

Title of Lesson: *Nellie Bly to Dr. Peter Bryce: 19th Century Asylum Reform*
(Suggested grade level: 11)

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Background Information:

Background information for teacher:

- The teacher should read *Ten Days in a Madhouse* and print chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14 for student groups. The full transcript can be found at <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/bly/madhouse/madhouse.html>.
- Background information about Bryce Hospital can be found at: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1564>.
- Background information about Peter Bryce can be found at: <http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1109>
- Background information about Nellie Bly can be found at: <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/386/nellie.html>.

Overview of lesson: Nineteenth century reform of asylums is investigated in this lesson. The students will read primary sources about Nellie Bly, Dorothea Dix, and Dr. Peter Bryce, investigate a real world historical problem, and develop possible solutions to the problem. The lesson will utilize both small group activity and individual work.

Content Standards

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)
Eleventh Grade: Standard 2, p.75

National Standards for History, 1996

Standards in History for Grades 5-12 (p. 41)

Era 7, Standard 1 – How Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption.

1A – The student understands the origin of the Progressives and the coalitions they formed to deal with issues at the local and state level.

1B – The student understands Progressivism at the national level.

National Council for the Social Studies, (Bulletin 89, 1994)

Standard V – Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, High School

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions, so that the learner can:

h. explain and apply ideas and modes of inquiry drawn from behavioral science and social theory in the examination of persistent issues and social problems.

Primary Learning Objective(s):

- The student will identify ill-treatment and abuses of 19th century asylums; identify reformers and activists (Bly, Dix and Bryce) and their contributions to the reform effort.
- The student will identify real-world problems and create possible solutions.

Time allotted: 90 minutes

Materials and Equipment:

- Copies of chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14 from Nellie Bly’s *Ten Days in a Madhouse*
- Copies of Questions for Reading
- Copies of [The Meteor](http://www.archives.alabama.gov/meteor/vol1_no2.pdf) found at http://www.archives.alabama.gov/meteor/vol1_no2.pdf
- Copies of the *New York Times* article praising Dr. Bryce found at http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?_r=3&res=9D0CE4DE113DE433A25752C0A96F9C94649ED7CF%20 (attached).
- Copies of “Instructions for Bringing a Patient to the Hospital” (attached).

Technological Resources:

- Computer with internet access

Background/Preparation:

- The students should have an understanding of economic, political, and social problems that led to the Progressive Movement.

Procedures/Activities:

Engagement/Motivation Activity:

The teacher will ask, “Do the following descriptions sound like the results of reasonable treatment plans?”

- ...a woman ‘in the horrid process of tearing off her skin by inches; her face, neck, and person, were thus ‘disfigured to hideousness’
- ...a man confined in an outbuilding next to the ‘dead room,’ with corpses for his companions
- ...people penned in cold, filthy sheds, without furnishings, daylight, or fresh air
- ...people chained to the wall for so long that they resembled wild animals more than human beings.”

The teacher will say, “Concerned individuals in the 19th century wanted to change the way mentally ill people were treated; let’s find out more about the treatment of the mentally ill. The conditions I’ve just shared were reported by Dorothea Dix in her attempt to bring about reform in the treatment of the mentally ill.”

Step 1	Introduce students to the skills of investigative reporting. Give students background information on Bly’s experience and discuss why her investigative reporting would have taken place.
Step 2	Place students into groups with each group reading a different chapter (chapters 11, 12, 13 & 14) from Nellie Bly’s <i>Ten Days in a Madhouse</i> . Classroom size determines the number of groups, and some groups may be reading the same material. Have students answer Questions for the Reading (attached).

Step 3	Using their readings as a base, have groups brainstorm reforms/changes that should have been made to the mental health institutions of the mid 19 th century.
Step 4	Have groups share suggestions for changes with the whole class.
Step 5	Distribute The Meteor to the groups to read. Assign the following articles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 1 – “Insane Hospitals; Labor, Amusement & Study” • Page 2 – “Amusements for the insane & Labor of the Insane” • Page 3 – “Innocent Row” Allow groups to discuss what they have read.
Step 6	Distribute copies of “Instructions for Bringing a Patient to the Hospital” to the groups to read. Allow groups to discuss what they have read.
Step 7	Have students read the <i>New York Times</i> article praising Bryce Hospital in Alabama (see link above). Allow groups to discuss what they have read.
Step 8	After they have read these materials, have students identify those treatments that were in place at Bryce Hospital in the 19 th century and compare those treatments with the experience of Nellie Bly in an asylum. Allow students to draw their own conclusions concerning the treatment of the mentally ill in Alabama and that it was more medically advanced and humane than in most states.

