

The World of Nellie Bly

Written by Rick Tan | Directed by Rick and Jennifer Tan

Prelude | Welcome to The World of Nellie Bly

Whole cast sings in chorus.

We welcome you with glory
For joining us today
So we may share this story
A musical theater play!

We've all come together
Friends in song and dance
So we may bring some laughter
If you give us half a chance!

Thank you in advance!

Oh Nellie Bly!
My oh my oh my oh my
Adventure is in your eyes
The World of Nellie Bly!

Oh Nellie Bly!
My oh my oh my oh my
Adventure is in your eyes
The World of Nellie Bly!

There was a girl in history
Her name was Elizabeth
Known to most as Nellie Bly
A famous journalist!

Then she traveled around the earth
By boat and train she went
In eight days less than eighty
On four continents!

Oh Nellie Bly!
My oh my oh my oh my
Adventure is in your eyes
The World of Nellie Bly!

Oh Nellie Bly!
My oh my oh my oh my
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The World of Nellie Bly!

Welcome to
The World of Nellie Bly!

Scene One | In the Town of Cochran's Mills

Judge Cochran and Elizabeth are greeted by townspeople in the morning.

Eldridge Family
Good morning, Judge!

Judge Cochran
Good day, Eldridge family!

Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins
Your honor! A fine day indeed - thank you for your fair ruling on our case!

Judge Cochran
Justice prevails, Mrs. Wilkins! I am certain you will find use for 200 cows!

Baker
Judge Cochran, a fine morning! May I interest you in a freshly baked English muffin?

Judge Cochran
I'll take two, Jim, one for me and one for my daughter. How much do I owe you?

Baker
These are on me - enjoy your day!

Judge Cochran
You as well!

Elizabeth (Nellie)

Father, why do the townsfolk love you so?

Judge Cochran

Haha! Well, I won't go as far as love, but I'd like to think I've earned their respect!

Elizabeth

How?

Judge Cochran

Oh, I suppose they believe I am honest and fair.

Elizabeth

And are you?

Judge Cochran

I expect nothing less. So many questions, my Elizabeth!

Elizabeth

Well, how else am I to know?

Judge Cochran

Know what?

Elizabeth

Without asking, how am I to know what's for real and what's not?

Judge Cochran

I ask myself that same question every day! What you are seeking, my Elizabeth, is the truth!

Elizabeth

The truth?

Judge Cochran

Yes. The truth!

SONG

Judge Cochran

How do you know the change of season

How do you know the time of year

Trust in clues with rhyme and reason

Not some bloke whispering in your ear!

What do you see falling from the tree
All around gather evidence
Smell, touch, and see the leaves
Trust in your uncommon sense!

What's true or not?
Use everything you got!
What's right from wrong?
You gotta be brave and strong!

(Judge)

It's all up to you!
To find the honest truth!

(Elizabeth)

It's all up to me!
To make you and me believe!

(Judge and Nellie)

It's all up to us!
To live a world that's just!

(Judge and Nellie)

And that's the honest truth!

(Cast)

And that's the honest truth!

(Cast)

How do you know the change of season
How do you know the time of year
Trust in clues with rhyme and reason
Not some bloke whispering in your ear!

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To make you and me believe!
It's all up to us!
To live a world that's just!

And that's the honest truth!
And that's the honest truth!

Judge Cochran

One day, Elizabeth, you'll go out into the world and find what you are looking for.
For now, let's just enjoy our muffins!

Elizabeth and Judge

Yum! And that's the honest truth!

Scene Two | Elizabeth Cochran aka Nellie Bly

Publisher Joseph Pulitzer hires Elizabeth as a reporter. Elizabeth becomes Nellie Bly.

Joseph Pulitzer

So your name is Elizabeth Cochran, is it?

Elizabeth Cochran

Yes sir. My grandfather's Irish.

Joseph Pulitzer

From Cochran's Mills, Pennsylvania, yes?

Elizabeth Cochran

Yes sir. Named after my father, Judge Michael Cochran.

Joseph Pulitzer

So, Ms. Elizabeth Cochran, you want to be a journalist, reporter, a newsman.

