She was “an adventurer, spy, archaeologist and powerful political force…[and the] first female Intelligence officer employed by the British Military.” Gertrude Bell is sometimes called “the female Lawrence of Arabia,” but very few people know her story. Now, Between the Rivers Productions is running a Kickstarter to create a documentary, Letters from Baghdad, about this trailblazing woman.

Zeva Oelbaum and Sabine Krayenbühl, the filmmakers who conceived the project, call Bell “part proper Victorian and part modern woman.” The first woman to receive the highest honors in Modern History at Oxford, she acted as an advisor on Middle Eastern affairs during World War I, and helped reshape the national boundaries there after the war concluded. She also advocated for Iraqi self-rule, criticized Britain’s colonial policy, drafted the 1925 Law of Antiquities that allowed Iraq to retain excavated artifacts, promoted education for Muslim girls and helped establish one of the most progressive educational systems in the Middle East.
known. Oelbaum and Krayenbühl point out that “a recent biography on T.E. Lawrence doesn’t mention her name, not even in a footnote” even though her maps and notes were critical to the success of the tribal revolt. In fact, they add, “In the 1996 Academy Award winning film, “The English Patient”, one of the characters mentions the ‘Bell Maps’, but goes on to refer to Bell as a man.” As the filmmakers assert, “It’s time to bring Gertrude Bell’s story back into history!”

The documentary draws on the over 1,600 letters that Bell wrote during her time in the Middle East. “These vibrant, humorous and richly detailed letters were written primarily to her family and friends,” Oelbaum and Krayenbühl say. “We were intrigued by the contrast between her public self and her private self.” The story these letters tell will be accompanied by more than 500 clips of archival footage: “[o]riginally shot in 35mm and transferred to HD, these visuals, some of them hand-tinted, will transport the viewer into the exotic, vanished world that Bell loved.”

As part of their Kickstarter campaign, Oelbaum and Krayenbühl are offering both digital downloads and DVDs of the documentary. They say, “with our team of historians, archaeologists, designers, editors, writers, researchers, and your help, we are poised to finally bring Gertrude Bell’s story to the big screen - where it belongs!”

To learn more the “Letters from Baghdad” film project, watch the film’s trailer, and support their Kickstarter campaign, visit http://kck.st/1gIaKgY

While there aren’t any books available for young readers about Gertrude Bell, there are several books for adult readers about her incredible life story: “Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell” (http://amzn.to/1h36vqo) and “Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations” (http://amzn.to/1myt6Dt).

To introduce your children to more real-life women explorers, visit our “Explorers / Adventurers” section at http://www.amightygirl.com/books/history-biography/biography?cat=347


For stories of amazing girls and women throughout history to inspire your Mighty Girl, visit our “History / Historical Fiction” section and our collection of hundreds of biographies, sortable by area of expertise, at http://www.amightygirl.com/books/history-biography

Like · Comment · Share · Friday, March 28 at 9:50am · Edited

Celesta Kin, Rio Tayla Jackson, Britt J. Haslett and 1,287 others like this.

492 shares

Kelly Bornt Phoninsan I read her story when I was in my late
Sally Tibbetts She sounds like an Amelia Peabody from the Elizabeth Peters series…except, she was real! So exciting to read about these wonderful women!
March 28 at 10:19am · Like · 1 · Reply

Sarah Bowsher There is a movie in production "Queen of the Desert"
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1837636/
March 28 at 10:24am · Like · 5 · Reply

Gretchen Bundy-Ladowicz I read about here while stationed in Iraq. Want to talk about cool...
March 28 at 10:32am · Like · 3 · Reply

Catherine Matthews Wow!
March 28 at 10:40am · Like · Reply

Jane Whitman Hollywood should just visit your website/
Facebook page for movie ideas.
March 28 at 10:47am · Like · 3 · Reply

Robin Stephens The letters were written to her extremely well connected friends and family back in England so that she could affect policy through them!
March 28 at 10:52am · Like · 3 · Reply

Toni Virginia Maltman Saylor So wish we could have learned about women like this in school.
March 28 at 11:01am · Like · 9 · Reply

Jackie McCabe-Beyale This is so fascinating.
March 28 at 11:03am · Like · Reply

Lisa Middleton It is so sad that we are never taught about so many of the great women of history. Our curriculums here seem to make the best known women seem like exceptions, and so much male ego rules the rest.
March 28 at 11:18am · Like · 8 · Reply

Cathy Claire Bjerkan Gotta add this to my library for Elise and Emma!
March 28 at 11:54am · Like · Reply

Katherine Gaudet AWESOME! SHARING!
March 28 at 12:19pm · Like · Reply

Carole Jonville She was also a great alpinist. I have read this biography: "Daughter of the desert - the remarkable life of Gertrude Bell" from Georgina Howell
March 28 at 2:23pm · Like · 1 · Reply

Caroline Mitchinson Lawther She was born a few miles from where I live in what is now known as the 'original Washington'.
March 28 at 3:50pm · Like · 1 · Reply

John O'Hare Fantastic when a truth like this is revealed!
March 28 at 4:38pm · Like · Reply
Kristi Adams Johnson  A Mighty Girl is my favorite page!!! I can hardly believe how many women are featured on here that I've never heard of - and I'm 42 and have a college education. My daughter is already bettereducated about women and their roles in the world!!! Thank you so much!!!!!
March 28 at 6:47pm · Like · 6 · Reply

Melissa Sames  Wow, Gertrude Bell, her name now gives me goosebumps...the Desert Queen, holy wow what a lady.
March 28 at 7:17pm · Like · 1 · Reply

Alison Enever  My 7 year old Mighty Girl wrote about Gertrude Bell for a school project on explorers last year. What a fascinating woman. My daughter loved learning about and telling others about her.
March 28 at 7:52pm · Like · 6 · Reply

Hannah Williams-Blakey  Wowza
March 29 at 12:20am · Like · Reply

Emily Watson  Colleen Ohlandt
March 29 at 1:39pm · Like · Reply

John Pulbrook  Extraordinary woman Gertrude Bell..
March 29 at 6:01pm · Like · Reply

Pamela Beere Briggs  I don't think it's a coincidence that it's women filmmakers making a film about this amazing woman. Let's keep digging up these hidden and forgotten stories, women filmmakers! Our daughters will be inspired. Our sons will be enlightened. The world will be wiser.
March 29 at 7:36pm · Like · 2 · Reply

Press Enter to post.

Write a comment...