

Move over Florence

Schools are told to ditch 'jaded' heroine Nightingale and give history lessons about a female Irish pirate

By Sarah Harris
Education Correspondent

PRIMARY schools are being encouraged to ditch Florence Nightingale from their history lessons and replace her with an Irish woman pirate.

The Government's curriculum watchdog fears that teachers have become 'jaded' with concentrating too heavily on the founder of modern nursing.

So the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is recommending that teachers look at obscure 16th century Irish pirate Grace O'Malley - who has been lionised by feminists.

It believes that 'teachers and their pupils can only benefit by taking more account of Ireland and its stories'.

But the watchdog was yesterday attacked by historians for downgrading Miss Nightingale in favour

'Left-wing fashion'

of politically correct Left-wing fashion. In latest guidance to primary schools about the teaching of history, the QCA asks teachers: 'Who needs Florence Nightingale?'

It adds: 'Are you in danger of becoming jaded with teaching about Florence Nightingale?'

'Are you looking for an alternative female to illuminate the "lives of significant men, women and children drawn from history" in history at Key Stage One?' (ages five to seven).

It cites Grace O'Malley as 'an alternative significant woman for primary history' and gives an example of how teacher Sandra Kirkland at Naseby Church of England School, Northampton-

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE (1820-1910)

- Reformer of hospital sanitation during Crimean War
- Known as *The Lady of the Lamp* as she walked the wards, holding aloft her Turkish candle lamp
- Reduced death rates with strict hygiene routines
- Collected statistics to show many military deaths were preventable, leading to improvements in medical and surgical practices
- In 1858 became first woman to be elected fellow of the Statistical Society
- Established training institution for nurses at St Thomas' Hospital in London in 1860
- Her textbook *Notes on Nursing* (1860) was the first specifically for teaching nurses
- Awarded Royal Red Cross by Queen Victoria in 1883. In 1907 became first woman to receive the Order of Merit
- Crimean Monument erected in her honour in 1915 in Waterloo Place, London
- Never married and died aged 90



Hospital angel:
Florence Nightingale

GRACE O'MALLEY (1530-1603)

- Nicknamed Grace the Bald after cutting off all her hair
- Commandeered a fleet of war and merchant ships, trading with France, Spain, England and Portugal
- Dominated the waters off western Ireland, resisting Tudor invaders
- Stormed castles and was involved in cattle rustling
- Labelled a 'chief commander and director of thieves and murderers at sea' by a Tudor official
- Twice imprisoned - released the second time aged 56 after supposedly promising to mend her ways
- Went on to slaughter hundreds of Spaniards in battle around 1588
- Met Elizabeth I in 1593 to ask permission to 'invade with sword and fire' the Queen's enemies
- Married twice, had four children
- Historians are divided over whether she died in bed or in battle



Sea Devil: Grace played by Gabrielle Breathnach

shire, managed to successfully introduce the pirate into lessons.

It states: 'Sandra gave herself a new lease of life and aroused the curiosity of years one and two (ages five to seven).'

The guidance points out O'Malley's feminist credentials as a 'courageous woman who stood up for her rights' during the Tudor conquest of Ireland. But historians reacted angrily to the material, which has been posted on the

QCA website. Dr David Starkey said there is 'no contest' between Miss Nightingale and Grace O'Malley - whom he had never heard of.

He added: 'There has been a fashion for knocking Florence Nightingale. I think it's unfortunate of course that poor Florence Nightingale was an upper-class woman who lived in a great country house and was successful. There is a particular kind of Left-

wing fashion which gets cross even about Establishment women, let alone Establishment men.'

He said teaching can become repetitive, but it is up to staff to refresh the study of Florence Nightingale instead of simply opting for sensationalism.

Alex Attewell, director of the Florence Nightingale museum in London - which attracts around 30,000 visitors a year - said he had seen no evidence that people are

becoming 'jaded' with her. 'We can't really cope with the demand for Florence Nightingale. There is such a strong interest.'

Nick Seaton, of the Campaign for Real Education, said: 'This is just another example of political correctness at the QCA.'

A QCA spokesman said: 'I think Grace is just being used as an example. That's not to diminish Florence Nightingale's very important contribution.'