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](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](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](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](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* found at http://www.archives.alabama.gov/meteor/vol1_no2.pdf
- 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.”

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<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>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.</th>
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<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Place students into groups with each group reading a different chapter (chapters 11, 12, 13 &amp; 14) from Nellie Bly’s <em>Ten Days in a Madhouse</em>. Classroom size determines the number of groups, and some groups may be reading the same material. Have students answer Questions for the Reading (attached).</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Using their readings as a base, have groups brainstorm reforms/changes that should have been made to the mental health institutions of the mid 19th century.</td>
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<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Have groups share suggestions for changes with the whole class.</td>
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| Step 5 | Distribute *The Meteor* to the groups to read. Assign the following articles:  
- 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 *New York Times* 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 19th 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?
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.