

A Teacher for Helen Keller



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Anne teaches Helen the sign for “doll”

Helen Keller was born a healthy baby in 1880, but became very sick at the age of two. The illness caused her to lose both her sight and her hearing.

As Helen grew, life became more difficult for Helen as well as for her family. Helen did not have a way to communicate with them. She couldn't understand them and they couldn't understand her. Helen got very frustrated. She had a lot of temper tantrums.

Helen's parents realized that they needed a specially trained teacher to help their daughter. They searched all over the country and found a unique woman named Anne Sullivan. Anne was a teacher for the blind in Massachusetts and was also partially blind herself.

A Teacher for Helen Keller

Anne moved to Alabama to live with Helen and her family. She became Helen's private tutor. She brought a doll with her to give to Helen. When she gave Helen the doll, she spelled the word "doll" into Helen's hand using sign language. Anne continued teaching Helen this way for some time. She would have Helen hold something in one hand while she spelled the word for that object into her other hand. Helen had a hard time understanding the meanings of the signs, but Anne was patient and did not give up.

Everything changed one day when Anne brought Helen to a waterspout. She poured water over one of Helen's hands and spelled the word "w-a-t-e-r" into the other one. Helen made the connection between the feeling of the water and the letters on her hand. She finally understood what the signs meant! She was delighted! She wanted to learn more and more.



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Anne teaches Helen how to read lips

Anne stayed with Helen for the rest of her life. She taught Helen how to read and write using Braille, a type of writing for people who can't see. Each letter of the alphabet has a different pattern of raised dots and you read Braille with your fingertips. Anne taught Helen how to speak, even though Helen couldn't hear herself. She taught her how to read people's lips by placing her fingertips over their lips as they spoke. Now Helen could understand people and they could understand her.

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Helen became an excellent student. She eventually went to college. Anne stayed with her during her classes and signed everything the teacher said into Helen's hand. Helen graduated college with honors.

Helen wrote books, starred in plays, and met presidents and celebrities. She showed the world that a person with disabilities can live an amazing, full life. She helped blind and deaf people all over the world. She showed the world how much people with disabilities can do if they have the right teacher. Thank you Anne Sullivan!

