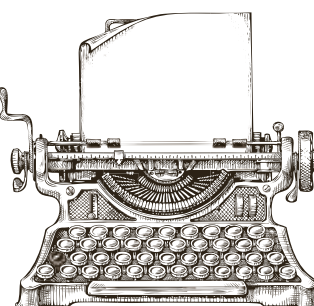


FEARLESS PERSONALITY
"I said I could and I would. And I did." – Nellie Bly was renowned for her determination.



The adventures of Nellie Bly

She was labelled the best reporter in America, but who exactly was Nellie Bly?

Nellie Bly was a famous journalist who investigated and revealed many injustices (examples of unfairness) in society. Her career began in Pittsburgh, a city in the US state of Pennsylvania, in 1885, but it would eventually take her around the world – including the battlefields of the First World War.

Humble beginnings

Born Elizabeth Jane Cochran, Nellie Bly grew up in a very poor household. At first she wanted to be a teacher, but she was soon forced to give up school because her mother couldn't afford the fees. In 1885, Bly read a newspaper article called "What Girls are Good For", which argued that a woman should always stay in the home, looking after her family. Angered by this, she wrote a strong reply to the editor of the newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Dispatch*. He was so impressed that he gave her a full-time writing job. From then on, she wrote under the pseudonym (a false pen name) Nellie Bly – the title of a popular song at the time.

A life of disguise

Bly's career was now under way, but it wasn't until she moved to New York that she became successful. Here, she went undercover as a patient in a female asylum (a place of care for those with very serious mental-health needs). This required her to pretend to be ill herself, so that she could really experience what it was like.

What Bly discovered there was shocking: filthy conditions; rotten food; and doctors and nurses being violent towards patients. She even found that healthy people were being kept there against their wishes. When her findings were published, the public was outraged. This sparked a bigger investigation, and improvements were made.

Bly's success encouraged her to investigate other wrongs in society and she soon led the way in undercover reporting. She revealed poor working conditions in factories, children abandoned by their parents and corruption (dishonesty) in government.

Female firsts

Proud of her achievement, Bly demanded more money as a reporter. When her boss refused, she quit to work for herself. Bly had often pushed boundaries in this way. She left her first role at *The Pittsburgh Dispatch* because she refused to write about what were then considered to be "women's issues" such as gardening and fashion. Instead, she headed to Mexico, where her criticism of the government led to her being forced out of the country.

Around the world



Despite being a respected journalist, it was an around-the-world adventure that made Bly truly famous. Inspired by a novel called *Around the World in Eighty Days*, written some years earlier, Bly wanted to beat this fictional record – and to write about the experience.

While her boss loved the idea, he wanted a man to go, not Bly. At the time, women were expected to travel with a man for their own protection. Bly, however, was determined. Fearful that she would move to a rival newspaper if he didn't agree, Bly's boss came around to the idea and she set off on 14 November 1889.

Her journey – which involved travelling by boat, train, carriage and horse – took her from England to Egypt, Singapore to Japan. She arrived back in the US 72 days later, beating the fictional record of 80 days.

Bly never lost her adventurous spirit. After many years running her husband's steel company – this eventually failed, causing Bly to lose her fortune – she returned to writing, reporting from the battlefields of Austria during the First World War. As one of America's first female war journalists, she became a role model not only for reporters, but for women everywhere.

Nellie Bly passed away on 27 January 1922, aged 57.

