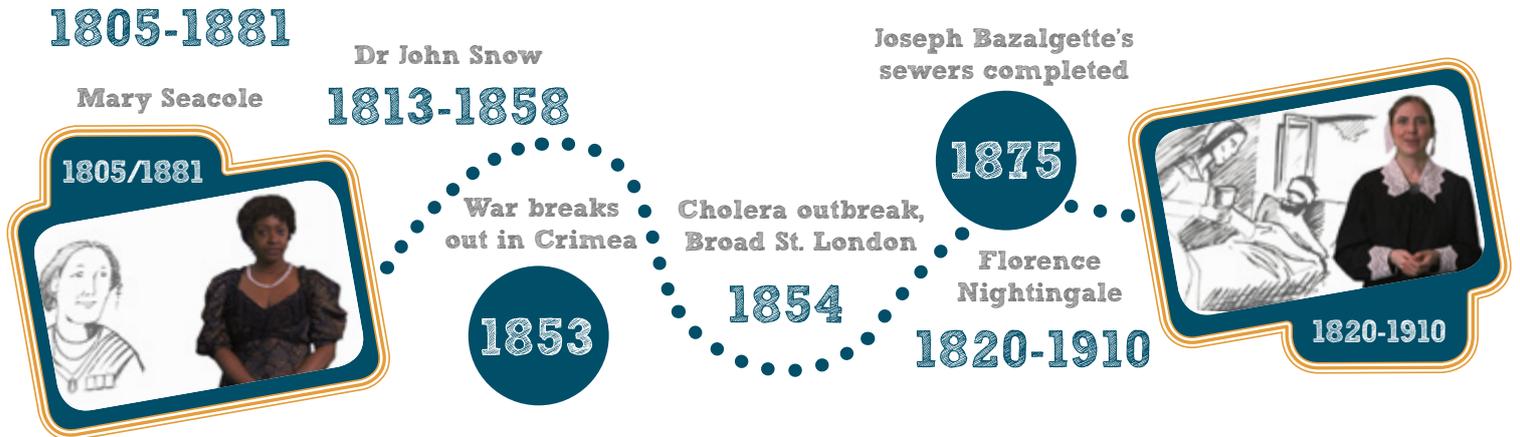
Lesson 2 – How significant was Mary Seacole?

Films to use

- **Mary Seacole: Introduction**
- **Mary Seacole successfully treats cholera**
- **Mary Seacole: Her travels**
- **Mary Seacole travels to the Crimea**
- **Mary Seacole: The British Hotel**
- **Mary Seacole: Life in the Crimea**
- **Mary Seacole: The end of the war**

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Lesson 2 – How significant was Mary Seacole? ...continued

Mary Seacole has become something of a controversial figure over the last few years. Almost forgotten for more than a century, her story has been revived in recent years as we take a sharper look at the history of black people in this country. And yet some critics would say that in nursing she is a marginal figure and her recent reputation is based solely on her ethnicity. This lesson would certainly allow her work to be judged against her more famous nursing sister, Florence Nightingale.

Start the lesson by playing **Mary Seacole: Introduction**. Record on the board the key details of her early life and then ask your class to discuss the differences between her upbringing and that of Florence Nightingale. How was her medical training different? Then play **Mary Seacole successfully treats cholera**. Remind your pupils about the causes and symptoms of cholera (they will revisit this topic in the next lesson on John Snow as well) and talk about the sorts of treatments she was offering – essentially herbal remedies of the kind seen in earlier periods of medicine.

