

The
MIRACLE
Worker

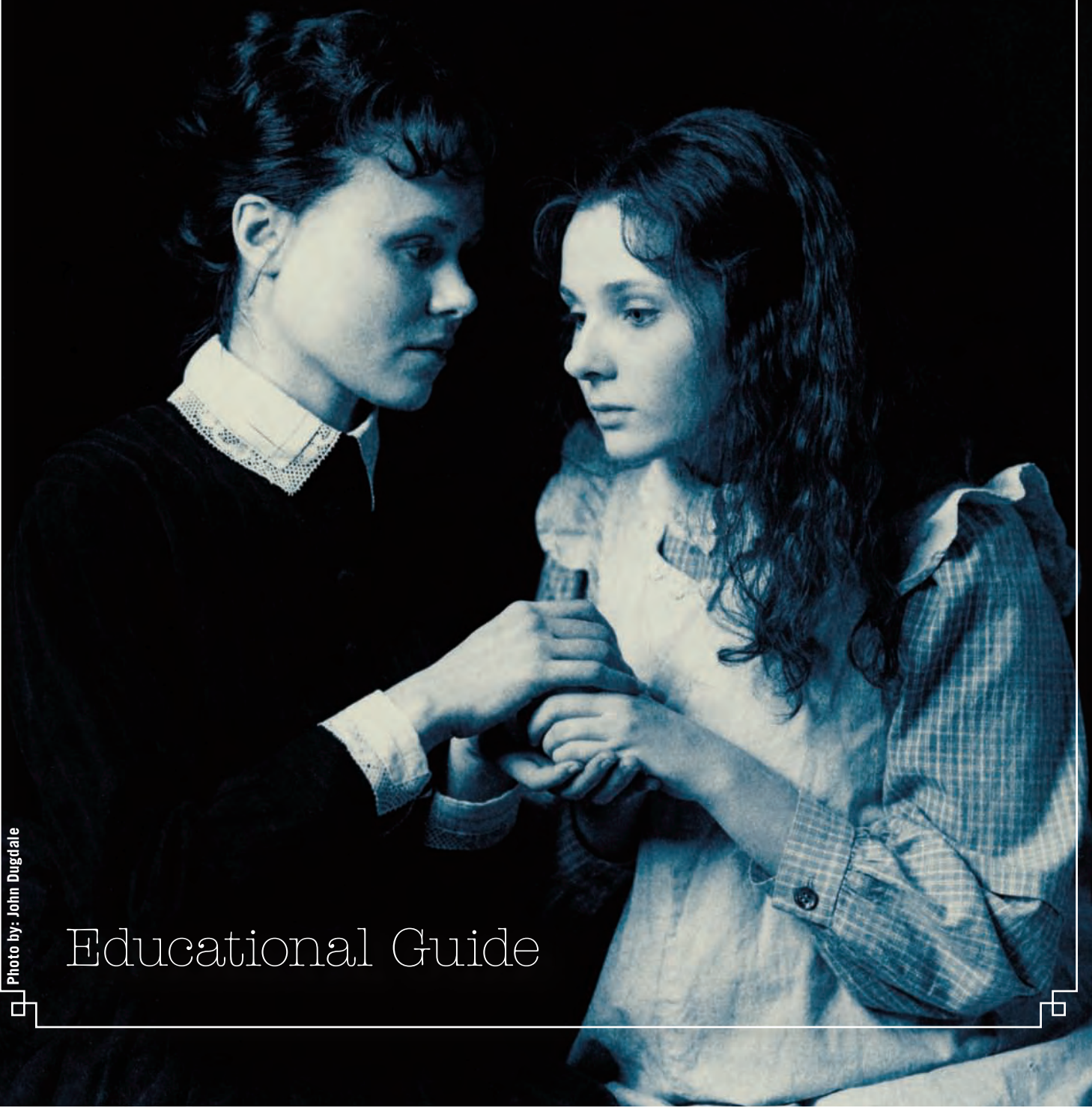


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Educational Guide

The
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Worker

Educational Guide

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Helen Keller, circa 1902. Photo courtesy of the American Foundation for the Blind, Helen Keller Archives.

I am only one, but still **I am one.** I cannot do
everything, but still **I can do something;**
and because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do something that I can do.

