

Biography

# Nellie Bly

## Reporter for the Underdog

by Julia Wall

ROUND THE WORLD WITH NE



Mc  
Graw  
Hill

PAIRED  
READ

Around the World

# STRATEGIES & SKILLS

## Comprehension

**Strategy:** Reread

**Skill:** Author's Point of View

## Vocabulary Strategy

Latin and Greek Suffixes

## Vocabulary

addresses, divided, haste,  
opposed, perished,  
proclamation, shattered,  
tension

## Content Standards

### Social Studies

History

Word Count: 1,084\*\*

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\*\*The total word count is based on words in the running text and headings only. Numerals and words in captions, labels, diagrams, charts, and sidebars are not included.



## Essential Question

How can words lead to change?

# Nellie Bly

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## Chapter 1

# A Woman in a Man's World

Women reporters investigate all kinds of crimes and injustices today. However, this hasn't always been the case.

Nellie Bly became a **journalist**, or reporter, in the late 1800s. Women reporters usually reported on gardening and fashion. People believed that it was a man's job to investigate the "serious" news stories. Nellie Bly shattered those beliefs. Many people call her America's first investigative journalist.



Nellie Bly became a journalist when she was 21 years old.



## WHAT WAS NELLIE BLY'S REAL NAME?

Nellie Bly's real name was Elizabeth Cochran. She was born in Cochrans Mills, Pennsylvania, in 1864. The town was named after her father. He died when Elizabeth was six.

## NELLIE BLY'S HOME TOWN



The family moved to Pittsburgh when Elizabeth was a teenager. Her mother rented out rooms in the house to **boarders**. This helped pay the bills. Elizabeth wanted to be a teacher, but there wasn't enough money.

## HOW COCHRAN BECAME A REPORTER

In 1885, Cochran read a story in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* called “What Girls Are Good For.” It made the proclamation that girls were only good for marriage. Cochran disagreed and sent a letter to the newspaper. The editor thought her letter was so good that he offered her a job!

People didn’t think that women should be reporters. Most female reporters used pen names. Cochran’s pen name was Nellie Bly. The name came from a folk song.

Here is a verse from the folk song “Nelly Bly” by Stephen Foster.

Nelly Bly has a voice  
like a turtle dove,  
I hear it in the meadow  
and I hear it in the grove.  
Nelly Bly has a heart warm  
as a cup of tea,  
And bigger than the sweet  
potatoes down in Tennessee.

## Life for Women in the 1800s

In the 1800s, a woman's role was caring for her family. Women became the property of their husbands after marriage. People thought women weren't as smart or as strong as men.

Women did all of the housework. They didn't have washing machines, dishwashers, or microwaves to help. Cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry took all day.

In the 1800s, women washed clothes by hand.

### STOP AND CHECK

How did Nellie Bly get her first job?

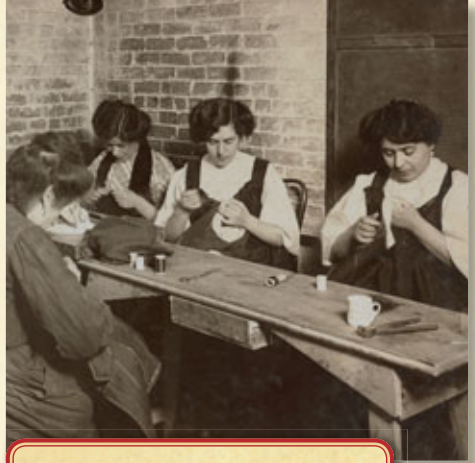


## Chapter 2

# Bly's Daring Jobs

Bly started working as a reporter with the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* in 1885. She didn't want to write about gardening and fashion. She wrote about things she wanted people to know. Bly's stories often divided public opinion.

Bly wrote about factories with poor working conditions. Some of these factories paid to advertise in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. Newspapers use the money from advertising to produce the newspaper. The factories threatened to stop advertising in the paper. Bly's story caused tension at the newspaper. The editor told Bly to write about other topics.



**Women in factories worked long hours for very little money.**



## **BLY ON THE RUN**

Bly refused to write about “safe” things. In 1886, she convinced the editor to send her to Mexico. She told him that she would write about her travels. But Bly also wrote about a Mexican journalist who had been sent to a prison because he had complained about the Mexican government.

Bly left Mexico to avoid being arrested. She published her stories in a book called *Six Months in Mexico*.

