



How do we know that Mary Seacole was a real person?

This is the only known portrait of Mary Seacole. This oil painting was 'lost' for many years and was found not long ago.



It was painted by a London artist called Albert Challen around 1869.

Here are some things to think about....

What does the portrait tell you about her age at the time the portrait was painted?



The painting shows Mary wearing the three medals that were awarded to her in recognition of her work and courage.

What is she wearing that might give you some clues about her life?

What words would you use to describe her face?



What do you think she might have been thinking about while the artist painted her portrait? What might she be remembering?

Her red scarf is a traditional scarf worn by Creole women – women who were born in Jamaica.

How was the portrait discovered after being lost for so long?

An art dealer (someone who buys and sells paintings) bought an ordinary picture in a frame from a car boot sale.



He was puzzled because he found a signature and the date 1869 on the backing board at the back of the picture so he took the picture out of its frame to have a closer look.

When he turned the 'backing board' over he had a shock!

It was actually a painted portrait with the artist's signature on the back. Someone had decided that they didn't like the portrait and used it to keep another picture in place in the frame!



The art dealer didn't know who the person in the portrait was so he sold the portrait to another art dealer.

This art dealer noticed the medals. He knew they were important so he decided to send the portrait to an expert - someone who knew a lot about history.



This expert realised who the person in the portrait was. It was Mary Seacole!

She was so pleased that she bought the portrait and sent it to the National Portrait Gallery so that anyone could visit the Gallery to see it.

So how do we know that it really is a portrait of Mary Seacole?

1. The portrait is of a black woman.
2. The woman would have been sixty when the portrait was painted so the dates are right.
3. There is one photograph of her that was taken when she was older and the face is very similar.
4. The medals in the portrait are the same as those Mary received.
5. Her red scarf was something that she would have been likely to wear.

Do you think they look similar?



Photograph of Mary Seacole



Portrait of Mary Seacole

In 1857 she wrote a book. People bought it and read all about her life.

People can still buy a copy of the book and read about her life!



Why do you think she wrote her book and why did people want to read it?

She wasn't the only one who wrote things down so they could remember...

One soldier from the Crimean war wrote in his memoirs: "She was a wonderful woman, all the men swore by her, and in case of any malady, would seek her advice and use her herbal medicines in preference to reporting themselves to their own doctors. That she did affect some cure is beyond doubt, and her never failing presence amongst the wounded after a battle and assisting them".

What do you think he was saying about her?



Mary Seacole was born in Jamaica but lived for a time in London in a building on George Street.

This blue plaque was put on the wall of a building and tells you that Mary Seacole lived in a house on the site where the plaque was placed.



Two small statues (a bust) were made of Mary Seacole. They tell us what she looked like.



These stamps went on sale in 2005 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Mary Seacole.

Part of the building in the background is named after her. It is Seacole Hall part of the University of West Indies in Jamaica.



Mary Seacole is buried in London and her grave has a new headstone.

These are just some of the things that tell us she was a real person.

It is important to remember people like this who can inspire others to do similar things.



- Objectives:
- Children will sequence the events in Mary's life.
- Children may discuss/write why Mary made the choices in her life that she did.
- Children will learn at least one reason why Mary Seacole is remembered today

Expectations. Most children will: know some of the main events in Mary Seacole's life and be able to sequence them correctly; give at least one reason for her actions; recount the story of Mary Seacole. Some children will also: identify a number of reasons for her actions; understand how we know about Mary Seacole from the evidence available; use pictures to draw their own conclusions about her. Some children will: be able to sequence some of the events in Mary Seacole's life correctly; recount episodes from the life of Mary Seacole.

[Link resources And Link](#)