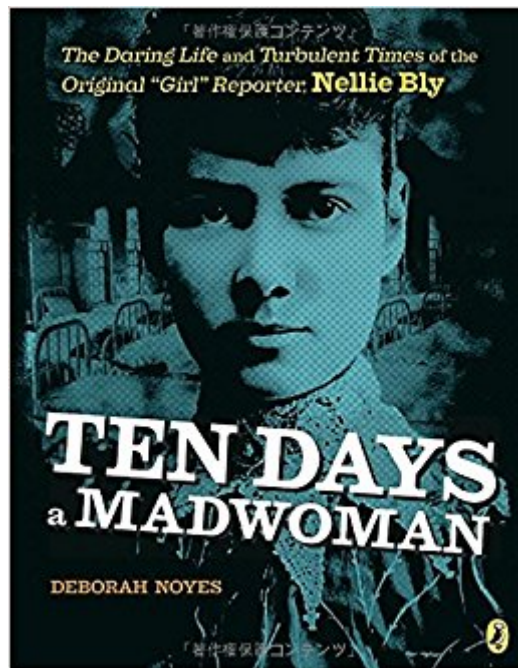




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Ten Days A Madwoman: The Daring Life And Turbulent Times Of The Original "Girl" Reporter, Nellie Bly



Synopsis

The compelling and true story of how one truly dedicated journalist admitted herself to an asylum to write a groundbreaking exposé. Young Nellie Bly had ambitious goals, especially for a woman at the end of the nineteenth century, when the few female journalists were relegated to writing columns about cleaning or fashion. But fresh off a train from Pittsburgh, Nellie knew she was destined for more and pulled a major journalistic stunt that skyrocketed her to fame: feigning insanity, being committed to the notorious asylum on Blackwell's Island, and writing a shocking exposé of the clinic's horrific treatment of its patients. Nellie Bly became a household name and raised awareness of political corruption, poverty, and abuses of human rights. Leading an uncommonly full life, Nellie circled the globe in a record seventy-two days and brought home a pet monkey before marrying an aged millionaire and running his company after his death.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1210 (What's this?)

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; Dgs Rep edition (February 7, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0147508746

ISBN-13: 978-0147508744

Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #42,262 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Social Activists #38 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1800s #71 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Women

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 6 Up •Daring? Turbulent? Madwoman? When a book's title includes those words, readers are bound to be inspired to open it. When the book is as well done as this one is, readers will stay through the last page. About half of the narrative is devoted to the 10 days that journalist Nellie Bly spent undercover in an asylum for mentally ill women (and women who were put there unjustly by their families). Given the high drama of these real-life events, the author's matter-of-fact

writing style keeps the narrative from veering toward sensationalism. Passages from Bly's newspaper article about the experience are threaded into the narrative, thereby keeping her vibrant viewpoint as the dramatic center. The rest of the volume covers Bly's other exploits, personal and professional: her venture around the world in a record-breaking 72 days, her interview with imprisoned anarchist Emma Goldman, and her own marriage at 31 to septuagenarian millionaire Robert Seaman. The illustrations are a mix of straightforward archival photos and surreal retouched photos -- la Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children (Quirk, 2011). Because the former are captioned with historical facts and the latter are not captioned at all, it is easy to tell the difference between the actual images and the fanciful. Noyes makes history accessible and irresistible in this thrilling account of women's lives, flagrant abuse, scandal, courage, and tenacity. The source notes are extensive, and the research is impeccable. VERDICT This excellent work is a natural fit for units on history, biography, and social studies. --Jennifer Prince, Buncombe County Public Libraries, NC --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Accolades for *Ten Days a Madwoman*: - A Junior Library Guild selection "Noyes makes history accessible and irresistible in this thrilling account of women's lives, flagrant abuse, scandal, courage, and tenacity. . . Excellent." --School Library Journal, starred review "You should also read *Ten Days A Madwoman*, even if you're not in middle school. You'll learn something. Because this isn't just a storybook telling of a woman's adventures . . . For a book that chronicles the life of a reporter at the end of the 19th century, *Ten Days A Madwoman* holds a startling prescience to the issues we face today, from benevolent sexism in the newsroom to the continued exploitation of the working class . . . A gripping book from start to finish, for kids and adults alike." --The A.V. Club "Plenty of pizzazz. The brisk narrative draws from Bly's own writings and from biographies, skillfully incorporating quotations, dialogue, and well-chosen facts. The overall tone is admiring, but the balanced text also acknowledges criticism of her kind of "stunt" reporting and touches briefly on problems in her personal life . . . A lively biography that reflects the spirit of the intrepid reporter." --Kirkus Reviews "Noyes's thoroughly researched account, with archival photos and myriad quotes from Bly's own work, offers a well-rounded look at a self-possessed woman who was nothing if not resilient." --Publishers Weekly "Noyes' vivid storytelling throws us headfirst into Nellie Bly's inspiring work and incredibly daring adventures." --Steve Sheinkin, National Book Award Finalist and Newbery Honor-winning author of *Bomb* and *The Port Chicago 50* "Ten Days a Madwoman" thrilled and terrified me at the same time.

