

Nellie Bly's Descent into Madness

In the fall of 1887, Nellie Bly, an American journalist, wanted to make a name for herself. She had heard about the abysmal conditions in insane asylums like Bellevue and wanted to make sure she had the most convincing evidence to bring change. Budget cuts had led to quite a decline in care. The hospital, built to house 1,000 patients was now overflowing with over 1,600. She and her editor concocted an idea to get her admitted to Bellevue insane asylum. She pretended to be a Cuban immigrant who had amnesia and dementia. Her act worked like a charm, and she was admitted straight away.

When she first arrived, she was appalled by the food conditions. The patients were fed spoiled food and given dirty water to drink, which caused rampant sickness. This was bad. She wondered what she had gotten herself into. She made friends with many of the inmates as soon as she could, and found out that these squalid conditions were just the beginning.

Treatments were barbaric and did little to help the patients. Some patients were forced to take ice cold baths and remain in their wet clothes for hours. Conditions were even worse for patients who were tethered together and forced to pull carts around like mules. Nellie was scared.

The worst treatment it seemed was used on immigrants. Most of them were there because they could not speak the language. They were subjected to psychological damage that eventually drove them insane. Once Nellie found out about this, she had to get out and tell her story.

Nellie's expose had immediate results. One month later, the grand jury found that conditions had improved immensely. There was fresh food and water and the asylum itself had been scrubbed down. Eventually a bill was passed that added one million to the hospital budget. They also made changes to the system to prevent those who do not actually have a mental illness from being committed.

**IT WAS
BAD!**

**EVEN
WORSE!**

**THE
WORST!**

brave	dangerous	famous	important	strong
braver	more dangerous	more famous	more important	stronger
bravest	most dangerous	most famous	most important	strongest

Do the above five sets of words based on a superlative make you think of anyone famous worthy of research? Could you create an essay similar to my Nellie Bly essay, using a set of superlatives to inspire your essay's structure? How would you have to organize your research in order to write your essay?