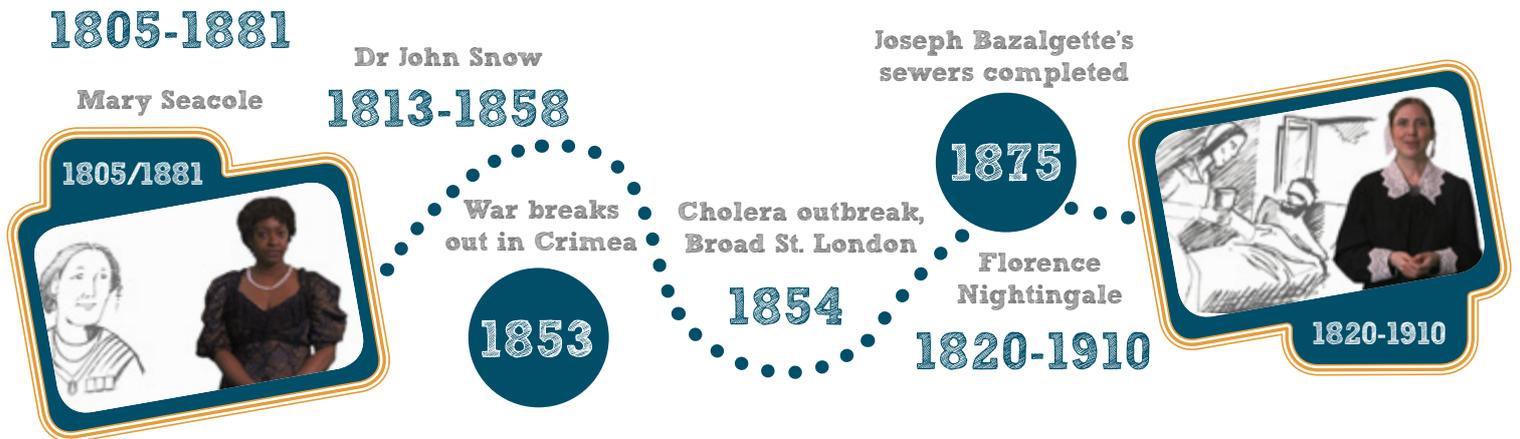
Now set up the question – How significant was Mary Seacole? Under the title, pupils should note down some of what they have seen so far, such as the fact that she could successfully treat a killer disease and she treated the poor for free. Again, ask your pupils to compare her to Florence Nightingale, who so far was more significant.

As you show the next few films your pupils should keep noting down evidence that they can use to make judgements about Seacole's significance. In **Mary Seacole: Her travels**, they will hear that she travelled to the Crimea at her own expense after being turned down as a volunteer nurse by the War Office. **Mary Seacole travels to the Crimea** and **Mary Seacole: The British Hotel** talk about her founding a convalescent home for wounded officers in the Crimea. In **Mary Seacole: Life in the Crimea** pupils will learn that Seacole was not too afraid to tend to the wounded under fire in the heat of battle. The final film, **Mary Seacole: The end of the war**, reveals that the Crimean War left Seacole bankrupt but a fund established in her name helped her to get home.

Now use all of these notes to judge her significance against the criteria established in the first lesson. Are the criteria sufficient? What evidence have we now got that we

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Lesson 2 – How significant was Mary Seacole? ...continued

could use to judge Seacole? Certainly, you should do a full comparison with Florence Nightingale. Who is the more significant figure in this enquiry? Nightingale, who cleaned up the army hospitals and established a nursing school or Seacole, who went to the Crimea at her own expense to look after the troops? If it is Nightingale, does that mean Seacole is not worth studying? How is she significant?

Lesson 3 & 4

Lessons 3 and 4 should follow a similar pattern to the first two lessons. The criteria you are using to judge significance might be amended or refined as you watch the films and start to judge John Snow and Joseph Bazalgette. You will also want to spend time during both lessons comparing all four reformers so that pupils are well prepared for the final outcome activity.

Lesson 3 – How significant was John Snow?

Films to use:

- **Dr John Snow: Introduction**
- **Dr John Snow: Proving a theory**
- **Dr John Snow: Gathering evidence**
- **Dr John Snow: The investigation continues**
- **Dr John Snow: Unravelling a mystery**
- **Dr John Snow: Removing the pump handle**
- **Dr John Snow and Rev. Henry Whitehead**
- **Mode of communication of cholera – part 1**
- **Mode of communication of cholera – part 2**

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Lesson 4 – How significant was Joseph Bazalgette?

