



English

Elizabeth Kenny



For Upper Primary



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Preview

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Battle and Victory

Elizabeth Kenny

Famous Faces from History 5

A girl was born in a country homestead, the daughter of a country vet. When she grew up she became a bush nurse but she did not go to college and she did not get a certificate in nursing. When a horrible disease spread around the world, she invented her own treatment. But doctors questioned her methods. To gain acceptance for her work she had to fight many battles but she was victorious, even though it took most of her life. Who was she?

Elizabeth Kenny was born in Australia in 1880. As a country girl she loved nothing better than being outdoors, riding bareback on her horse around the farm. One day when she was a teenager she fell and broke her wrist. The doctor who treated her, Dr McDonnell, lent her textbooks on muscles and how they worked. She was so fascinated that she even made her own "skeleton" with pulleys showing how the muscles worked.

Her brother, Bill, was small and weak as a child. When Elizabeth was still quite young she set up an exercise program for him and the exercises made him stronger. This program probably inspired some of the techniques she developed when she grew up.

At about the age of 31, Elizabeth was working as a bush nurse in the outback of Queensland. Everything she learnt was "on the job" because she did not have any proper training. In the outback, so far from

the hospital, she had to use her common sense treating farm injuries, broken bones and delivering babies. If she came across a difficult case all she could do was to telegraph the doctor in town. One day she had a patient, a two-year-old girl, and she had no idea what was wrong with her. The child seemed to be paralysed so she telegraphed the local doctor describing all the symptoms. He wrote back:

"It sounds like infantile paralysis (poliomyelitis or polio). There's no known treatment, so do the best you can."

Now in those days there was no cure for polio and no such thing as vaccinations. Children became sick very quickly, usually in the summer months. First they had a fever, headache, upset stomach, and in some cases, a stiff neck and sore muscles. Very quickly they could not walk or use their limbs. Their muscles would not work, they became weaker and weaker. Sometimes parts of their lung collapsed and gave up working. Some children became so sick they had to live inside an "iron lung" – a metal contraption like a coffin which helped them to breathe. Parents were terrified that their children would catch this disease if they went to places like swimming pools. The usual medical solution was to bind the children to the bed and put splints on their arms and legs to stop them from moving the muscles that were affected.

Elizabeth Kenny, working so far away from hospitals, did not know this treatment. The little girl could not sleep with the pain



Battle and Victory

Elizabeth Kenny

Famous Faces from History 6

in her legs. Elizabeth thought that her pain could be eased by using heat. So she wrapped her legs in hot damp rags, called a compress. She was able to relax and soon fell asleep. Using her knowledge of wasted muscles and spasms, Elizabeth massaged the legs and created an exercise program. The little girl recovered and so did six more children in the district treated by her.

In 1916 when World War I started, Elizabeth aged 36, served as an Australian army nurse, which was a very brave thing to do. She was given the title “Sister” because of her hard work. While she was working on the battlefields she invented the stretcher to make it easier for the soldiers to carry the wounded back to the hospitals set up in tents near the battlefields. Later on she patented this stretcher and gave the money to the Country Women’s Association in Queensland.

When Elizabeth returned to Australia to continue as a bush nurse she opened a clinic in the backyard of a hotel in Townsville and called it the *Experimental Muscle Reduction Clinic*. Here she treated children with polio and showed parents how to carry out the treatment of their children at home. Eventually other clinics opened around Australia, and one in England.

Time and time again she had to fight to prove her methods worked. Local people liked her work but doctors stuck to the old ways of splints and criticised her work. A

Royal Commission started up by the same doctors said her methods were “costly”, “cruel”, and “dangerous”.

So at the age of 59 Elizabeth set off for the United States, where there was an epidemic of polio cases. There she taught others about her procedure. With some studies proving that her technique was superior to the old ways, many American clinics followed her ideas. Still some in the medical profession ridiculed her. Eventually in Minneapolis a clinic was set up to treat thousands of young children paralysed with polio. In 1941 the United States Medical Association finally declared support for her methods. This was one victory in the battle.

By 1947 Elizabeth was triumphant. Hospitals had to sell great piles of splints – 10,000 of them – for scrap metal. These were the splints that had been used by doctors to stop poor children from moving. Now they were only good for scrap!