I'd heard of Nellie Bly as a crusading reporter, but had no idea how daring, impetuous, and smart she was. I've got a new hero. Elizabeth Partridge, National Book Award Finalist and Printz Honor-winning author of *John Lennon* and *This Land Was Made for You and Me* "Noyes delivers a riveting narrative of one of our cleverest and most resourceful heroines, zeroing in on Nellie Bly's first exposé, and putting us right in the madhouse alongside sane women being driven crazy." Tanya Lee Stone, Sibert Medalist and NAACP Image Award-winning author of *Almost Astronauts* and *Courage Has No Color* "In *Ten Days a Madwoman*, Deborah Noyes gives us a compelling portrait of Nellie Bly, the audacious young reporter who risked her own safety to expose social injustice. Vividly written and gorgeously illustrated, the book brings fully to life a heroine of her time and ours." Matthew Goodman, bestselling author of *Eighty Days: Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland's History-Making Race Around the World* "Noyes' emphasis on muckraking as opposed to showmanship is a valuable corrective to Bly's popular legacy." *Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books* "A stimulating read for those interested in strong women throughout history." *VOYA* "A good, readable introduction to a fascinating vanguard." *Booklist* "Noyes smartly...engage[s] readers." *Horn Book* "In this truly thrilling, appealingly designed, photo-laden biography by Deborah Noyes, readers will not only get a chilling look into the horrors of Blackwell's Island, but also a sense of women's challenges in 19th-century America." *Shelf Awareness*

So interesting to learn of her courageous and outrageous efforts to be taken seriously as a journalist!

Fascinating story told in an enjoyable way!

I didn't purchase this from ; I bought it in a bookstore recently along with several other books. It was purchased as part of the historical aspect of my daughter's homeschooling. My daughter is eleven. This book is the first she's begun and finished in a single sitting. She was thoroughly entranced and came away just as thoroughly educated about how fortunate she is to live the life she has lived - and how important it is to fight for those who can't. I can't recommend this book enough. Extremely fast read, accessible to all ages, and so very educational. An enjoyable telling of the tale of an eye-opening life. Wonderful book.

Elizabeth Jane Fitch Cochran was born on May 5, 1864. Although you may not recognize her name, she would go on to become one of the most well-known personalities of her time. Fitch's childhood would shape her future life, as many of ours do, but perhaps more so for Fitch as she developed a keen sense of the plight of the poor, growing up poor herself, and the rights of women, as she watched the abuse her mother endured at the hands of her stepfather. Throughout her career Fitch would go on to investigate and report on the lives and issues of the socially downtrodden as well as political corruption and many other social ailments. However, Fitch's work wouldn't be published under her given name, but rather under her pen name --- Nellie Bly. Throughout the rest of this review I will refer to Elizabeth Jane Fitch Cochran as Nellie Bly as that was the name she came to be known by throughout the world. There were many paths and events that led Bly towards becoming a journalist and breaking out of the mold of fashion and household maintenance tasks that most women journalists of her time were regulated to writing about. Noyes reports that Bly was given the pen name of Nellie Bly by her first editor, George Madden, of the Pittsburgh Dispatch. Supposedly while Madden was pondering a pen name for Bly --- most women of the day wrote under pen names as it was considered somewhat scandalous to be a female journalist --- an office boy passed by whistling a popular song of the time. The song was about an African-American servant named, yes, you guessed it, Nelly Bly; but Madden spelled Nelly as Nellie and Nellie Bly was born. Bly was spunky and always looking for bigger and better. Working for the Pittsburgh Dispatch was not enough for Bly and she soon moved to New York City hoping to get hired by one of the major newspapers there. Although it would take some time, Bly eventually got hired by Colonel John A. Cockerill, the Editor in Chief of the New York World, which was owned by Joseph Pulitzer. The first assignment Cockerill gave Bly was to get herself committed to the asylum on Blackwell Island in New York City. The asylum was infamous and many rumors abounded about what it was like, but not many people who experienced treatment on the Island were ever released to talk about it. If Bly could convince doctors and judges that she was a "madwoman" she would be one of the first people to expose what was going on on Blackwell Island. Bly asked Cockerill if he had a plan to get her out of the asylum, but he told her to just worry about getting herself committed and that he would worry about getting her out when the time came. As the title of this book, *TEN DAYS A MADWOMAN*, reveals, Bly was successful in convincing doctors and judges that she was a "madwoman" and as a result she spent 10 days on Blackwell Island.