Elizabeth

Newswoman. Yes sir.

Joseph Pulitzer

I read your response to the article on Working Women and I'll admit, you have potential, real talent.

Elizabeth

Thank you, sir.

Joseph Pulitzer

But reporting needs more than just knowing how to write, Ms. Cochran, it takes boldness, temerity, gumption, schutzpa!

Elizabeth

I have all of those, sir, and tenacity, too.

Joseph Pulitzer

Ms. Cochran, the world is huge, immense, gigantic, and you come from a small, miniscule town, so -

Elizabeth

Mr. Madden, I may be a small town girl but -

Joseph Pulitzer

You're hired.

Elizabeth

You haven't heard the last of me! I assure you - excuse me, did you say hired?

Joseph Pulitzer

When can you start?

Elizabeth

Yesterday!

Joseph Pulitzer

Tomorrow then! Your first assignment is investigating a Box Factory in the industrial district. Make sure to bring your pencil.

Elizabeth

Yes, sir! Check!

Joseph Pulitzer

Your pad of paper.

Elizabeth

Check!

Joseph Pulitzer

And something else all writers have.

Elizabeth

What's that, sir?

Joseph Pulitzer

A pseudonym.

Elizabeth

I have very little money to buy a fancy suit like that.

Joseph Pulitzer

Ha ha, no! A pseudonym is a pen name, a given name, something for the history books! Today, Ms. Elizabeth Cochran, reporter for The New York World, you shall be Nellie Bly!

Elizabeth

Well, then hello! My name is Nellie Bly, reporter!

Scene Three | The Box Factory

Nellie Bly investigates the working conditions of a box factory.

Supervisor

Ms. Bly, we build boxes. The more boxes the better!

Nellie Bly

And what about the workers?

Supervisor

Workers work. Workers build boxes. More work means more boxes! The more boxes the better!

Nellie Bly

Do the workers have a break time? *(Lunch horn blows)*

Supervisor

Ms. Bly, it is time for lunch!

Nellie Bly

Wonderful, I will interview the workers while they eat.

Supervisor

Oh, sorry, Ms. Bly, I mean *my* lunch! Workers work and more work means more boxes and -

Nellie Bly and Supervisor

- the more boxes the better!

Supervisor

Precisely. I'll be back!

Worker 1

Workers work alright!

Worker 2

Ten hours a day!

Worker 3

Fingers raw to the bone!

Worker 4

No breaks, no lunch!

Worker 5

Hardly a living wage!

Nellie Bly

Tell me and I'll write about it. Our readers deserve the truth!

(SONG)

(Workers Ensemble)

Early in the morning I leave my flat
Nothing in the cupboards but hungry rats
Landlord's mad cuz rent is due
So I don my coat and hob-nailed shoes

(Cast)

They don their coats and hob-nailed shoes!

(Workers Ensemble)

I walk through the city and board a bus
I choke on smoke, exhaust, and dust.
Arrive at work I punch my card
The boss is shouting, "Better work hard!"

(Cast)

The boss is shouting, "Better work hard!"

(Cast)

Keep it moving
Down the line they're sent
Keep it going
We repeat it all again!
Keep it coming
Gotta earn my salary
There's no stopping
At the box factory!

There's no stopping
At the box factory!

Keep it moving
Down the line they're sent
Keep it going
We repeat it all again!
Keep it coming
Gotta earn my salary
There's no stopping
At the box factory!

There's no stopping
At the box factory!

(Workers Ensemble)

I work the line I do my share
No break for lunch - now that's not fair!
I glue and fold, and cut and crease
Box after box - no time to eat!

(Cast)

Box after box - no time to eat!

(Cast)

Keep it moving
Down the line they're sent
Keep it going
We repeat it all again!
Keep it coming
Gotta earn my salary
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Keep it moving
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There's no stopping
At the box factory!

There's no stopping
At the box factory!

(Cast)

Working hard all day
No time to delay
Hardly any pay
Much to my dismay!

Keep it moving
Down the line they're sent
Keep it going
We repeat it all again!
Keep it coming
Gotta earn my salary
There's no stopping
At the box factory!

