

# International Women's Day

## PRIMARY ASSEMBLY

### Additional Resources

PowerPoint presentation

Flash cards

### Catherine Booth

#### Aims

To understand how Catherine Booth helped to change people's lives for the better

To reflect on what we can challenge and change in our own lives

## Introduction

*Welcome children and teachers to assembly and introduce yourself*

International Women's Day is an opportunity to learn about inspiring women.

Today I am going to tell you about a woman who grew up in the Victorian times. Her name was Catherine Booth. In the Victorian times there was no TV, no computers and, while Catherine lived, no cars. No mobiles, very few phones, and definitely no Playstations. No T-shirts, no short dresses and no jeans.

## Main Talk

*This is the world Catherine was born into. She was born Catherine Mumford. Girls in the Victorian times were taught that when they grew up, they would get married and look after the house, look after the children and look after their husband. Most women were not meant to think for themselves. But this is the story of a little girl who grew up to think for herself.*

*Ask for volunteers to hold the three flash cards - things must change. Explain that they need to hold the cards up when that line is mentioned, so all the children can repeat the phrase.*

When Catherine was very little, she became very ill and she had to spend a long time lying down. She had to lie down for days, for weeks, for months. *What would you do if you had to lie down for so long? How would you keep yourself busy?*

Catherine read. She read and read and read. She read lots of books. She read the whole Bible eight times by the time she was a teenager! She thought carefully about what she had read and she started to have lots of opinions about the world. She thought about what was fair and what was not fair. She began to realise that **things must change**.

She was teased a lot growing up because she was learning more than what a girl in the Victorian times was expected to learn. But she ignored the teasing. She realised that lots of things in life were not fair, but she decided to change what she could. And when she was well enough, she started to do just that.





# International Women's Day

## PRIMARY ASSEMBLY

One day she saw a man hitting a donkey. He was hitting the animal because it was travelling too slowly even though the donkey was carrying far too many things. Catherine said, '**Things must change.**'

Even though she was only a little girl, she carefully explained to the man that hitting the donkey was the wrong thing to do and helped him to understand how to treat the animal fairly.

One day she saw another man acting very foolishly because he was drunk. He was being arrested because of his behaviour. But he was too drunk to understand what was happening. Everyone was laughing most unkindly. But Catherine said, '**Things must change.**' She went to the man and explained she was his friend. She gently and kindly helped him to the police station. She treated him fairly and people stopped laughing, ashamed of how they had behaved.

Catherine found out that the workers in the sugar fields in other countries were being treated cruelly. She said, '**Things must change.**' So she stopped eating sugary things and persuaded lots of other people to do the same in protest at the treatment of the workers.

When Catherine grew up she continued to speak and write about treating others fairly.

She met a man called William Booth. William preached the Bible and she enjoyed listening to him. But when he was finished, she would discuss and challenge him about what he knew and understood.

William liked learning from Catherine. William also thought, '**Things must change.**' And when they got married, the two of them worked together to do just that. Catherine was now called Catherine Booth.

*Ask for new volunteers for the new phrase - **Things can change!***

Catherine and William started a Christian church and charity called The Salvation Army.

Catherine wanted to help people. When she visited the poor and needy she would help clean and tidy their house. Other people started to help her and together they slowly started to clean up the slums. **Things can change!**

They started soup kitchens and breakfast clubs to help people who were hungry. **Things can change!**

They found shelter for people who were homeless. **Things can change!**

One day William was preaching to a lot of people about how Things can change! Catherine suddenly felt she had a lot to say on the topic and, despite being a Victorian woman, she got up and started to preach! **Things can change!**

Catherine wrote books on how **Things can change.** She travelled around the country telling others about how **Things can change!** People loved to come and listen to her.





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## PRIMARY ASSEMBLY

Catherine managed to do all this despite being a Victorian woman, wife and mother. She and William had eight children. She sometimes had to write down her ideas in little notes in between housework and looking after the children!

Catherine helped to lead The Salvation Army. She inspired lots of people to help improve the lives of the poor. She was known as The Army Mother.

The Salvation Army continues to this day, doing exactly what Catherine Booth taught them. To look after people that need help, to make sure people are being treated fairly. That, yes, **things can change!**

### Christian Perspective

Catherine was inspired by her reading and understanding of the Bible. She followed the teachings of Jesus who taught people to **'Love your neighbour'** (Matthew 19:19). This means you treat people with respect, with fairness, as you would want to be treated yourself.

### Challenge and Reflection

Catherine challenged people's ideas of what a Victorian woman was capable of. She challenged how unfairly society treated the poor by helping to improve their lives. What can we learn from Catherine's example?

Take a moment now to think about our own lives. Can we challenge any of the ways that we treat others? Can we challenge people's ideas of what we are capable of? Where do we have to say: 'Things can change'? What can we change in our lives?

*Pause for short reflection time.*

*Thank children and staff for letting you be a part of their assembly today.*

