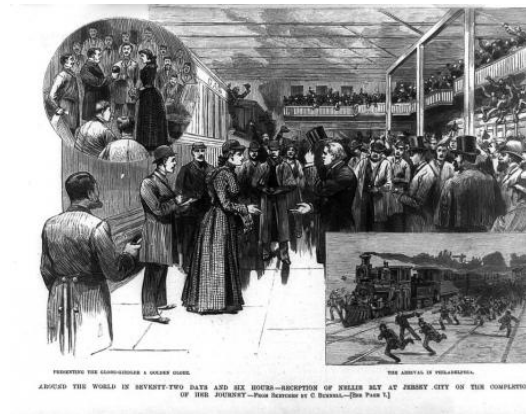




Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper ran a major story on Nellie Bly's round-the-world trip in its February 8, 1890 issue. This image depicts the article's pictures. Online via the Library of Congress. Click on the image for a much-better view.

It was the fall of 1888 when she first had the idea.

Nellie Bly, an early feminist and reporter for the *New York World*, would embark on a trip to rival that of Phileas Fogg, the fictional character from *Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days*.

Except that ... Nellie would try to accomplish her trip in less time.

Sure that her managing editor would love the idea, Bly explained her goal to John A. Cockerill. The *World* would send her on a race, around the world, to beat Fogg's fictional time of eighty days.

A year went by as Cockerill and his male colleagues mulled-over Nellie's idea. They weren't sure a woman—especially a young twenty-five-year old woman—should make the trip. Who would be her chaperone? Who would look after all her luggage (which would surely slow her down)?



George W. Turner, the *World's* business manager, liked the idea but thought a man would be more suitable to put Phileas' time to the test. A man wouldn't need a chaperone and wouldn't be burdened with all the luggage a woman usually needs.

Nellie was having none of it. Why should a man carry-out her idea? She didn't need a chaperone, and she didn't plan to travel with more than a single bag.

When Bly heard rumors that the *World* had, in fact, selected a man to make the trip, she wasted no time in delivering her ultimatum:

Very well. Start the man and I'll start the same day for some other newspaper and beat him. (Bly, *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days*, at [page 6](#).)

Knowing Bly meant it, Cockerill finally gave in. The *World* would send Nellie on her trip to beat Fogg's time.

Nellie selected a single travel bag for her journey. It measured sixteen inches high and seven inches wide. Into

it she stuffed:

- Two traveling caps;
- Three veils;
- One pair of slippers;
- Toilet articles;
- An ink stand;
- Pens, pencils and paper;
- Pins, needles and thread;
- One dressing gown;
- A tennis blazer;
- One small flask;
- A drinking cup;
- A few changes of underwear;
- Handkerchiefs; and
- A jar of cold cream.

About her case and its items, Bly said:

It will be seen that if one is traveling simply for the sake of traveling and not for the purpose of impressing one's fellow passengers, the problem of baggage becomes a very simple one. (Bly, at [page 10](#).)

In addition to the bank notes and 200 English pounds (in gold) which the *World* gave her, for travel expenses, Nellie also had some American money. She was curious to see who, in the world, would accept those U.S. dollars.

On the 14th of November, in 1889, Nellie set sail on a ship called the *Augusta Victoria*. At about the same time as Bly left Hoboken Pier, the *World* ran a lead story on her race to beat Fogg's eighty-day journey. The article included these words:

The "World" today undertakes the task of turning a dream into reality...Nellie Bly, so well known to millions who have read of her doings, as told by her captivating pen, will set out as a female Phileas Fogg... (Quoted by Emily Hahn in *Around the World with Nellie Bly*, at [page 106](#).)

Less than a full week later—a bit more than six days to be exact—Nellie arrived in Britain. She learned that all the buzz about her trip had attracted the attention of Jules Verne who wanted to meet her. Only when she was convinced that the side trip would not delay her plans did Bly agree to meet with Verne.

Traveling day and night, she reached Verne's home in Amiens, France. She told the man who'd inspired her trip about her planned itinerary:

- [New York to London](#);
- [Calais \(France\)](#);
- [Brindisi \(Italy\)](#);
- [Port Said \(Egypt\)](#);
- [Ismailia \(Egypt\)](#);
- [Suez \(Egypt\)](#);
- [Aden, Yemen](#) (on the Gulf of Aden);
- [Colombo](#) (today's Sri Lanka);
- [Penang \(Malaysia\)](#);

- [Singapore](#);
- [Hong Kong](#);
- [Yokohama \(Japan\)](#);
- [San Francisco](#); and
- [Back to New York City](#).