The things that Bly saw and experienced during her 10 days were horrifying and barbaric. As soon as she was liberated from the asylum she wrote extensively and dramatically about the conditions on the Island and the treatment she witnessed and experienced. Bly's reporting eventually led to reforms on Blackwell Island and other institutions for the mentally ill. However, it was her next big stunt that would make Bly a household name across the United States and throughout the world. Inspired by Jules Verne's *AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS*, Bly proposed to travel around the world, by conventional means of the time, in less than 80 days. The New York World agreed to her stunt and in 1889 Bly set off to circumnavigate the globe. Her adventure(s) captured the attention of newspaper readers throughout the country and the world. Bets were placed on how long her trip would take down to the second. Despite many setbacks and potential derailments, Bly completed her journey in just 72 days, six hours, eleven minutes and 14 seconds! Bly would continue to lead an adventurous life punctuated by many other instances of stunt journalism. Much of her undercover reporting would focus on the conditions of the poor and the voiceless, especially women. By bringing light to these issues, Bly was able to improve the lives and conditions of many throughout the country. Bly worked for a variety of newspapers during her career and eventually ended up being one of very few foreign journalists that reported from the frontlines of WWI and certainly the only woman. Bly's personal life was almost as sensational as her career. After an acquaintance and courtship that lasted only two weeks, Bly married a seventy-year-old bachelor millionaire, Robert Livingston Seaman, who was many years her senior. After his death Bly would take charge of his Iron Clad industries and run it for many years. While in this role, she would continue to advocate for the rights of workers. *TEN DAYS A MADWOMAN*, Noyes's detailed biography of Bly's life provides many perspectives on Bly's life and the times she lived in. Noyes punctuates Bly's story with sidebars about the people and events that Bly's life intersected with. As I was reading I felt that in addition to learning a great deal about Bly I also learned more about the time period Bly lived in, especially in regards to the conditions of women and the poor and the state of journalism at that time. Noyes writes in a narrative style that is compulsively readable and extremely accessible. The text is scattered with archival photos that bring further life to the events and the history of the time period. This review is based on an advanced reading copy of the book and many of the photographs were difficult to see because of the grainy black and white reproductions, but I have no doubt that the final images are stunning. Noyes also integrates snippets of Bly's own writing throughout the book, which helps to provide further insight into Bly as a person and a journalist. Bly's story is

an important one to know, especially for young women, not only for all that she accomplished in her life, but for the pathways she opened for women as a result of her accomplishments. Noyes writes in her author's note that, "Bly was a feminist, but a playfully irreverent one."

Reviewed by Aimee Rogers

I highly recommend "Ten Days a Madwoman" by Deborah Noyes to readers of all ages. In this book we gain an understanding of the full life of Nelly Bly. Not just what she did, but who she was and what propelled her to embark on her grand and brave adventures. The archival and art (created by the author) help us to understand the environmental and emotional world of Nelly Bly. This is a must read!

I'd heard her name before but never really knew what she had done. She was a very determined social reformer. Even though the book moves forward and back in the chronology of her life it is easy to understand and easy to read.

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