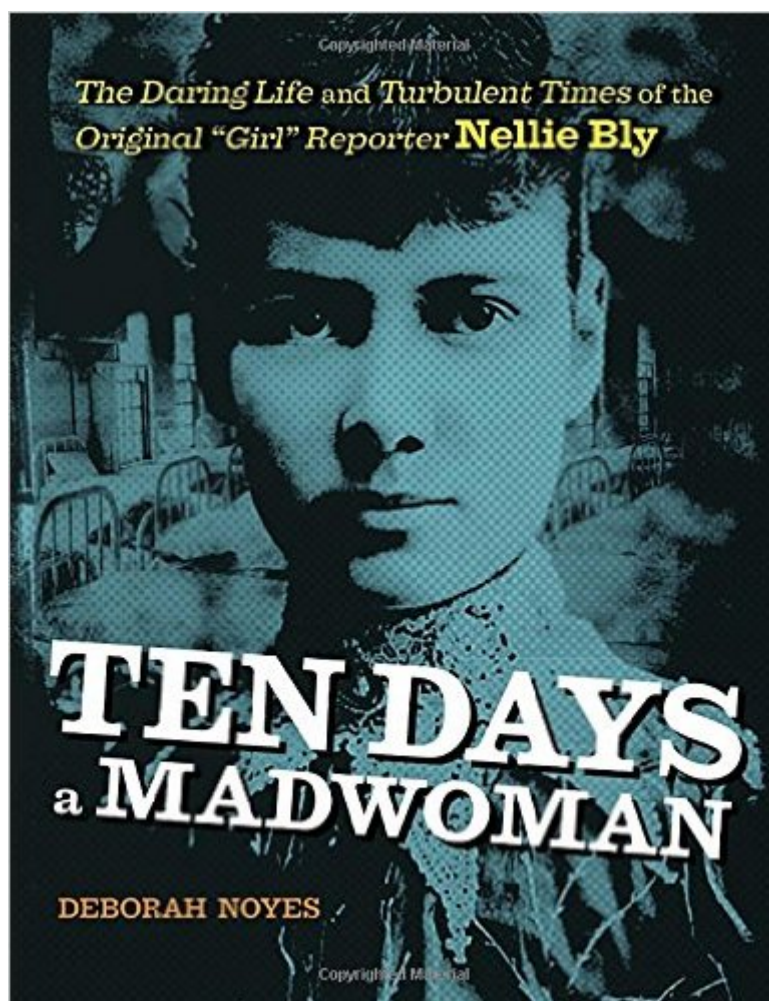


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# Ten Days A Madwoman: The Daring Life And Turbulent Times Of The Original "Girl" Reporter, Nellie Bly



## Synopsis

Work for a New York newspaper Fall in love Marry a millionaire Change the world • Young Nellie Bly had ambitious goals, especially for a woman at the end of the nineteenth century, when the few female journalists were relegated to writing columns about cleaning or fashion. But fresh off a train from Pittsburgh, Nellie knew she was destined for more and pulled a major journalistic stunt that skyrocketed her to fame: feigning insanity, being committed to the notorious asylum on Blackwell's Island, and writing a shocking exposé of the clinic's horrific treatment of its patients. • Nellie Bly became a household name as the world followed her enthralling career in • journalism that raised awareness of political corruption, poverty, and abuses of human rights. Leading an uncommonly full life, Nellie circled the globe in a record seventy-two days and brought home a pet monkey before marrying an aged millionaire and running his company after his death. • With its sensational (and true!) plot, *Ten Days a Madwoman* dares its readers to live as boldly as its remarkable heroine.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars • See all reviews • (5 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Despite the fact that "Ten Days a Madwoman" is quite misleading in terms of title, it is in fact a very introductory, yet visually engaging, biography of "girl reporter" Nellie Bly. First and foremost, what you need to know about this book is that it is a biography. It

doesn't just focus on Bly's journalistic experiment in Bellevue Hospital, title notwithstanding. If I were to pick this book up, it would seem for all the world to only focus on that one adventure, but that isn't the case. This covers a bit of Bly's early life, as well as numerous adventures after the Bellevue ordeal. As such, it can be a bit odd when reading "Ten Days A Madwoman" when it seems to come to a climax (the Bellevue stuff) and you are roughly halfway through the book. This is a bit disingenuous, and the reason I'm giving it four stars instead of the full five. Bly's most famous Bellevue experiences are being used here to semi-facetiously sell her entire biography. Once you look past the disjointedness of title/content, however, this is really a great book (especially for youngsters, but also can be enjoyed by any age). It covers the important events of Bly's life, and even gives some background/context on the entire state of female journalism in general during that time period. It is also very visually diverse, filled with many photos and different unique page formats/layouts. Perfect for a school library. Overall, then, "Ten Days A Madwoman" is a very engaging, interesting book that only struggles as far as the misleading-ness of its title is concerned. You just have to know/realize that this is a bio of Bly's entire life/career, not just focusing on the Bellevue days.

