**Through the Eyes of Nellie Bly**

**1**  When Nellie Bly returned to New York City in 1890, a celebration greeted her. She had been gone for 72 days. In those 72 days she had traveled by boat, train, and horseback. When she completed this amazing journey, she held the new record for the fastest trip around the world. For Nellie Bly, it was just another day at work.

**2**  Bly enjoyed challenges. In fact, her job as a journalist was about facing new challenges all the time. A newspaper, *The New York World*, had planned her trip around the world. From Europe to Africa to Asia, Bly wrote about what she saw. Readers across the United States eagerly waited for each report. Would she beat the record for fastest trip? What did she think about the sights and sounds of faraway places? Had she ever become lost? The paper even ran a game for readers to guess the exact time that Bly would return. Everyone wanted to read about the famous Nellie Bly.

**Becoming a Reporter**

**3**  Bly’s journey from small-town girl to famous reporter is just as fascinating as her trip around the world. Nellie Bly was born Elizabeth Cochrane in 1864. As a young woman, she helped her family by working in her mother’s boarding house.**1** She never thought of being a writer. Then one day she read a newspaper column, and what happened next changed her life.

**4**  The column was titled “What Girls Are Good For.” The writer argued that women did not belong in the workplace. As Bly read the article, a wave of anger washed over her. How could the newspaper publish an article so insulting to women? She knew she had to do something, so she put down the newspaper and picked up a pen. She told the editor exactly what she thought about the article. The editor admired her powerful writing. He published Bly’s letter. To Bly’s surprise, the editor also offered her a job.

**5**  Bly took the job in 1885, becoming a reporter for the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. It was then that she decided to write using the name Nellie Bly. When she started, she hoped to write about important social issues of the day. Instead, the paper wanted her to write about topics like gardening. Although Bly was bored, she decided to stay at the paper to learn her craft.

**6**  After a year, Bly thought she had learned all she could at the *Dispatch*. She wanted to write about more-interesting topics. She quit her job and went to Mexico, where she wrote about the daily lives and customs of its people. She sold her articles to newspapers in the United States. Sometimes she wrote about the terrible living conditions she saw in some communities. She also wrote about dishonest government officials. This made the officials angry, and they told her to leave. Bly returned to the United States and searched for a job where she could still write about the topics that interested her.

**A New Kind of Reporter**

**7**  At *The New York World*, Bly found the perfect job. She became one of the first investigative reporters. Investigative reporters do not rely only on what people say is happening. They investigate issues by trying to find out for themselves what is really happening. Like a police detective, Bly searched for the truth. She followed clues. Like some detectives, she also went undercover. This meant she had to pretend to be someone else. For example, she pretended she wanted work in a factory and applied for a job. After she was hired, she saw for herself the bad working conditions. Then she wrote about what she saw and experienced. Bly’s reports often resulted in action. Her report about the way a hospital treated its patients led to public outrage. New rules were passed so that the hospital had to provide better care.

**8**  Bly created opportunities for others. Newspapers began to hire women as reporters. More men and women journalists began to adopt Bly’s undercover approach. They, too, wrote stories that led to change. One reporter disguised as a worker learned about problems in the food industry. His reporting led to new laws. The laws protected workers as well as helped ensure that food was safer for people to eat.

**9**  Many reporters continue to use this style of reporting today. They look for the truth and follow clues. They let the public know what they discover, and at times this leads to positive change. As a reporter, Nellie Bly traveled the world. The example she set helped change the world as well.

**1**boarding house – a private house where people can rent a room and get meals for a period of time.

**Around the World in 72 Days**

If you had read the paper

back in 1889

you’d certainly have learned about

a legend of that time.

A daring young reporter

whose name was Nellie Bly

proposed to travel ‘round the world—

she simply had to try!

A fabulous adventure

did this young woman seek;

to help her paper with its sales

she would write about her feat.

Her boss was unsupportive,

saying, “Ladies shouldn’t stray

so far from home—all by themselves!”

but Bly would not delay.

Big trunks and heavy luggage

she refused to bring

“A dress, a coat, and one small bag—

yes, yes, that’s everything!”

She climbed aboard a royal ship

beside a New Jersey pier

and then began her journey

in November of that year.

She went from Europe to the Middle East,

Ceylon to Singapore,

Hong Kong and on to Japan

as her readers cried for more.

She traveled on a ship,

a burro, and a train,

and even in a rickshaw

because there was no plane.

Her stories flew by cable

for *New York World* to print

where they informed the public

of her seventy-two-day sprint.

Adventures from around the world

were what she loved to write

to all the readers of the paper

who learned about her sights.

When Nellie’s reporting trek was over

in San Francisco she did face

cheering fans and big brass bands

to celebrate her race!