Assessment Strategies:

- Suggested essay topics for unit test:
 - Compare the treatment of patients described by Dorothea Dix and Nellie Bly to the treatment of the mentally ill at the Alabama Insane Hospital in Tuscaloosa.
 - If you had been a United States Congressman at the turn of the 19th century, what legislation would you have introduced to improve treatment of the mentally ill? Include at least three proposals for reform.

Extension:

- Investigate Nellie Bly’s other reporting. Compare her to contemporary investigative journalists, and research and present findings on other antebellum reform movements (temperance, education, women’s rights, abolition) and compare them to with modern reform efforts in the same areas.

Remediation:

- Allow students to take copies of readings home for additional study.

Accommodation:

- Give extended time on assignments and tests.
- Allow additional time for skill mastery.
- Supply a teacher-initiated daily assignment sheet.

Modification:

- Review Individualized Education Plans, 504 Plans, and Gifted or ELL Plans for instructional and assessment accommodations or modifications.
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate comprehension and mastery of appropriate learning objectives.

Questions for Reading *Ten Days in a Madhouse*

Chapter XI – In the Bath

1. How much privacy was allowed in the bath?
2. Why did the author laugh at her bath?
3. What was the nurse's response when Miss Brown/Bly asked for a nightgown?
4. Why is Miss Brown/Bly worried about fire?
5. What concerns does the author have about the morning towels and combs?
6. What was for breakfast?
7. Who cleaned and maintained the dormitory areas?

Chapter XII – Promenading with Lunatics

1. How many women are incarcerated at Blackwell's Island?
2. What does it mean to be "on the rope"?
3. What sign was found in the pavilion? What sign would Miss Brown/Bly have put over the gates?
4. What was the dinner meal?
5. Was there a difference in the meals of the staff and the patients? If yes, what.
6. How did Nurse Grupe treat the old, blind woman who complained of being cold?

Chapter XIII - Choking & Beating Patients

1. How did Mr. Dent take care of Miss Mayard's fit?
2. What forms of entertainment were available to the women – if any?
3. What happened to women who went to the closet?
4. What sort of treatment did the nurses administer to the patients who annoyed them?

Chapter XIV – Some Unfortunate Stories

1. Briefly characterize the treatment the following patients received:
 - Louise
 - Josephine
 - Sarah
2. Why did Miss Brown/Bly agree to take a sleeping tonic?
3. Why could Mrs. Cotter's story be considered a happy ending?

MODEL HOME FOR INSANE

Features of the Alabama-Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa.

NO PHYSICAL RESTRAINT IS USED

Patients Have Concerts, Theatricals, and Picnics, and Work on the Farm No More than They Wish.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Aug. 31.—The Alabama-Bryce Insane Hospital is situated in the town of Tuscaloosa, on the Queen and Crescent Road, about sixty miles south of Birmingham. Under the management of Dr. Peter Bryce, who died last year, this Alabama State institution won a National reputation in the medical world. The institution bears the stamp of the genius of Dr. Bryce. His idea as to the treatment of insane patients has become as popular as it is successful. His theories on this subject might be well expressed in one word—"gentleness."

Dr. Bryce believed that the patient would be much better controlled without the straitjacket than with it, and during a lifetime devoted to the test of this theory at the hospital that bears his name he fully established its correctness. Dr. Bryce has been succeeded in the management of the institution by Dr. James T. Searcey, who was his intimate associate.

The hospital now owns about 1,200 acres of land, with three or four miles of river front. The property embraces very fine farm lands, and has upon it a coal seam that furnishes a very excellent quality of coal. About 500 acres of this farm are under a high state of cultivation, most of the work being done by the less violent patients, of whom there are between 300 and 400, who do some work every day. They are not compelled to work, but are allowed to do almost what they please.

Potatoes are the chief crop. As high as 10,000 bushels have been produced in a single crop, the prospects now being for a yield equally large, if not larger. The cabbage crop this year has been very fine, besides which a great many barrels of pickles have been put up for home consumption. The fruit orchard out on the farm is yet too young for bearing. There are more than 4,000 trees of different kinds—pears, peaches, plums, and apples. This year 6,000 bushels of oats were raised, and forty acres in millet produced more hay than could be stored. A good corn crop will also be raised.

The dairy, too, an interesting feature. The hospital now owns about 100 cows, 50 of which are now in milk. These 50 cows on Aug. 1 of this year gave 760 pounds of milk, being 2 gallons a day for each cow. This milk is used mostly for coffee and for sick patients. Two hundred full-blooded Berkshire hogs are now in very fine condition, and will be killed in the fall.