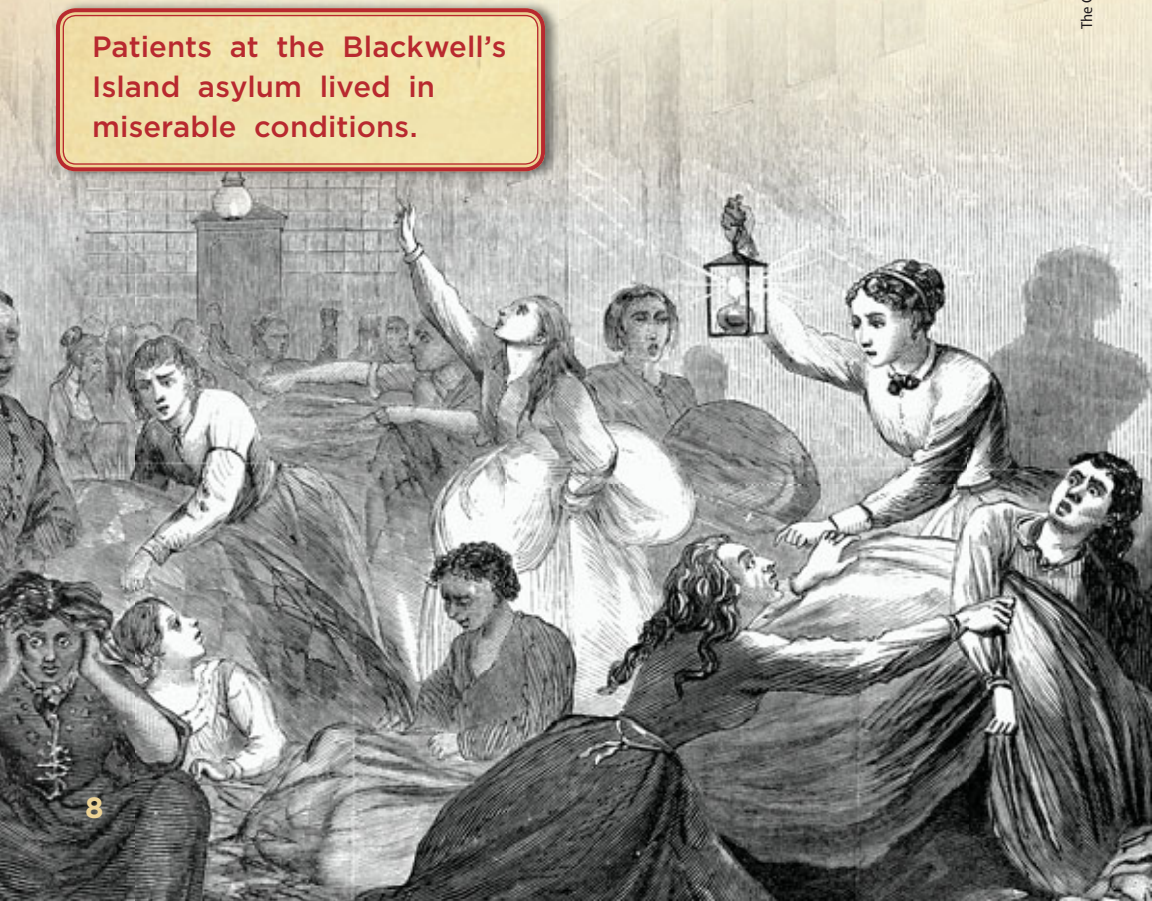
Bly moved to New York City. She spent four months looking for another newspaper job. Then she started writing for the *New York World*.

**“I was too impatient to work at the usual duties assigned women on newspapers.”**

In 1887, she decided to write about Blackwell's Island **asylum** near New York City. She wanted to write about the conditions in the asylum. Bly pretended to be mentally ill so that she could stay there. She lived in dirty conditions, ate rotten food, was beaten, and had ice-cold baths.

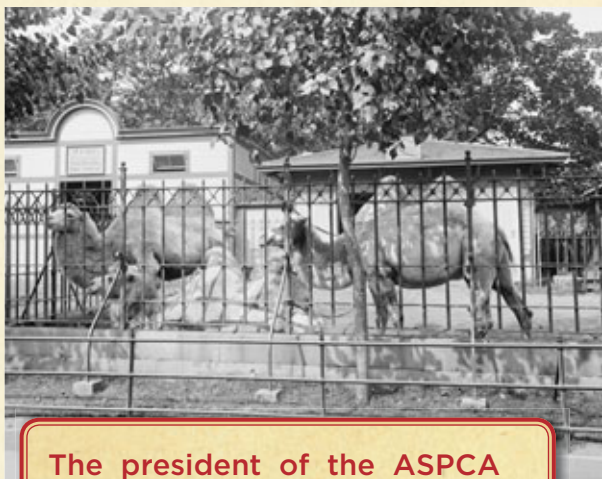
People were shocked when they read Bly's stories. They didn't know that conditions in the asylum were so bad. Conditions improved because of Bly's stories.