~ Helen Keller

Introduction



Helen Keller, circa 1893. Photo courtesy of the American Foundation for the Blind, Helen Keller Archives.

Never bend
your head.
Hold it
high.
Look the
world
straight in
the eye.

~Helen Keller

How to Use This Guide

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to *The Miracle Worker* Educational Guide. These materials can serve as a catalyst for educational enrichment beyond the performance.

Inside this resource you'll find a variety of activities that may either stand alone or work in sequence as a unit of study. Feel free to photocopy pages from this guide to distribute to your students. We have structured the guide into three sections: Before the Show, After the Show, and Resources.

The first section, **Before the Show**, provides information about the production, some historical background, and additional information. The second section, **After the Show**, features activities and discussion topics to explore *The Miracle Worker's* content in your classroom. Finally, the **Resources** section provides information for delving deeper into the world of *The Miracle Worker* with websites, videos, and more.

We hope this guide will inspire your students to further explore the world of *The Miracle Worker* and all of its educational riches. Enjoy the Show!

A Letter From Keller Johnson-Thompson,

Ambassador for the American Foundation for the Blind in New York City

Winston Churchill called her “the greatest woman of the twentieth century.” Mark Twain went even further, calling her “the most extraordinary product of all the ages.”

Helen Keller was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, on June 27, 1880. At the age of 19 months she was stricken with a sudden illness that would leave her both blind and deaf for the rest of her life.

It was Alexander Graham Bell who put the Keller family in touch with the Perkins Institution for the Blind, which arranged for Annie Sullivan to become Helen’s Teacher. With determination and compassion, Annie took charge of her student and led her into life, starting with that famous day at the water pump when she spelled W-A-T-E-R into Helen’s hand.

I always knew I had a special connection to Helen Keller. I was born in Helen Keller Memorial Hospital and named after my great-great-aunt. I remember blindfolding myself with one of my mother’s scarves and putting cotton balls in my ears to help me imagine what kind of world she must have lived in. After reading Helen Keller’s autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, when I was 9 years old, I realized that Helen Keller did much more than learn what W-A-T-E-R stood for. I was amazed to learn that a deaf-blind person could learn to read, write, and speak in several languages. She would meet 10 U.S. presidents, travel to 39 countries, receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the rich and famous would call her their friend. She was an author, activist and diplomat who fought for people on the margins of society. It was the moment I realized that Helen Keller’s life was about helping others that I knew I would someday follow in her footsteps.

Today, as Ambassador for the American Foundation for the Blind, I am fulfilling that dream. In this capacity—the same position held by my great-great-aunt—I share the message that Helen Keller’s life was not just about being deaf and blind. It was about overcoming incredible odds, sacrificing for what you really want in life, and leaving the world better than you found it.

So powerful a symbol of triumph did she become that she has an indisputable place in the history of our time and of times to come. Upon her death in 1968, Senator Lister Hill of Alabama expressed the feelings of the world at the funeral services at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., when he said, “She will live on as one of the few, the immortal names not born to die. Her spirit will endure as long as man can read, and stories can be told of the woman who showed the world that there are no boundaries to courage and faith.”

Keller Johnson-Thompson

Before the Show

About the Show



Anne Sullivan Macy (seated right) manually signs into Helen Keller's right hand, 1899. Photo courtesy of the American Foundation for the Blind, Helen Keller Archives.

Plot Synopsis

Act One

In Alabama, during the 1880s, Arthur (Captain) and Kate Keller are relieved to hear their baby daughter, Helen, will live after a bout of fever and congestion. However, they quickly discover Helen is unable to see and unable to hear. Five years later, Helen has grown to be a difficult child, prone to violent tantrums as her only means of getting what she wants. The Keller household, in addition to the Captain and Mrs. Keller, consists of James, Helen's older half-brother; Mildred, Helen's baby sister; Aunt Ev, and a handful of African-American servants and their children. As Helen's behavior becomes more and more unmanageable, Captain Keller considers putting Helen into an asylum. Kate and Aunt Ev convince him to seek help from doctors up north.

The Keller family consults Dr. Anagnos of the Perkins Institute in Boston, Massachusetts, who decides to send Annie Sullivan to work with Helen. As Annie and Dr. Anagnos say their goodbyes, it becomes clear that Annie, only 20 years old, is actually a former pupil at the Perkins Institute, not a teacher. We learn in a flashback that when Annie was 9 years old, her younger

brother, who used crutches, was taken away from her.