Elizabeth Jane "Pink" Cochran was born on May 5, 1864. Although you may not recognize her name, she would go on to become one of the most well-known personalities of her time. Pink's childhood would shape her future life, as many of ours do, but perhaps more so for Pink as she developed a keen sense of the plight of the poor, growing up poor herself, and the rights of women, as she watched the abuse her mother endured at the hands of her stepfather. Throughout her career Pink would go on to investigate and report on the lives and issues of the socially downtrodden as well as political corruption and many other social ailments. However, Pink's work wouldn't be published under her given name, but rather under her pen name --- Nellie Bly. Throughout the rest of this review I will refer to Elizabeth Jane "Pink" Cochran as Nellie Bly as that was the name she came to be known by throughout the world. There were many paths and events that led Bly towards becoming a journalist and breaking out of the mold of fashion and household maintenance tasks that most women journalists of her time were regulated to writing about. Noyes reports that Bly was given the pen name of Nellie Bly by her first editor, George Madden, of the Pittsburgh Dispatch. Supposedly while Madden was pondering a pen name for Bly --- most women of the day wrote under pen names as it was considered somewhat scandalous to be a female journalist --- an office boy passed by whistling

a popular song of the time. The song was about an African-American servant named, yes, you guessed it, Nelly Bly; but Madden spelled Nelly as Nellie and Nellie Bly was born. Bly was spunky and always looking for bigger and better. Working for the Pittsburgh Dispatch was not enough for Bly and she soon moved to New York City hoping to get hired by one of the major newspapers there. Although it would take some time, Bly eventually got hired by Colonel John A. Cockerill, the Editor in Chief of the New York World, which was owned by Joseph Pulitzer. The first assignment Cockerill gave Bly was to get herself committed to the asylum on Blackwell Island in New York City. The asylum was infamous and many rumors abounded about what it was like, but not many people who experienced treatment on the Island were ever released to talk about it. If Bly could convince doctors and judges that she was a madwoman she would be one of the first people to expose what was going on on Blackwell Island. Bly asked Cockerill if he had a plan to get her out of the asylum, but he told her to just worry about getting herself committed and that he would worry about getting her out when the time came. As the title of this book, TEN DAYS A MADWOMAN, reveals, Bly was successful in convincing doctors and judges that she was a madwoman and as a result she spent 10 days on Blackwell Island. The things that Bly saw and experienced during her 10 days were horrifying and barbaric. As soon as she was liberated from the asylum she wrote extensively and dramatically about the conditions on the Island and the treatment she witnessed and experienced. Bly's reporting eventually led to reforms on Blackwell Island and other institutions for the mentally ill. However, it was her next big stunt that would make Bly a household name across the United States and throughout the world. Inspired by Jules Verne's AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS, Bly proposed to travel around the world, by conventional means of the time, in less than 80 days. The New York World agreed to her stunt and in 1889 Bly set off to circumnavigate the globe. Her adventure(s) captured the attention of newspaper readers throughout the country and the world. Bets were placed on how long her trip would take down to the second. Despite many setbacks and potential derailments, Bly completed her journey in just 72 days, six hours, eleven minutes and 14 seconds! Bly would continue to lead an adventurous life punctuated by many other instances of stunt journalism. Much of her undercover reporting would focus on the conditions of the poor and the voiceless, especially women. By bringing light to these issues, Bly was able to improve the lives and conditions of many throughout the country. Bly worked for a variety of newspapers during her career and eventually ended up being one of very few foreign journalists that reported from the frontlines of WWI and certainly the only woman. Bly's personal life was almost as sensational as her career. After an acquaintance and courtship that lasted only two weeks, Bly married a seventy-year-old bachelor

millionaire, Robert Livingston Seaman, who was many years her senior. After his death Bly would take charge of his Iron Clad industries and run it for many years. While in this role, she would continue to advocate for the rights of workers. *TEN DAYS A MADWOMAN*, Noyes's detailed biography of Bly's life provides many perspectives on Bly's life and the times she lived in. Noyes punctuates Bly's story with sidebars about the people and events that Bly's life intersected with. As I was reading I felt that in addition to learning a great deal about Bly I also learned more about the time period Bly lived in, especially in regards to the conditions of women and the poor and the state of journalism at that time. Noyes writes in a narrative style that is compulsively readable and extremely accessible. The text is scattered with archival photos that bring further life to the events and the history of the time period. This review is based on an advanced reading copy of the book and many of the photographs were difficult to see because of the grainy black and white reproductions, but I have no doubt that the final images are stunning. Noyes also integrates snippets of Bly's own writing throughout the book, which helps to provide further insight into Bly as a person and a journalist. Bly's story is an important one to know, especially for young women, not only for all that she accomplished in her life, but for the pathways she opened for women as a result of her accomplishments. Noyes writes in her author's note that, "Bly was a feminist, but a playfully irreverent one." •Reviewed by Aimee Rogers

I didn't purchase this from ; I bought it in a bookstore recently along with several other books. It was purchased as part of the historical aspect of my daughter's homeschooling. My daughter is eleven. This book is the first she's begun and finished in a single sitting. She was thoroughly entranced and came away just as thoroughly educated about how fortunate she is to live the life she has lived - and how important it is to fight for those who can't. I can't recommend this book enough. Extremely fast read, accessible to all ages, and so very educational. An enjoyable telling of the tale of an eye-opening life. Wonderful book.

I highly recommend "Ten Days a Madwoman" by Deborah Noyes to readers of all ages. In this book we gain an understanding of the full life of Nelly Bly. Not just what she did, but who she was and what propelled her to embark on her grand and brave adventures. The archival and art (created by the author) help us to understand the environmental and emotional world of Nelly Bly. This is a must read!

So interesting to learn of her courageous and outrageous efforts to be taken seriously as a journalist!

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