Elizabeth Kenny died in 1952 back in Queensland, Australia, at the age of 72. She was a heroine to patients all over the world who learned to walk again after therapy at her clinics. Her methods led to modern physiotherapy treatments for polio, strokes, accidents and backaches. Elizabeth must have seen her life as a victory over the medical profession because she called her biography *My Battle and Victory*. ■



Famous Faces from History 4

Elizabeth Kenny

Word Study

Jumbled Letters

Unjumble these medical words.

● NLIICC

● LYSPAARIS

● SEDAISE

● DEEMPIIC

● MLECUSS

● IJUISREN

Punctuation – Punctuation is very useful for the reader to help understand a text. Think of punctuation as the traffic signs of reading. So a *full stop* is a stop sign and a *comma* means to slow down. Capital letters start off a new sentence and also indicate important words such as names, places, titles and headings. Add the full stops, capital letters and other punctuation to the following passage:

elizabeth kenny was born in new south wales in 1880 elizabeth made an important contribution to the treatment of polio she developed some exercises which helped patients to strengthen their legs her method of using hot damp cloths reduced the pain elizabeth didn't know it but she was doing exactly the opposite of what the doctors thought was right the patients elizabeth treated all recovered

Syllables – Words can be broken up into sounds called syllables. Place your hand under your chin and say this word slowly: **encouraging**. Every time you feel your chin drop is another syllable. En-cou-rag-ing. Did you count four? Each one of these parts is a syllable, so the word has four syllables. Say these words slowly with your hand under your chin. Write down the number of syllables (chin drops):

victory _____ muscles _____ triumphant _____
collapse _____ contraction _____ wooden _____
experience _____ tent _____ method _____

Plurals

The general rule when making a plural is to add an **-s** to the noun, but sometimes with words ending in **-ch** **-sh** or **-x** you have to add **-es**.

For example **crutch** **crutches**. Form the plurals for the following words:

nurse _____ horse _____ ash _____
limb _____ fax _____ hatch _____
crash _____ tax _____

Scramble

How many words can you make using this word: **INFANTILE**? They must be words of three letters or more; no hyphens and no capital letters. E.g. **LINE**

Word Families

-tch is a common word family found in words like **crutch** and **latch**. Make new words by adding **-atch**, **-itch** or **-utch** to the family using these letters:

h _____ D _____ th _____ m _____
p _____ er _____ cl _____ disp _____ st _____



Famous Faces from History 6

Elizabeth Kenny

Comprehension

Understanding the Text

1. What events inspired Elizabeth to study muscles?

2. What jobs did Elizabeth Kenny have during her lifetime?

3. How did she learn to become a nurse?

4. What is another name for poliomyelitis? What is it?

5. What was the treatment that Elizabeth used on children who had polio?

6. What reaction did Elizabeth get from the medical profession for her ideas for treating children with polio? Why do you think they reacted that way?

7. What was Elizabeth Kenny's achievement? Why is she remembered today?

8. Elizabeth Kenny once said: "It is better to be a lion for a day, than a sheep all your life." What do you think this means? Do you agree with her or not? Why or why not?

Reading Task

Read about another famous doctor or nurse in the library or on the Internet. Find out the contribution that person has made to medicine. For example:

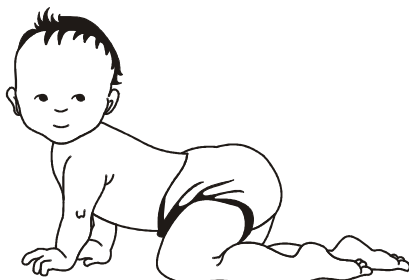
Howard Florey, Marie Curie, Florence Nightingale, Louis Paster, Dr Victor Chang, etc.

Internet Resources:

- ▶ www.time.com/time/
Time Magazine
- ▶ www.adb.online.anu.edu.au
Australian Dictionary of Biography
- ▶ www.famouspeople.co.uk

Drawing Task

Draw a picture of a healthy baby and one who is sick in bed. Underneath the pictures write down the things which help a baby to be healthy. Don't forget to include basic needs such as sunshine, clean water, etc.





Famous Faces from History 6

Elizabeth Kenny

Extension Tasks

Complete on a separate piece of paper.

1 Book Title

- ♦ Why do you think that Elizabeth Kenny chose the title for her book *Battle and Victory*? What would be another good title for her autobiography?
- ♦ What would you call your autobiography if you were famous? What would you like to be famous for?