When Annie arrives at the Keller home, they are surprised by her young age and that she has a visual disability. Annie is partially blind, but as a result of many surgeries is still quite sensitive to light and wears glasses. Also surprising to the Kellers are Annie's northern mannerisms, which strike the family as peculiar and unladylike.

In Annie's first interaction with Helen, she takes the girl to her room and gives her a doll. Spelling out the word "doll" in sign language on Helen's palm, Annie's goal is to teach Helen that objects have names, and she can use those names to "see." Helen rejects this lesson when she isn't instantly

Think About It...

- In Act I and again in Act III, Annie comments that, "I think God must owe me a resurrection." What does she mean by that?
- Why do you think William Gibson decided to end Act II with Annie singing the lullaby "Hush, Little Baby?"

gratified with what she wants. In a fit of rage, Helen locks Annie into the room and runs out of the house with the key. James sees Helen do this, but rather than stop Helen, he allows the prank to ensue. Hours later, Captain Keller angrily helps Annie leave her room through the window and down a ladder. As the rest of the family storms in to have dinner, Annie watches as Helen, thinking she's alone, removes the key from her mouth and drops it down the well.

Act Two

During dinner, Annie observes how Helen is allowed to walk around the table, using her hands to take whatever food she wants from everybody's plate. The family allows this since it's easier than dealing with one of Helen's tantrums. When Helen attempts to take food from Annie's plate, Annie doesn't allow it. In a controversial confrontation, Annie insists that the family leave the room. Annie then locks herself and Helen in the dining room. James supports Annie's radical behavior, but Captain Keller is appalled and decides he is going to fire Annie. After a violent struggle and several hours, Annie leaves the dining room and announces that Helen has learned to sit by herself, eat with her spoon, and fold her napkin. Inspired by this success, and recalling a time when Helen was younger and tried to say "water," Kate persuades the Captain to let Annie stay.

Meanwhile, Annie realizes she will not be able to help Helen as long as she is coddled by her family. Annie exposes more of her past to the Kellers, describing how she and her brother lived in an asylum where they were maltreated and surrounded by death and dementia. After some negotiating, the Captain agrees to move Helen and Annie into a garden house on their homestead for two weeks, where they are promised to be uninterrupted by the family.

Unhappy and confused, Helen moves into the cabin. Annie works, along with the help of Percy, the son of the Keller's cook, to finger spell vocabulary to Helen. Annie believes that, just like a baby, as long as

Helen is inundated with language she will soon learn to connect words to their objects and feelings.

Act Three

The two weeks pass. Annie teaches Helen to be more disciplined and well-behaved but has not been able to teach her that words represent ideas. Frustrated, Annie begs for more time, but the Captain and Kate insist Helen come back to the house.

At dinner that night back in the main house, Helen tests her boundaries and reverts to some spoiled behaviors. The family is so happy to have Helen back, they allow her to get what she wants when she throws a tantrum. Annie scolds the Kellers for "unteaching" Helen, but the Kellers feel Annie is expecting too much of her. James tries to interject on Annie's behalf, but, as usual, Captain Keller belittles him. As the adults struggle about what to do with this situation, Helen runs out of the house. Annie starts to run after her, and the Captain tries to stop her. James finally stands up for himself and defends Annie, forcing his father to let Annie run after Helen to continue her lesson.

Once Annie is outside, she finds Helen at the water pump. The miracle Annie and Helen so desperately need finally takes place. Helen finger-spells "water," showing she understands what the word "water" actually signifies. Helen then bursts forth with the finger-spellings for many words, realizing a word is a name for an object or an idea. Annie has unlocked Helen's thoughts by teaching her the gift of language.

Think About It...

- In Act III, James gives a grace at the table that Aunt Ev finds odd. If the grace represents a metaphor for the characters in the play, who do you think is Jacob? Who do you think is the angel?

"The **best** and most beautiful things
in the **world** cannot be seen
or even touched
— they must be felt with the heart."

