



Introduction

Elizabeth Blackwell was born February 3, 1821, in Bristol, England. She had four brothers and four sisters. Mr. Blackwell believed that each child should have a chance to develop his or her talents and had the children educated by private tutors.

Early Life

In 1832, her father moved the family to the United States, where he set up a sugar refinery in New York City. Mr. Blackwell took Elizabeth to abolitionist (anti-slave) meetings in the 1830s. The family hid an escaped slave who was on his way to Canada in their home for several weeks. In 1838, the family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. Mr. Blackwell wanted to raise sugar beets as a better source of sugar because he was opposed to the strenuous slave labor needed to grow and process sugar cane. Unfortunately, just three weeks after the move, Elizabeth's father died. Elizabeth and her sisters became teachers to help support their family.

Elizabeth Decides to Become a Doctor

Elizabeth was inspired to become a doctor after one of her friends, who was dying of a painful disease, admitted her condition would be easier for her to handle if she had a female doctor. Elizabeth promptly took a job teaching music to raise money to pay for medical school. She studied a friend's medical books and studied anatomy with a doctor, but was continually denied entrance to medical school. Some doctors recommended that she either go to Paris or disguise herself as a man in order to study medicine. Others discouraged her because they thought women were intellectually inferior. Finally, in 1847, she was accepted into the Geneva Medical College in upstate New York. In 1849, Blackwell graduated first in her class and became the first woman to earn a medical degree in the United States.

During the Civil War

In 1853, Elizabeth and Marie Zakrzewska, a German doctor, founded the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women and Children. During the Civil War, Elizabeth supported the North because of her abolitionist roots. She and her sister Emily, who had also become a doctor, worked as nurses during the war. The New York Infirmary worked with Dorothea Dix to train nurses for the Union. In 1874, Elizabeth helped start the London School of Medicine for Women.

Elizabeth Blackwell was a pioneer for the medical education of women and made it possible for others to follow in her footsteps. She died May 31, 1910, in Hastings, England.

1. **Why did Blackwell's father want to raise sugar beets?**
 - A. They were healthier than sugar cane
 - B. They were easier to grow than sugar cane
 - C. Growing sugar cane required slave labor
 - D. Because he owned a sugar refinery

2. **What was the effect of Mr. Blackwell's death as described in the passage?**
 - A. His daughters became teachers to support their family
 - B. The family took in a runaway slave
 - C. The family sold the sugar refinery
 - D. Elizabeth Blackwell was inspired to become a doctor.

3. **Which of the following WAS NOT an obstacle to Elizabeth becoming a doctor?**
 - A. Her gender
 - B. Money
 - C. Attitudes about women
 - D. The difficult nature of medical school

4. **What does the story suggest about Paris?**
 - A. It was similar to New York
 - B. Its medical schools in the city might accept women
 - C. Its medical schools would not accept women
 - D. She could become its first woman to become a doctor

5. **Which of the following WAS NOT true about Elizabeth Blackwell?**
 - A. She had a sister named Emily
 - B. She worked as a nurse during the Civil War
 - C. She supported the South during the Civil War
 - D. She went to Geneva Medical College

6. **What does "inferior" mean in the following sentence?**

Some rejected her because they thought women were intellectually inferior.

- A. Less smart
 - B. More rejected
 - C. Better
 - D. Harmful
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7. **Which of the following best describes Elizabeth Blackwell?**
 - A. An abolitionist who eventually became a nurse during the Civil War
 - B. A hard worker who went to Paris to chase her dream of becoming a doctor

- C. A person who overcame great obstacles to become America's first female doctor
- D. A doctor who, along with her sister, became an important nurse in the Civil War