**Patients at the Blackwell's Island asylum lived in miserable conditions.**



## HELPING ZOO ANIMALS

Bly wrote many stories about the injustices she saw in New York. In 1894, the president of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals told Bly about conditions at the Central Park Zoo. The hippo pool was filthy, and the bears didn't have shelter from bad weather. The president showed the zookeepers how to take better care of the animals.



The president of the ASPCA helped the zookeepers make better shelters for the animals at Central Park Zoo.

*“I have never written a word that did not come from my heart. I never shall.”*

### STOP AND CHECK

How did Nellie Bly help change things in her community?



## Chapter 3

# Bly Travels the Globe

Bly read the book *Around the World in Eighty Days*, by Jules Verne. A character in the book travels around the world in 80 days. Bly wanted to try the same thing.

### TRAVELING SOLO

Bly set out on her long journey on November 14, 1889. She was going to travel around the world by herself. She traveled in haste to meet her 80-day deadline.

Many people opposed the idea of women traveling alone. Bly didn't care. She traveled to many places, including England, France, Egypt, and Japan. She wrote stories for the newspaper as she went. People followed her journey with great interest.



Bly carried just one small travel bag on her journey.



## Women and Travel

Women didn't usually travel alone in the 1800s. People thought women needed to travel with others for safety. They also thought women took too much luggage with them!

Bly returned to New York in only 72 days!



Bly's trip became so well-known that a board game called *Round the World with Nellie Bly* was created.

Bly married Robert Seaman in 1895. He owned steel companies. Bly began running one company.

Bly took over all of the companies when Seaman died in 1904. The companies closed in 1914 because they owed a lot of money.

World War I began in 1914. Millions of people perished on the battlefields. Bly became the first American woman journalist to report from a war zone.



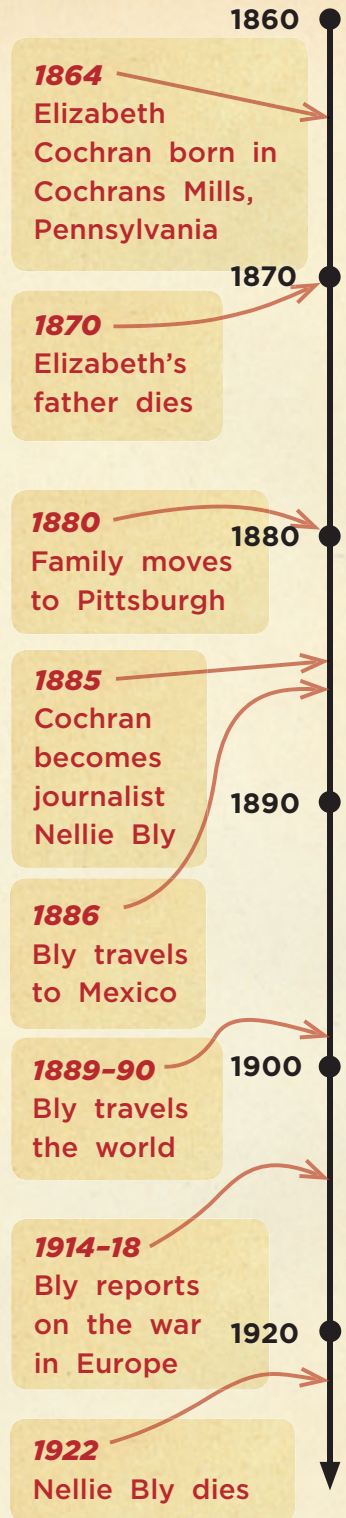
Nellie Bly ran the Iron Clad Factories company.

## INTO THE DANGER ZONE

Bly traveled to the **front line**. She wrote about things she saw. For example, she wrote about the conditions for officers and soldiers. Officers lived in clean, warm quarters. Regular soldiers lived in “grave-like trenches.”

Bly kept writing after the war. She used her writing and public addresses to help her community. She found homes for children, helped women get jobs, and raised money for people in need.

Bly died from pneumonia in 1922. She was 57. After her death, New York’s *Evening Journal* called her “The Best Reporter in America.”





Nellie Bly was a reporter for the underdog. She spoke for people who had no money, no power, and no voice. She wrote about problems and helped to change things.

Bly was brave. She never took no for an answer. Her work took her around the world, but she also helped those at home.



In 2002, Nellie Bly was honored with a United States postage stamp.