~ Helen Keller, as an adult

Character Descriptions



Alison Pill (left) and Abigail Breslin (right)

(Characters Listed in Order of Appearance)

Captain Arthur Keller: a proud southern gentleman, father to Helen and James, husband to Kate

Kate Keller: a well-mannered southern gentlewoman, Helen's mother and James's stepmother, Captain's wife

Doctor: examines Helen as a baby and claims she is completely healthy

Helen Keller: loses her ability to hear and see due to an illness as a baby, gets what she wants through violent outbursts

Martha and Percy: the children of the cook on the Keller homestead

Aunt Ev: Helen and James's aunt who lives on the homestead

James Keller: a young man who is often ignored or chastised by his father, James is still forming a relationship with his stepmother of about six years, Kate Keller

Dr. Anagnos: runs the Perkins Institute in Boston where he helps children with visual disabilities

Annie Sullivan: a 20-year old woman from Boston with low vision

Blind Children: children at the Perkins Institute

Boy's Voice/Jimmie: Annie's younger brother, Jimmie, only seen in flashback

Offstage Voices: patients at the hospital with Annie and Jimmie

Viney: a cook at the Keller homestead

“She is like a little safe,
locked, that no one can open.
Perhaps there is
a treasure inside.”
~ Anagnos, *The Miracle Worker*



Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan Macy, 1893. Photo courtesy of the American Foundation for the Blind, Helen Keller Archives.

William Gibson, the Author

On November 13, 1914, William Gibson was born in the Bronx, New York. After graduating from the City College of New York in 1932, William moved to Kansas to study theater. His first plays, *A Cry of Players* and *Dinny and the Witches*, were produced in 1948. In 1958, Gibson received critical acclaim for his Broadway success, *Two for the Seesaw*. This success allowed him to garner support for his pet project, *The Miracle Worker*. Gibson first envisioned *The Miracle Worker* as a solo dance piece, but later wrote it as a teleplay for the CBS series *Playhouse 90*. Gibson adapted the script for the stage in 1959. In 1960, *The Miracle Worker* received a Tony Award for Best Play.

Adaptations of the Show

In 1962, *The Miracle Worker* was adapted into a full-length film. Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke reprised their Broadway roles for the film, starring as Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller, respectively. In 1979, *The Miracle Worker* was re-produced as a television movie. Patty Duke took on the role of Annie Sullivan this time, and Melissa Gilbert played Helen. In 2000, *The Miracle Worker* was again made for television featuring Hallie Eisenberg and David Strathairn as Captain Keller.

Think About It...

- Captain Keller remarks to his wife that “[they] certainly rear a peculiar kind of woman in the north.” Why does Captain Keller find Annie so peculiar? Compare and contrast Annie and Kate.
- Annie remembers her brother, Jimmie, asking her to stay with him “forever and ever.” Why is this quote so significant to Annie?
- Water is often used in literary imagery. Why is it significant that the first word Helen understands is “water?”

The World Around the Show



Helen Keller, circa 1896.
Photo courtesy of the
American Foundation for the
Blind, Helen Keller Archives.

Helen Keller

Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880 on the Ivy Green plantation in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Helen lost her ability to see and hear when she was nineteen months old. With the help of her teacher, Annie Sullivan, Helen learned to use sign language and written language to communicate.

In 1888, Helen moved to the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston. In 1904, Helen Keller became the first person with deafblindness to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree when she graduated from Radcliffe College.

Helen used her love of language to become a political activist and author. She was an out-spoken suffragette, pacifist, and socialist. Helen advocated for women's rights and helped to form the American Civil Liberties Union. Helen founded an organization called Helen Keller International, to raise awareness for vision research. She became a world traveler, accompanied by her lifelong best friend, Annie Sullivan,

to speak on behalf of people with disabilities.

In addition to political activism, Helen was an established writer, precociously writing her first work when she was only eleven years old. In 1903, she published her autobiography *The Story of My Life*. By the time Helen died, she had published a dozen books.

Since her death in 1968, Helen has received many posthumous honors. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. Her visage is seen on the Alabama state quarter, and hospitals, statues, and streets worldwide are named in her honor.

"I long to
accomplish a **great**
and **noble task**,
but it is my chief duty
to accomplish
small tasks as if
they were
great and noble."

