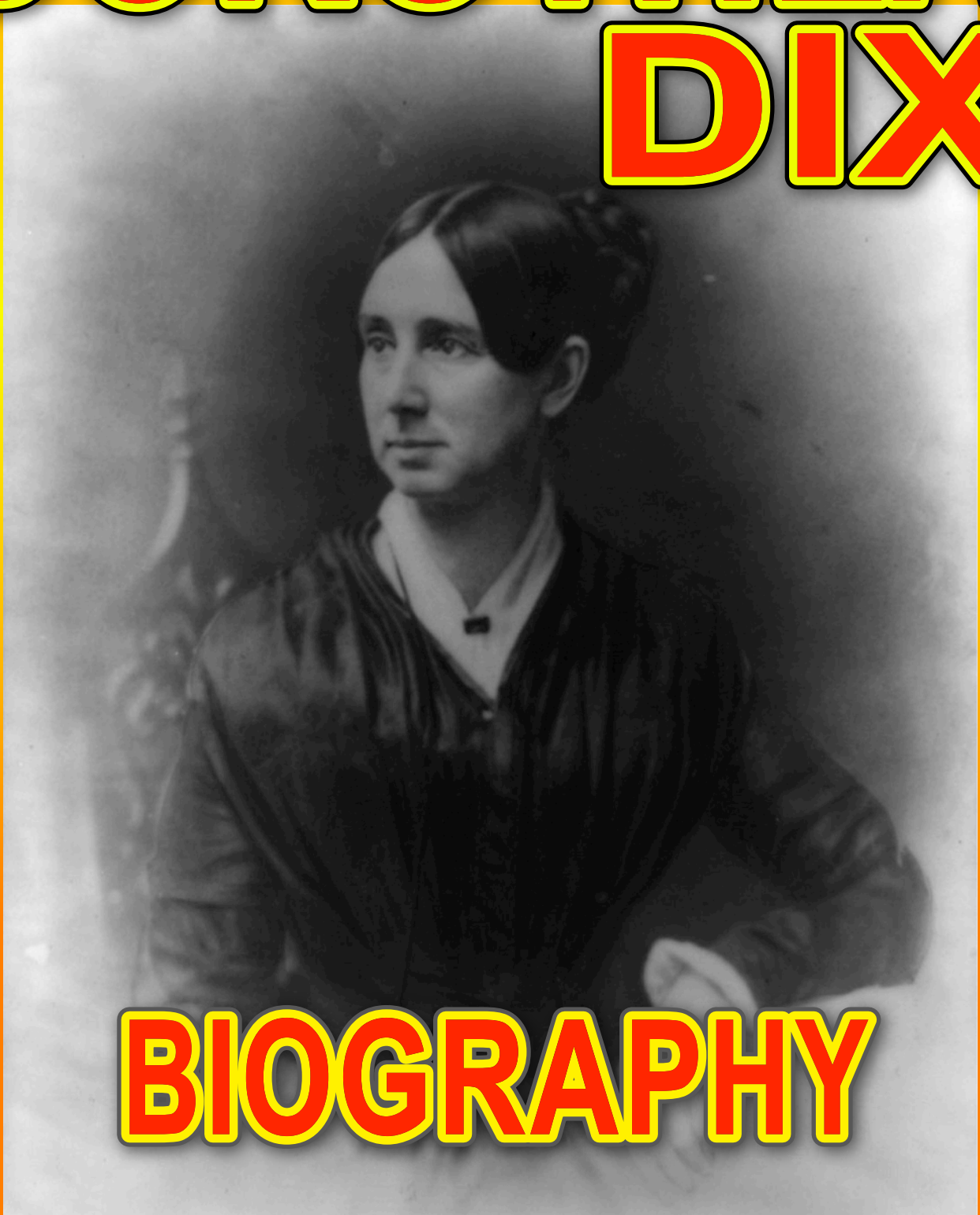


DOROTHEA DIX



BIOGRAPHY

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Dorothea Dix was born in Maine on April 4, 1802, but did not have an easy childhood. Her religious father traveled often for his work, while her mother suffered from depression. As a result, Dix spent her teenage years with relatives in Massachusetts.

Around this time, Dix began teaching, and she founded a school for girls in Boston in 1819. As well as setting up more schools, Dix also wrote information books, such as 'Conversations on Common Things'. It contained conversations full of facts for teachers or parents to use to teach children. It sold well enough to be reprinted many times.

In 1841, Dix started teaching at a women's jail in Massachusetts. There she was appalled by the conditions facing the prisoners, many of whom suffered from mental illnesses. One problem was that there was no heating for the prisoners, and Dix successfully argued for heating to be provided.

After that, Dix went to jails, and hospitals too, in Massachusetts and other states, to record the conditions she found there. She gathered all her evidence into reports, which she used to bring about change. Because of her efforts, many states, like Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, set up or expanded state asylums and hospitals with better conditions for the mentally ill. She later traveled around Europe, bringing about similar changes.

During the Civil War, Dix volunteered as a nurse and was put in charge of organizing Union Army nurses. She was efficient at her work, but sometimes clashed with doctors who did not want women in their hospitals. She was also unusual in offering help to soldiers on both the Union and Confederate sides after battles.

In 1870, Dix became ill, and she moved into a hospital in New Jersey that she had previously helped to found. She could no longer travel, but she continued to write to people demanding change on behalf of the mentally ill and disabled. She died in 1887.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'appalled'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'appalled' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'appalled'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'appalled'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'appalled' means.

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: better	improved

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

Dix started writing about conditions for mentally ill people in jails and hospitals so that they would be improved.

During the Civil War, Dix volunteered as a nurse, and cared for wounded soldiers.

Later on, Dix brought about similar changes in Europe.

As a young woman, Dix taught and set up schools.

In 1841, Dix started teaching at a women's jail, where conditions for mentally ill prisoners were terrible.

Dix spent the last part of her life in a hospital that she had founded.

Dorothea Dix was born in Maine in 1802, but moved to Massachusetts.

Get to the facts

1 What did Dorothea Dix found in 1819?

2 Where was Dix teaching in 1841?

3 What did Dix find appalling in the jail?

4 When did Dix volunteer as a nurse?

5 What did Dix do in hospital in New Jersey?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Volunteer nurse

Imagine the Civil War has just started, and you want to help out by being a nurse. Write a letter to the army saying why you want to volunteer to nurse wounded soldiers.

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

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Finding key words:

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – better Synonym – improved

Sequencing:

Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

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