**STOP AND CHECK**

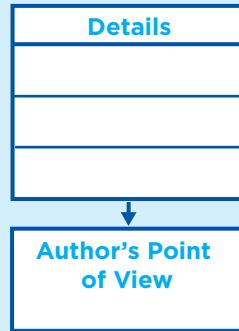
What kinds of things did Bly write about during World War I?



# Respond to Reading

## Summarize

Summarize how Nellie Bly used words to bring about change. Your graphic organizer may help you.



## Text Evidence

1. What kind of informational text is *Nellie Bly: Reporter for the Underdog*? What text features tell you this? **GENRE**
2. What does the author want you to learn from this text? **AUTHOR'S POINT OF VIEW**
3. What is the suffix of *community* on page 9? What does this suffix mean? What does *community* mean? **LATIN AND GREEK SUFFIXES**
4. Write about one way Nellie Bly used her writing to change people's ideas about what women could do. Use details from the text in your writing. **WRITE ABOUT READING**

## Compare Texts

Read about a trip that helped change people's ideas about women and travel.

# Around the World

Nellie Bly got the idea for her journey because she ran out of ideas. Bly had to write one story each week for the *New York World*. One week, she thought:

I wish I was at the other end of the earth!  
(*Around the World in Seventy-Two Days*, page 2)

Then she had an idea! Bly would try to beat the 80-day record set in *Around the World in Eighty Days*. It was hard to plan such a long journey. But Bly had no doubts.

I always have a comfortable feeling that nothing is impossible if one applies a certain amount of energy in the right direction ... If we want good work from others or wish to accomplish anything ourselves, it will never do to harbor a doubt as to the result of an enterprise.

(*Around the World in Seventy-Two Days*, page 3)

Bly's journey didn't begin well. She got seasick. Later, she met Jules Verne, the author of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, in Paris, France. She talked with him and found out that great ideas can come from surprising places. Verne got the idea for his book from a newspaper story.

I got it from a newspaper ... I took up a copy ... one morning, and found in it a discussion and some calculations showing that the journey around the world might be done in eighty days. (*Around the World in Seventy-Two Days*, page 22)



**Bly completed her world trip in only 72 days.**



Bly knew that she had to travel quickly. She didn't want to fall behind.

My only wish and desire [in Hong Kong] was to ... learn the earliest possible time I could leave for Japan, to continue my race against time around the world.

*(Around the World in Seventy-Two Days, page 74)*

Bly always found the time to look around her. She wrote about the streets, the people, and their way of life in each place she visited.

Japanese children are unlike any other children I ever saw at play. They always look happy and never seem to quarrel or cry.

*(Around the World in Seventy-Two Days, page 97)*

Bly had a few delays, but she made it back to the United States in fewer than 80 days. Bly had shown that a woman could travel alone—and in record-breaking time!



## Make Connections

How did Nellie Bly's trip change ideas about women's travel? **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

What kinds of things did Nellie Bly write about? Why was her trip around the world important?

**TEXT TO TEXT**



# Glossary

**asylum** (*uh-SIGH-luhm*) a hospital for patients with mental health problems (**page 8**)

**boarders** (*BAWR-duhrs*) people who stay in a house and pay for a room and meals (**page 3**)

**front line** (*FRUHNT lighn*) the area where an army is close to the enemy (**page 13**)

**journalist** (*JUR-nuh-list*) a person who writes news stories for newspapers or magazines (**page 2**)

# Index

*Around the World in  
Eighty Days*, 10, 16, 17

*Around the World in  
Seventy-Two Days*, 16–18

Blackwell's Island asylum,  
8, 14

Cochran, Elizabeth, 3, 4,  
13

*New York World*, 8, 16

*Pittsburgh Dispatch*, 4, 6–7

World War I, 12–13

# Focus on Social Studies

**Purpose** To learn about the differences between primary and secondary sources

## Procedure

**Step 1**

With a partner or a small group, make a list of the things in this book that came from primary sources.

.....

**Step 2**

Talk about the list. How can you tell if information comes from a primary source or a secondary source?

.....

**Step 3**

Make a poster that will help other students understand the differences between a primary and a secondary source. Include what to look for and when they might want to use these sources in their own work.

## Literature Circles

### Nonfiction

# Thinkmark

### **The Topic**

What is *Nellie Bly: Reporter for the Underdog* mostly about?

### **Text Structure**

What are two things that Nellie Bly helped change through her words?

### **Vocabulary**

What new words did you learn in the text?  
What helped you understand what they mean?

### **Author's Purpose**

Why do you think the author wrote *Nellie Bly: Reporter for the Underdog*?

### **Conclusions**

What conclusions can you make about people who are able to make changes in the world?