~ Helen Keller, as an adult

**“The most important day I remember
in all my life is the one
on which my teacher,
Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me.”**
~ Helen Keller, as an adult

Johanna Sullivan

Johanna (Anne or Annie) Sullivan was born in Agawam, Massachusetts on April 14, 1866. At the age of three, Annie started to lose her sense of vision due to a bacterial infection. Her mother died of tuberculosis when she was eight, and her father subsequently abandoned her and her four siblings. Three of her siblings were sent to live with different relatives. Annie and her brother, Jimmie, who had tuberculosis, were sent to Tewksbury Almhouse where the children endured horrifying circumstances. Jimmie died three months after they moved to the institution.

Annie was forced to live at Tewksbury for four more years. While there, Annie underwent several eye surgeries, but none cured her blurred vision. In 1880, Annie attended the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston. There she had another surgery, which restored part of her vision. Annie graduated in 1886 as valedictorian. The director of the Perkins Institute, Michael Anagnos, encouraged Annie to move to Alabama to become a teacher and governess to Helen Keller, a six-year old with deafblindness.

Annie and Helen became constant companions. The two lived together, along with Annie's husband, John Albert Macy. John and Annie married in 1905, but separated in 1914. Annie and Helen traveled the world advocating for more research on vision, nutrition, and health. In 1936, Annie had a heart attack and went into a coma and died, with Helen by her side. Annie Sullivan's ashes are in the Washington National Cathedral.



Anne Sullivan Macy, 1894.
Photo courtesy of the
American Foundation for the
Blind, Helen Keller Archives.



Anne Sullivan Macy manually signing into Helen Keller's left hand, circa 1893. Photo courtesy of the American Foundation for the Blind, Helen Keller Archives.

The 1880s

The *Miracle Worker* takes place in the late 1880s during a time when the United States felt a great cultural divide between the North and the South. Northern industry grew more profitable, while in the South, farmers struggled to revive their economy in the aftermath of the Civil War. This divide provided emotional momentum for women's suffrage and the socialist movement, both of which had a great impact on Helen Keller's life.

Notable Events:

- President Garfield was assassinated
- North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington admitted to statehood
- Brooklyn Bridge opened to the public
- Statue of Liberty dedicated in New York Harbor
- Debut of the automobile in Germany
- Inception of the Eiffel Tower in France
- Construction of Panama Canal began
- Mark Twain published *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Inventions:

- Ballpoint pen
- Dishwasher
- Drinking straw
- Electric fan
- Kodak hand camera
- Phonograph
- Cash register
- Trolley car
- Contact lenses

The Role of Women

Known as "The Gilded Age," this time period was the height of 19th century American wealth, but also a time of growing poverty. More and more poor or working-class women took jobs to support themselves and their families outside of the home.

In the South, working-class women were permitted to work as teachers or as house servants. Since slave labor was prohibited, many women took on double duties of running a household and helping to share-crop. In the North, immigrant women and other working-class women typically worked in textile mills and factories. They were paid less than men so employers were willing to hire them. However, these women were expected to leave their work once they married.

At the end of the 1800s as more women became accepted in traditionally masculine work places, like factories and offices, fewer women took domestic jobs. And unlike their predecessors, many women in the 1880s insisted upon receiving an education and enrolling in college. These newly educated women began championing to better the lives of all women.

Medical Practices

When Helen Keller fell ill as a baby, the doctor diagnosed her as having congestion of the stomach and brain. Though she recovered from this "congestion" she was left blind and deaf. Now, doctors believe Helen had either scarlet fever or meningitis.

Scarlet fever is a streptococcal infection characterized by a rash and a high fever. In the 1880s, when Helen may have contracted this infection, there was no way to treat it. In 1924, George and Gladys Dick developed a scarlet fever vaccine. Meanwhile, Alexander Fleming had discovered penicillin and by the 1940s the scarlet fever vaccine was unnecessary. Strep infections could be easily treated with a course of the penicillin antibiotic.

Meningitis is the inflammation of brain and spinal cord membranes. Though still a serious illness today, meningitis is often successfully treated with a course of antibiotics. People are also able to receive a vaccine to prevent meningitis. In the 1880s, people who contracted meningitis typically died a short time later.

Other diseases that were common in the 19th century were cholera, smallpox, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, pneumonia, dysentery, diphtheria, and rheumatic fever. Nearly all of these illnesses were

fatal, but now these illnesses are preventable or treatable. Immunizations and nutrition protect most children in the United States from these diseases. If they are contracted, a standard course of antibiotics or rehydration treatments will generally flush out the infections.