There's no stopping
At the box factory!

Nellie Bly

Thank you for showing me! I will write a story that exposes the poor work conditions of this factory!

Workers

Thank you, Ms. Bly! Let the world know, Ms. Bly!

Nellie Bly

I will!

Supervisor

Back to work! More work, more boxes!

Workers

The more boxes the better!

Scene Four | Read All About It

City streets and people are reading The New York World.

Newsie

Get your paper here! One cent! Read all about it!

Person 1

I'll take one!

Person 2

Listen to this headline: Box Building Boxers Bullied by Bosses!

Person 3

It says here that journalist Nellie Bly exposes unfair working conditions at a box factory. Investigation forces the box company to improve the workers' work day with mandatory lunch and break times.

Person 4

Bless her soul! Nelly Bly is a hero, fighting for truth and justice.

People

Hooray for Nellie Bly!

Joseph Pulitzer

Nellie, our newspaper today is sold out! The whole city is reading your story! Well done!

Nellie Bly

Thank you, sir.

Joseph Pulitzer

But tomorrow is going to be a new day! Can't sit too long on fame, you know. Do you know what word is in the word question?

Nellie Bly

No sir.

Joseph Pulitzer

The word “quest” is in the word “question”. Reporters ask questions because we are on a quest, a mission, a crusade! What quest shall the great Nellie Bly go on next?

Nellie Bly

We are on the same page, sir. I have an idea!

Joseph Pulitzer

Let’s hear it.

Nellie Bly

Jules Verne wrote a book called Around the World in Eighty Days. It’s just a story, of course, but I want to actually do it!

Joseph Pulitzer

What?! Travel the world in eighty days?

Nellie Bly

No! 72 days. I can do it in 72 days! And I will report to our readers my adventure into exotic lands! A quest!

Joseph Pulitzer

Mmm...brilliant, Ms. Bly! Let’s do it!

Nellie Bly

Hello, my name is Nellie Bly, reporter, traveller, adventurer!

Scene Five | Around the World in 72 Days

Nellie Bly travels the world.

Oh Nellie Bly

Bon voyage and good-bye!

The world is yours

My oh my oh my oh my!

Oh Nellie Bly

Bon voyage and good-bye!

The world is yours

My oh my!

From New Jersey on the month of November
Nellie Bly took a trip the world will remember
It was 1889, the Atlantic breeze was fine
She'd cross the ocean on a steam liner!

To London she would disembark
Nellie Bly lands safe on European shores
Not to pass a chance, she headed off to France
To meet Jules Verne halfway round the world!

Oh Nellie Bly
Bon voyage and good-bye!
The world is yours
My oh my oh my oh my!

Oh Nellie Bly
Bon voyage and good-bye!
The world is yours
My oh my!

A horse-drawn carriage takes her to a station
She hops a train for a new destination
She goes to Italy, she has the best cannoli
Then Egypt, Sri Lanka with determination.

She sails on to Hong Kong and Singapore
She braves pirates and a whole lot more
Ride a horse and donkey, she buys herself a monkey
Everyplace she goes Nellie Bly was so adored!

Oh Nellie Bly
Bon voyage and good-bye!
The world is yours
My oh my oh my oh my!

Oh Nellie Bly
Bon voyage and good-bye!
The world is yours
My oh my!

She crosses the Pacific on her way
Nellie Bly she reaches San Francisco Bay

A train across the States, returns where all await
She's back in Jersey in seventy-two days!

Oh Nellie Bly
Bon voyage and good-bye!
The world is yours
My oh my oh my oh my!

Oh Nellie Bly
Bon voyage and good-bye!
The world is yours
My oh my!

Finale | Quote from Nellie Bly

Cast sends a message to the audience.

Mrs. Tan

Nellie Bly had said "Nothing is impossible if one applies a certain amount of energy in the right direction."

Dr. Tan

And when she meets someone who doesn't think they can do it, she would say:

Cast

"Nonsense! If you want to do it, you can do it. The question is, do you want to do it?"

(Cast)

Oh Nellie Bly
Bon voyage and good-bye!
The world is yours
My oh my!