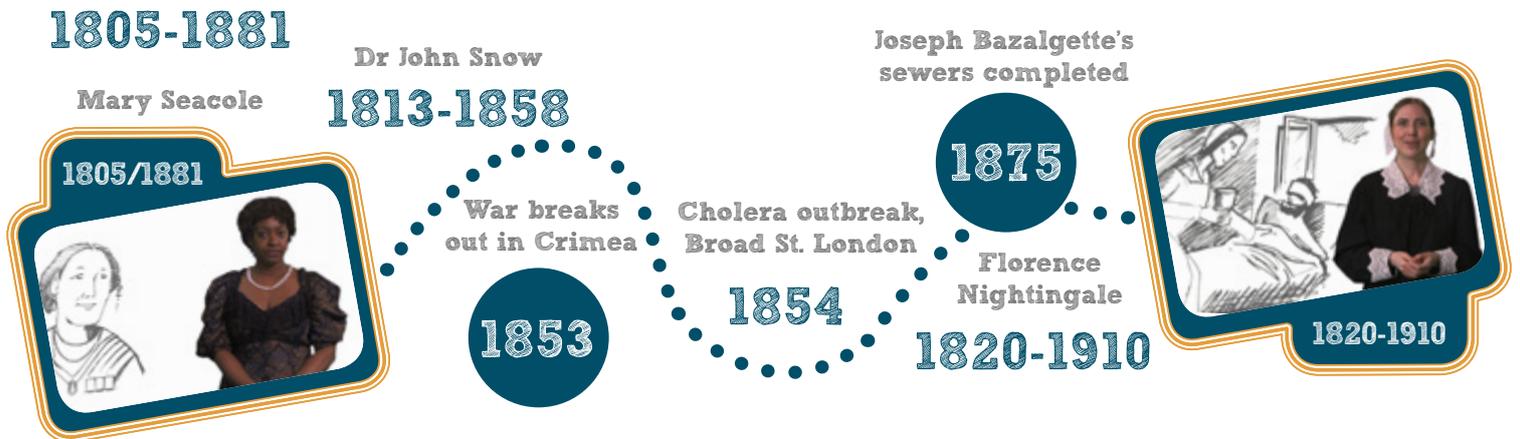
Films to use:

- **Joseph Bazalgette: The early years**
- **Joseph Bazalgette: Early career**
- **Metropolitan Commission of Sewers**
- **Metropolitan Board of Works**
- **Joseph Bazalgette: Construction of the sewers**
- **Joseph Bazalgette: The legacy**

At the end of the unit, pupils could write a short essay in which they talk about which of the four they consider to be most significant. Certainly, their judgement would be based on comparing the reformers against your final criteria and some pupils might refine these even further in their writing.

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Differentiation, assessment and reflection

Extension

There are other reformers that students might investigate to add to the debate at the end. They could look at Edwin Chadwick, the public health reformer mentioned in the Bazalgette film, and others might also do some research into Charles Booth. While he does not normally form a part of a Medicine specification, his work on poverty in London in the 1880s is very important.

Pupils should also be pushed to come up with different, even better, criteria for judging significance. As you get to each new reformer, you might ask whether the criteria pupils used for the last are still useful. Does anything need to be changed?

Scaffolding

Each pupil should have a really clear timeline of medicine in their exercise book, or up in the classroom.

Formative assessment opportunities

- Throughout the sequence you should check your pupils' grasp of the factual details they need to make their judgements with lots of short question and answer sessions or informal written tests. Their knowledge of what Nightingale, Seacole, Snow and Bazalgette actually did is essential to everything else.
- You should also be checking pupils' understanding of the concept of historical significance throughout the lesson sequence.

Reflection

At the end of the lesson sequence, pupils might apply their final refined criteria to other figures in the History of Medicine course. Why do we remember Galen? Who is the most significant doctor of the Renaissance? 60 second histories has a number of films to support the Medicine topic. **Click here** and search 'Medicine & Health' under ERAS or TOPICS.

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Appendix: Painting of Florence Nightingale



Image courtesy of www.wellcomeimages.org