Accessibility for People with Disabilities in the United States

In the 1800s, there was little advocacy in the United States for people with disabilities. Many people with disabilities, whether congenital or as a result of an illness or accident, were segregated into institutions. Though there were significant exceptions, such as the Perkins Institute for the Blind and Gallaudet University, most people with disabilities were treated as invisible members of society.

After World War I, attitudes toward people with disabilities shifted. Assistive technology such as hearing aids, microphones, and amplifiers were developed and people with disabilities, particularly veterans, had greater involvement in their communities.

In the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement reached its peak. Doctors and therapists started to help people with disabilities engage in their community rather than be institutionalized. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protected the civil rights of people with disabilities by guaranteeing equal employment opportunities and access to public transportation. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act provided every child the right to free education. In 1990, this educational act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and more specific legal mandates were put in place to maximize the success of all students.

Also in 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA guarantees that public buildings and systems include assistive technology such as ramps, elevators, chair lifts,

information in braille, closed-captioning, and doors and hallways wide enough to accommodate people who use wheelchairs, walkers, or service animals.

American Sign Language

American Sign Language was developed in the United States by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, a minister from Hartford, Connecticut. Gallaudet traveled to Europe where he was inspired by Old French Sign Language (OFSL). OFSL was developed by Abbe Charles Michel de L'Epee in 1755. L'Epee founded a school for people who were deaf and used natural hand gestures and finger spellings to help his students communicate.

Decades later, Gallaudet moved to Europe to study deaf communication so that he could better help his neighbor's daughter who was deaf. After spending some time studying in England, Gallaudet moved to Paris where he befriended Laurent Clerc, a sign language instructor. Gallaudet returned to Connecticut in 1817, where he and Clerc founded the first school for deaf people in the United States. Gallaudet and Clerc revised the language to include gesticulations, which were natural for Americans, hence the name American Sign Language (ASL). ASL, or Ameslan, is used in many deaf communities throughout the world, including the Philippines, Malaysia, Kenya, Puerto Rico, and nearly 20 other countries.

Think About It...

- Countries outside of the United States have their own sign language vocabulary. For example, the United Kingdom uses British Sign Language which is completely different from ASL.
- ASL is the fourth most-used language in the United States.

"Although the world is full of suffering,
it is also full of the overcoming of it."

~ Helen Keller, as an adult

The American Foundation for the Blind

Annie's work with Helen Keller became the blueprint for education of children who were blind, deaf-blind, or have low vision. The foundation still continues their work today. The American Foundation for the Blind website (www.afb.org) includes photos, letters, artifacts, audio-visual materials and further information on both Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Use this site as a guide to learn more about these two amazing women who are still considered role models today.

AFB American Foundation[®]
for the Blind

Expanding possibilities for people with vision loss

Things to Remember When You Meet or Speak to Someone Who is Blind or Has Low Vision.

- When speaking about a person with a disability, refer to the person first and then to the disability. For example, say "people who are blind" rather than "blind people."
- Greet people who are blind right away when they enter a room. Make sure to use your name if they aren't familiar with your voice.
- Speak directly to people who are blind or have a visual disability, not through their friend or guide.
- Do your best to refer to specific people or items by name instead of general terms like "you" or "they" or "this."
- Offer to guide people who are blind or have low vision by asking if they would like assistance. They won't always need assistance so respect their desires.
- For people who ask for assistance, allow them to take your arm just above the elbow when your arm is bent and walk ahead of the person you are guiding.
- Never grab a person who is blind or has low vision by the arm and push him/her forward.
- Never call or whistle to a guide dog or touch the dog's harness or leash. Guide dogs are working animals and doing so can distract the dog.

After the Show

Topics for Classroom Exploration

After seeing *The Miracle Worker*, use the following prompts to discuss the themes, characters and context of the show. These prompts may also be used as essay topics.

Communication

- 1) Helen can not speak and therefore has trouble communicating with her family. What are some non-verbal ways you communicate each day? Do you use signals in your classroom? Think about your daily routine. What other signals do you and other people in your community use to communicate?

