**Nightingale, Florence** (1820-1910), British nurse, hospital reformer, and humanitarian. Born in Florence, Italy, on May 12, 1820, Nightingale was raised mostly in Derbyshire and received a classical education from her father. In 1849 she went abroad to study the European hospital system, and in 1850 she began training in nursing at the Institute of St Vincent de Paul in Alexandria, Egypt. She subsequently studied at the Institute for Protestant Deaconesses at Kaiserswerth, Germany. In 1853 she became superintendent of the Hospital for Invalid Gentlewomen in London.

After the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854, Nightingale, stirred by reports of the primitive sanitary conditions and grossly inadequate nursing facilities at the large British barracks-hospital at Üsküdar (formerly Scutari, now part of stanbul, Turkey), dispatched a letter to the British secretary of war, volunteering her services in the Crimea. At the same time, unaware of her letter, the Secretary of War proposed that she assume direction of all nursing operations at the war front.

She set out for Üsküdar accompanied by 38 nurses. In the rat-infested barracks she found many of the wounded without beds, lying on the floor, a shortage of bandages, and no soap, towels, or washbasins. She immediately set about organizing the cleaning of the barracks.

She then established a schedule for nursing care and diets. At night she walked the corridors with her lamp, checking on the soldiers, a habit for which she became known as “the lady with the lamp”. Under Nightingale's supervision, efficient nursing departments were established at Üsküdar and later at Balaklava in the Crimea. Through her tireless efforts the mortality rate among the sick and the wounded was greatly reduced.

At the close of the war in 1860, with a fund raised in tribute to her services, Nightingale founded the Nightingale School and Home for Nurses at St Thomas's Hospital, London. The opening of this school marked the beginning of professional education in nursing.

*From: Microsoft Encarta 98*