The watermelon crop has been very fine, and for several days the whole population of nearly 1,500 persons has been fed just as much of this fruit as it wanted. This took from 300 to 400 melons a day.

There are now about 1,220 inmates confined in the hospital, and 175 employes and their families to care for them. The entire cost of keeping up this institution is less than \$2 a week for each patient. The statutes allow the Superintendent to draw \$3 per week for each indigent, but never is more than \$2 drawn, and this pays the salaries of all the officers, employes, and, in fact, all the expenses of running the institution. Out of this fund enough money has been saved to put up the addition now in progress, which will accommodate about 100 more male patients. This building will be ready for occupancy by the time cold weather begins.

A great many people have the idea that the hospital is a very noisy and dangerous place. A visit there will convince them that there is not a hotel in the country where so little noise is heard, or where such good order prevails. None of the inmates is ever put in irons, or, to use the technical expression, mechanically restrained. This rule was adopted more than fifteen years ago, and it has been found to work splendidly. Humane treatment instead is resorted to, and the results have been far-reaching.

A great many entertainments are gotten up for the benefit and pleasure of the convalescent and saner patients. These consist of concerts by the best local talent in the city, amateur theatricals and tableaux, and bi-weekly dances that are entered into and enjoyed by the patients in a degree that is highly gratifying. At all these entertainments the very best of order prevails; in fact, so noticeable is this, that there are many so-called sane people who might learn a lesson from the excellent good manners of these unfortunates, who know when to listen and when and what to applaud.

Occasionally large numbers of them are carried to Lake Lorraine for a picnic. These are the happy times for those people, who are supposed to be outside the world and to have no pleasure at all. Everything that can be done to make shattered lives pleasant is done. Those who work do as much as they want to do and no more. Very often one may see a man roll his wheelbarrow up to be loaded and he will go galloping off with it before two shovelfuls of dirt are in it. Some of the patients have a lot of life in them, and not a few are very witty and well informed on many subjects.

The colored patients have separate apartments, and they, too, are treated as well as can be. They have their dances, plays, and picnics just like the white folks, but they enjoy these a great deal more. There was a picnic at the lake last Thursday. They had music for dancing and refreshments in profusion, consisting of ginger cakes, lemonade and watermelons.

The hospital is not a house of detention or a prison, for, while it is true that certain restrictions are necessary, yet everything is conducted on humane principles.

BULLETINS

INSANE HOSPITALS

1874 - 1907

ALABAMA OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS



[NOTICE:—Address all communications to Tuscaloosa, Ala.]

The Alabama Insane Hospitals.

INSTRUCTIONS ON BRINGING A PATIENT TO THE HOSPITAL.

Let the patient, whom you bring, distinctly know where he (or she) is going. A patient seldom forgets being deceived in that particular; and it affects many injuriously, when they hold it as a grievance afterwards.

It is very improper to send a lady patient in charge of an officer alone. Always have a woman, or a near male relative to accompany her if possible. The Probate Judge, if he sees proper, can deputize any relative or friend to accompany a patient. There need not be any officer in charge, in most cases. In some cases, the presence and control of a stranger—an officer of the law—acts injuriously.

Furnish the patient with a sufficiency of comfortable clothing. With many, to wear good clothing of their own, tends to their self-respect and satisfaction; and to receive articles of clothing, as well as other remembrances from home, is a matter of pleasure. Lists of clothing needed will be sent, from time to time during the year, to the family.

All persons are supposed by the law, to be able to pay for their board and attendance at the Hospital. The Probate Judge of the county, where the patient resides, determines whether they are not able to do so, and issues certificates accordingly. The regular charges are twenty-five dollars per month, quarterly in advance, which covers board and all Hospital expenses.

The patients are not allowed to have articles of value, such as jewelry, money, watches, etc., on the wards, nor articles of danger, such as knives, matches, scissors, etc. They ought not to bring such things with them.

The answers to the interrogatories, on an accompanying sheet, relating to personal and family history, are very important. They ought to be made fully and honestly, giving as much information as possible. They are kept in confidence, and are of great value to the physicians in making a correct opinion of the patient.

THE BRYCE HOSPITAL is three miles from the depots in Tuscaloosa. The Dummy meets all trains, and hacks meet them day and night. They all bring patients to the Hospital. Until otherwise instructed, bring all patients to Tuscaloosa.

The trip, if possible, ought to be arranged so as to reach the Hospital *during the day*. There is an extra charge for a hack at night, which often causes annoyance and imposition; besides, the patient generally comes more willingly and in better shape during the day, and the necessary routine of receiving and assigning him is more conveniently and satisfactorily done.