Expectations

- 2) The Kellers are grateful Helen learns how to behave after spending two weeks in the garden house. However, Annie is disappointed, and feels Helen hasn't learned enough because the child still doesn't understand the meaning of words. Even though Annie is successful in some areas, she doesn't achieve all the goals she sets for herself. Is Annie being too hard on herself? Have you ever been praised for one of your accomplishments but been disappointed because you couldn't reach the goal you had set for yourself? How did you deal with this? What does it mean to try your best?

Family

- 3) How do Annie's memories of her younger brother Jimmie influence her behavior as an adult? How do these memories assist her in working with Helen? Which other experiences from Annie's past shape how she works with Helen? Now think about your own experiences. What aspects of your background (family size, where you live) and experience (family trips, volunteering) influence the way you work with other people? How do you feel this will change as you get older?
- 4) Throughout the play, nothing James does seems to make his father happy. What are some of the reasons you think Captain Keller is so hard on James? Does James have a better relationship with his stepmother, Kate?

“**Abraham Lincoln**, born in poverty and insecurity, rises up to become **one of the greatest characters in history...**

Franklin D. Roosevelt, inflicted with infantile paralysis, rises up to leave such an imprint that **history books will be incomplete without his name...**

Helen Keller, burdened with blindness and deafness, rises up to live such a sublime and noble life that **millions have come to admire her** as one of the choicest fruits on the tree of history.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Behavior

- 5) Near the end of the play, Annie admonishes the Keller family for allowing Helen to act out uncontrollably, and says, "If she was a seeing child, none of you would tolerate this." Do you think it is okay to have different behavioral expectations of someone who is blind? What if they are deaf or use a wheelchair?

Role Models

- 6) In *The Miracle Worker*, Annie is a strong role model for both Helen and her family. What is a role model and why is it important to have them in our lives? Can Helen be used as an example of a role model? Does it matter if these role models are male or female? What happens when a role model disappoints the people who are looking up to them? Who are your role models and why?

Transformation

- 7) Why doesn't Annie let Helen take food from her plate? What is it about this specific confrontation that is so important to Helen's growth?
- 8) All of the characters undergo major changes over the course of the play. While Helen's is the most dramatic, the changes in the Captain, James and Annie are also significant. Discuss each character's individual transformation and how these changes are interconnected.

Language

- 9) Annie tells Kate, "What she (Helen) has to learn first is that things have names." Discuss the importance of language and the meaning of words. Brainstorm about how different life would be without language.

Discipline

- 10) Before Annie Sullivan arrives, what strategies are the Keller family members using in order to communicate with Helen? Are there ways you think they could have communicated with Helen differently? Do you believe they needed Ms. Sullivan's help?
- 11) How effective is parental discipline to a child in regards to learning? Support your opinion with examples from the play, as well as from your own experiences.

Public Opinions

- 12) What was the general attitude toward people who were blind or deaf during the 1880s when *The Miracle Worker* takes place? Do you think people who were blind or deaf had prospects for careers, relationships, or financial independence? How have views toward people with disabilities changed in today's society? How have opportunities changed?

Connecting to the Curriculum

A. Language Arts

1. POETRY IN MOTION

Find a copy of one of your favorite poems. If possible, choose a poem full of imagery. Identify the nouns, adjectives, and verbs in the poem, and make a list of these words. After you compile your list, visit one of the many American Sign Language (ASL) websites and learn the signs for these words. Practice these signs over and over, combining the signs into the phrases or sentences from the poem, until you are comfortable signing your entire piece. Remember, part of sign language is using your facial expressions to support what you are saying. Once you have practiced your poem several times, perform it for the rest of your class or your family.

National Standards: NL-ENG.K-12.4: Communication Skills, NL-ENG.K-12.5: Communication Strategies, NL-ENG.K-12.12: Applying Language Skills

2. DESCRIBING THE UNSEEN

Read the following passage from “Three Days to See,” an essay she wrote describing a walk in the woods. Notice the choice of words in this essay and how each description helps illustrate the woods in a unique way.

“I pass my hands lovingly about the smooth skin of a silver birch, or the rough, shaggy bark of a pine. In spring I touch the branches of trees hopefully in search of a bud, the first sign of awakening Nature after her winter’s sleep. I feel the delightful velvety texture of a flower, and discover its remarkable convolutions. Occasionally, if I am very fortunate, I place my hand gently on a small tree and feel the happy quiver of a bird in full song.”

