

HELEN KELLER



On June 27th, 1880, a baby girl was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Her father, Captain Arthur Keller, and her mother Kate were both delighted with their newborn daughter. Young Helen Keller's bright eyes and laughter filled the house with happiness.

And then tragedy struck. In February 1882, when Helen was only 19 months old, she developed a serious sickness. Although the illness didn't kill her, it did have devastating effects: Helen was left both blind and deaf.

Unable to see the world around her, and with none of her family able to communicate with her, Helen quickly became wild. A young playmate worked out a system of codes for basic words with Helen so that she could communicate somewhat, but generally Helen was locked in her own darkness, and nobody knew how to help.

Mrs. Keller tried to find help for Helen. She contacted doctors and other experts. Finally, when Helen was six, Mrs. Keller was put into contact with a special school for deaf and blind students. They sent Anne Sullivan, a former student of their own, to try to work with Helen.

Anne Sullivan had a very difficult time with young Helen, who was stubborn and uncontrolled. After weeks of struggling, Helen made the connection between the water that her teacher was pouring over her hands and the sign for water. The story of Helen Keller's first understanding of sign language is so well-known that it is legendary. The image of a young girl trapped in darkness, and that glimmer of hope finally bursting through, the hope of communication, is one that resonates across cultures and generations.

Helen Keller quickly mastered sign language and went on to learn spoken language, which is very difficult to do when you cannot hear. She read voraciously (in English, French, Greek, and Latin) and also spent time writing her own books.

Keller saw important parallels between her own literal blindness and deafness and symbolic blindness and deafness. She spent much of her adult life struggling to tear down barriers of ignorance and want. She worked tirelessly to help other deaf and blind people overcome the challenges of their lack of hearing and sight. She worked in politics to secure rights for women and for the underprivileged. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom four years before her death in 1968.

Helen Keller is an important figure in American history. Her story of triumph over incredible adversity is an inspiration throughout the world.

Name _____ Date _____

**Use your math skills and logic to
ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT *HELEN KELLER***

1. When was Helen Keller born?
 - a. in 1968
 - b. in the 19th century
 - c. in the 20th century
 - d. in Tuscomb, Alabama

2. When did Helen Keller become seriously ill?
 - a. She was almost six years old.
 - b. She was just over two years old.
 - c. She was less than two years old.
 - d. The story doesn't say.

3. How long was Helen "locked in darkness"?
 - a. just over four years
 - b. less than four years
 - c. six years
 - d. She was locked in darkness her whole life.

4. In what year did Anne Sullivan come to help Helen?
 - a. She came in 1886.
 - b. She came in 1882.
 - c. She came in 1968.
 - d. She came in 1880.

5. When was Helen Keller awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom?
 - a. in 1968
 - b. in 1964
 - c. in 1880
 - d. in 1882

6. How old was Helen Keller when she died?
 - a. She was about 68 years old.
 - b. She was about 64 years old.
 - c. She was about 88 years old.
 - d. She was about 80 years old.

Name _____ Date _____

**Use your comprehension skills to
ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT *HELEN KELLER***

7. Was Helen Keller deaf and blind when she was born?
 - a. She was blind, and later went deaf.
 - b. She was born hearing and seeing.
 - c. She was both deaf and blind at birth.
 - d. She was deaf, and later went blind.

8. Why, according to the story, was Helen Keller “locked in her own darkness”?
 - a. Her parents kept her in a locked room.
 - b. It was before electricity was commonly used.
 - c. People couldn't communicate with her.
 - d. She was blind.

9. Why did Anne Sullivan have a particularly difficult time with Helen?
 - a. Helen didn't know the word for water.
 - b. Helen was blind.
 - c. Helen was deaf.
 - d. Helen was wild.

10. Why is the story of Helen's first sign word significant?
 - a. It proved that deaf people could learn to communicate.
 - b. It was the beginning of Helen's education.
 - c. It showed the importance of water in daily life.
 - d. It showed that blind people could learn to talk.

11. What kind of a reader was Helen Keller?
 - a. She read a great deal in many languages.
 - b. She couldn't read at all; she was blind.
 - c. She read sometimes, and Anne Sullivan read to her daily.
 - d. She read slowly and clearly.

12. Why is Helen Keller an important figure in history?
 - a. She was the first blind person to learn to read.
 - b. She was the first deaf person to learn to speak.
 - c. She was successful against the odds.
 - d. She was born during a difficult period in American history.

ANSWERS TO *HELEN KELLER*

MATH

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. a
5. b
6. c

COMPREHENSION

7. b
8. c
9. d
10. b
11. a
12. c

WRITING

Answers should vary.