2 Health and Hygiene

People did not know in Elizabeth Kenny's time that diseases could spread by water droplets from coughing. There have been great developments in treatment and prevention of diseases. Today there is greater awareness of the dangers of disease spreading from person to person because of poor hygiene, not using handkerchiefs and tissues, not washing hands and unclean water.

- ♦ Draw a poster reminding people to wash their hands, wear a mask or use tissues to help prevent the spread of diseases.

3 Fitness First

Create an exercise program to suit someone who is not very fit. Write the instructions for some exercises you do at school. Explain which muscle groups they are helping to develop. Draw some diagrams to show exactly how to do the exercises. Include details for each exercise, the number of repeats, etc.

4 When I Grow Up

Elizabeth Kenny was a nurse and she also began the field of physiotherapy. The people who carry out physiotherapy are called physiotherapists.

- ♦ Find out what the people, who work in these jobs in the medical field do:
*general practitioner *biologist *pediatrician *obstetrician
*optician *rheumatologist *psychologist *podiatrist *coroner
- ♦ Which of these jobs would you prefer to have when you grow up? Why? Write about the job you would like to do and why you would like it.
- ♦ Conduct a survey of the students in the class to find out what job they would like to have when they grow up. Draw a graph to show the results.

5 Medical Breakthroughs

- ♦ Research other medical breakthroughs and who was responsible. Choose one of the following breakthroughs to find out more about medicine:
* Penicillin * Vaccine for smallpox
* The discovery of the genes * The stethoscope
* First heart transplant * Discovery of X-rays
- ♦ Write down what the breakthrough was, who discovered it, what impact it had at the time, what it means today, what discoveries it has led to, etc.

Internet Resources:

HINT: use the Internet or the library:
▶ www.infoplease.com/people.html
▶ www.askforkids.com
▶ www.wikipedia.org

6 Broadcast News

Write a news item to read aloud announcing the success of Elizabeth Kenny's methods in America. Read your announcement to the class.

Famous Faces from History

Elizabeth Kenny

Word Study (Page 5)

❑ Jumbled Letters (medical words)

•CLINIC, •PARALYSIS, •DISEASE, •EPIDEMIC, •MUSCLES, •INJURIES

❑ Punctuation

Elizabeth Kenny was born in New South Wales in 1880. Elizabeth made an important contribution to the treatment of polio. She developed some exercises which helped patients to strengthen their legs. Her method of using hot damp cloths reduced the pain. Elizabeth didn't know it but she was doing exactly the opposite of what the doctors thought was right. The patients Elizabeth treated all recovered.

❑ Syllables

•victory=3 •muscles=2 •triumphant=3
 •collapse=2 •contraption=3 •wooden=2
 •experience=4 •tent=1 •method=2

❑ Plurals

•nurses •horses •ashes
 •limbs •faxes •hatches
 •crashes •taxes

❑ Word Families

•hatch •Dutch •thatch •match
 •pitcher •clutch •dispatch •stitch

Comprehension (Page 6)

Understanding the text

1. What events inspired Elizabeth to study muscles?

Elizabeth broke her wrist and read books lent to her by her doctor on muscles and how they worked.

2. What jobs did Elizabeth Kenny have during her lifetime?

Elizabeth Kenny had a job as a bush nurse, war nurse, healer and teacher.

3. How did she learn to become a nurse?

Elizabeth Kenny learned how to be a nurse from reading textbooks and on the job.

4. What is another name for poliomyelitis? What is it?

Poliomyelitis is also called polio. It is a disease which affects muscles, making them weaker.

5. What was the treatment that Elizabeth used on children who had polio?

Elizabeth used hot compress to ease the pain, and a program of exercise and massage to get the muscles working again.

6. What reaction did Elizabeth get from the medical profession to her ideas for treating children with polio? Why do you think they reacted that way?

The medical profession did not approve of her ideas and claimed that they were dangerous and cruel. They probably did not approve of her ideas because she was not a doctor and she did not have any recognised qualifications as a nurse.

7. What was Elizabeth Kenny's achievement? Why is she remembered today?

Elizabeth Kenny developed a treatment for poliomyelitis and opened clinics to treat patients in Australia, England and America. She introduced the field of physiotherapy and she invented a stretcher.

PREVIEW