Now write your own essay using descriptive words. Your essay topic can be about a recent experience or from your memory. Think about using words that communicate both pictures and emotions.

National Standards: NL-ENG.K-12.6: Applying Knowledge, NL-ENG.K-12.12: Applying Language Skills.

3. LOUIS BRAILLE

In 1824, Louis Braille created a method using raised dots that people who are blind can use in order to read. It is not a language, but a code by which another language can be written and read. Research the braille system and its uses today. See if you can locate signs or labels in your school or community that are printed in braille. Can you find an example to share with your classmates? Check out www.afb.org/braillebug for a guide to the language and fun games to give you deeper insight into the world of braille.

National Standards: NT.K-12.4: Technology Communication Tools, NS.6: Personal and Social Perspectives

B. Geography & History

1. THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

Annie travels from Boston, Massachusetts to Tusculum, Alabama to work for the Keller family. Find these two cities on a map. Compare and contrast the two cities based on their climate, population, agriculture, and ethnic make-up to gain an understanding of what type of environment Annie was coming from and moving into. Remember to focus your research on these cities in the late 1800s when the play takes place.

National Standards: NSS-G.K-12.6: The Uses of Geography, NSS-G.K-12.2: Places and Regions, NSS-US.H.5-12.3: Era 3 Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)

TAKING IT FURTHER

Annie travels to Tusculumbia by train. Research train travel during the 1880s. What were the accommodations like? How many miles did Annie travel? Can you determine how long Annie's trip to Alabama might have taken?

National Standards: NSS-USH.5-12.3: Era 3 Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s), NSS-USH.5-12.4: Era 4 Expansion and Reform (1801 – 1861)

C. Mathematics

1. THE PRICE OF LEARNING

Before Annie heads out to work with Helen, Dr. Anagnos tells her, “No one expects you to work miracles, even for twenty-five dollars a month.” While this salary includes room and board, twenty-five dollars a month is less than one dollar a day. What would Annie's hourly rate be assuming she worked 8 hours a day for 30 days each month? Find out what the minimum wage is in your city, and compare that amount to Annie's hourly rate. What would Annie's monthly salary have been if she was paid the current minimum wage?

National Standards: 1) Understand measurable attributes of objects and the units, systems, and processes of measurements. 2) Apply appropriate techniques, tools, and formulas to describe measurements.

D. Visual Arts

1. TEXTURE COLLAGE

Gather lots of different craft items with a variety of textures and shapes, like macaroni, fabric, paper, string, leaves, flowers, and so forth. Pair up with another student and choose one person to be blindfolded. Have the blindfolded person feel the collected craft items, and choose items they would like to use in their project. Next, while still blindfolded, have the blindfolded person glue the material to craft paper based on how it feels versus how he or she thinks it will look. When the project is done, change places and create another art project. Display the work proudly, encouraging people to both admire and feel the artwork.

National Standards: NA-VA.5-8.1: Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes, NA-VA.5-8.2: Using Knowledge of Structures and Functions

Additional Resources

Production Based Websites

www.miracleworkeronbroadway.com – Official website for the Broadway production of *The Miracle Worker*.

www.afb.org – Official website for the American Foundation for the Blind.

www.deafblind.com - Official website for more information on deafblindness.

www.helenkeller.org - Website highlighting Helen Keller Services for the Blind.

<http://gardenofpraise.com/ibdkell.htm> – a great page for Helen Keller information, study guides, and games.

www.nbp.org - Official website for National Braille Press.

www.itheatrics.com – Official website for iTheatrics, music theatre education consultants.

Video / DVD

The Miracle Worker (1962, United Artists)

The Miracle Worker (1979, NBC, Half-Pint Productions)

The Miracle Worker (2000, Fountain Productions)

Texts

Helen Keller: Selected Writings edited by Kim Nielsen (AFB Press and New York University Press)

Optimism by Helen Keller (FQ Publishing)

The Story of My Life by Helen Keller (W. W. Norton & Company; Centennial edition)

To Love This Life: Quotations by Helen Keller by Helen Keller. (AFB Press)

The
MIRACLE
Worker

Educational Guide

Created by the Good Folks at



iTheatrics.com