So excited were people around the world about Nellie's trip, and Jules' book, that Verne reissued ten new editions of *Around the World in 80 Days*.

In the days before instant reporting, Nellie's stories took awhile to reach her editors in the *World's* New York office. During off days, when Nellie had no news, the paper ran Bly-related items to keep-up reader enthusiasm. One of the editors' strategies was to sponsor a sweepstakes for readers to guess how long Bly's journey would actually take. By the time Nellie returned, the paper had received more than 500,000 "guesses."

As she traveled, Bly remained true to herself. A feminist and a progressive, she was an independent thinker who did not appreciate treatment of women as second-class citizens. Wishing to visit a Hindu temple, in Singapore, she was rebuffed by a local priest. She wrote about her reaction, using 19th-century language:

"Why?" I demanded, curious to know why my sex in heathen lands should exclude me from a temple, as in America it confines me to the side entrances of hotels and other strange and incommodious things.

"No, señora, no mudder," the priest said with a positive shake of the head.

"I'm not a mother!" I cried so indignantly that my companions burst into laughter, which I joined after a while, but my denials had no effect on the priest. (From *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* by Nellie Bly, at [page 87](#).)

On the home stretch of her round-the-world trip, Nellie worried about the time it was taking to complete her race. So keen was she to beat Fogg's record that she insisted a terrible storm, en route to Japan, should not slow her down:

I'd rather go back to New York dead than not a winner. (Quoted by Richard F. Bellaver in *Characters of the Information and Communication Industry: 2nd Edition*, at [page 164](#).)

When she reached San Francisco, she knew victory was in sight. During her transcontinental rail trip, back to New York, Nellie couldn't believe how much Americans were supporting her. The trip became a:

...maze of happy greetings, happy wishes, congratulating telegrams, fruit, flowers, loud cheers, wild hurrahs, rapid hand-shaking and a beautiful car filled with fragrant flowers attached to a swift engine that was tearing like mad through flower-dotted valleys and over snow-tipped mountains. (Bly, at [page 134](#).)

Feeling like a queen, Nellie greatly appreciated the cheering crowds:

[I] rejoiced with them that it was an American girl who had done it. (Bly, at [page 134](#).)

By the end of her trip, Nellie Bly was the most-famous woman in the world. People sang songs about her, and the *World* issued a board-game called "Round the World with Nellie Bly."



Minimizing her trail-blazing role, and underscoring that other women could also embark upon—and accomplish—amazing things, Bly responded to a comment, from a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter, who noted that her trip was remarkable:

Oh, I don't know. It's not so very much for a woman to do who has the pluck, energy and independence which characterize many women in this day of push and get-there. (Quoted by Brooke Kroeger in *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist* at [page 167](#).)

It actually was a lot to do—even for someone with “pluck, energy and independence”—but part of Nellie’s positive impact was her matter-of-fact belief that women and girls could produce remarkable accomplishments, just like men and boys.

Credits:

Images, of Nellie Bly's reception in Jersey City following her famous round-the-world trip, based on sketches by C. Bunnell and published in "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper" (vol 70, no. 1795) on February 8, 1890, at page 5.

The two separate inserts are titled: "Presenting the Globe-Girdler a Golden Globe" and "The Arrival in Philadelphia."

Public-domain images online via the Library of Congress.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Nellie-Bly-and-Her-Round-the-World-Trip>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Nellie-Bly-and-Her-Round-the-World-Trip>

Media Stream



Elizabeth Jane Cochrane also known as Nellie Bly

In this image, we see Elizabeth Cochrane—also known as Nellie Bly—as she appeared circa 1890.

Born Elizabeth Cochran, the future famous reporter later added an "e" to the end of her last name.

The Library of Congress, which [maintains the photo](#), describes it with these words:

Elizabeth Cochrane "Nellie Bly," head-and-shoulders portrait.

Click on the image for a better view.

Public-domain image, described above, [online via the Library of Congress](#).

[View this asset at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Elizabeth-Jane-Cochrane-also-known-as-Nellie-Bly>



Nellie Bly and Her Limited Luggage

This picture depicts Nellie Bly after her famous round-the-world trip which she finished in 72 days, 6 hours, 11 minutes and 14 seconds.

Carrying her single satchel, Nellie is wearing the coat and dress which she wore during the whole trip.

The Library of Congress, where this image is maintained, tells us more about the photo which was taken around February 21, 1890:

Nellie Bly

Portrait, full length, standing, facing left slightly, holding hat in one hand and bag in the other.

Click on the image for a better view.

Public-domain image, described above, online via the Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nellie-Bly-and-Her-Limited-Luggage>