



Helen Keller's Miracle



Mini Fact:

Helen could remember people's handshakes years after last meeting them and identify hundreds of plants by their smell.

Imagine what life would be like if you could not see or hear. Imagine you did not know any way to communicate with other people. Imagine being shut inside a confusing world with no way to ask for help.

Helen Keller lived in such a world. When she was 19 months old, she became very ill. The disease left her blind and deaf.

But in the spring of 1887, a special teacher came to work with Helen. The progress they made together came to be known as Helen Keller's "miracle."

Helen as a child

Helen Keller grew up in Tuscumbia, Alabama. She was a smart, loving child. But she also misbehaved a lot.

Her parents felt so bad that she couldn't see or hear that they didn't teach her proper behavior. Helen also acted naughty when she couldn't communicate with others.

She wandered around the table, grabbing food from other people's plates. One time she locked her mother in a cupboard. She bit and scratched people.

Anne Sullivan

When Helen was about 7 years old, Anne Sullivan came to live with and teach Helen. Sullivan knew she had to be strict with her naughty student. For example, she would not let Helen eat until Helen sat properly, with her napkin on her lap. At first Helen rebelled, fighting her teacher for hours.

Anne Sullivan took Helen to a little cottage

on the family's property so she could teach her without the family's interference. In just two weeks, Sullivan taught her much about how to behave.

However, when they returned to the family house, Helen continued to throw tantrums occasionally.

The miracle

One day, during a tantrum, Anne Sullivan made Helen come out to the yard. While she pumped water into Helen's hand, she spelled out "w-a-t-e-r" using a special hand alphabet.

And then the miracle happened. Suddenly Helen understood. She understood that what her teacher was spelling stood for actual water. She realized words had meaning.

Sullivan had been working with Helen for only a month. That day alone she learned about 30 words.

A new world

Anne Sullivan opened up Helen Keller's world when she taught Helen to communicate through the hand, or **manual**, alphabet.

A blind and deaf person can "read" words by feeling the hand of the other person. The person spells out words in the palm of the blind and deaf person's hand. It is very close to the sign-language alphabet that deaf people use to communicate by sight.



Helen, left, and Anne Sullivan in 1888.

The world opens up

Anne Sullivan taught Helen to experience nature by touch and smell. They had many of their classes outdoors. All of her life, Helen loved nature and outdoor activities.

Helen learned to speak by feeling how Sullivan's mouth moved when she spoke. She learned to read and write French, German, Greek and Latin in **Braille**. She even learned to play chess.

Throughout her life, Helen traveled, speaking and raising money for causes such as the American Foundation for the Blind, women's right to vote, peace and ending poverty. She also worked to change laws so that people with disabilities could go to school and have jobs like other people.

World travels

Between 1946 and 1957, Helen traveled to 35 countries, meeting leaders such as Winston Churchill of Great Britain and Golda Meir of Israel. She visited blinded and wounded soldiers during World War II. She met other famous people and received honorary degrees from several universities.

Helen died at her home in Connecticut in 1968 at age 87.



Braille is a form of writing where letters are formed by raised dots.

Resources



On the Web:

- braillebug.afb.org/hkmuseum.asp

At the library:

- "I Am Helen Keller" by Brad Meltzer
- "Helen Keller" by Margaret Davidson

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of Helen Keller are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



ALABAMA, ALPHABET,
ANNE, BLIND, BRAILLE,
CHESS, COMMUNICATE,
DEAF, HELEN, KELLER,
MANUAL, MIRACLE,
NATURE, NAUGHTY,
PROGRESS, SULLIVAN,
TANTRUM, TEACHER,
TRAVEL, WATER.

R	M	L	Q	W	N	A	U	G	H	T	Y	H	R	J
E	B	X	U	V	A	M	A	B	A	L	A	E	L	M
H	F	A	E	D	K	E	L	L	E	R	T	L	A	I
C	N	A	V	I	L	L	U	S	P	A	R	E	U	R
A	D	N	I	L	B	O	S	N	W	H	W	N	N	A
E	G	N	L	E	V	A	R	T	A	B	A	K	A	C
T	C	O	M	M	U	N	I	C	A	T	E	B	M	L
C	H	E	S	S	G	T	A	N	T	R	U	M	E	E
E	N	N	A	E	L	L	I	A	R	B	I	R	J	T
H	P	R	O	G	R	E	S	S	W	X	F	Y	E	V

Cook's Corner

Green Angel Hair With Black Olives

You'll need:

- 12 ounces angel hair pasta
- 2/3 cup prepared basil pesto
- 1/2 cup chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes

- 2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup sliced black olives



What to do:

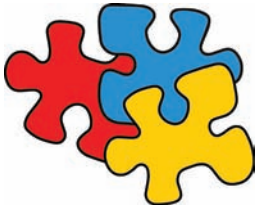
1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and transfer to a large bowl.
2. Add pesto and sun-dried tomatoes and stir to coat pasta.
3. Transfer to a serving platter and top with parmesan cheese and olives.

Adapted from "The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families" with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com).

* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of learning.



usytd _____
ebsoerv _____
eharcesr _____
ciptrcae _____

Answers: study, observe, research, practice.

Mini Jokes



George: What number does a pig dial when it needs help?
Gordon: Swine-one-one!

Eco Note



British researchers have found LED streetlights harm insects and wildlife even though they save energy. A study by the University of Exeter found the lights attracted spiders and beetles more than regular street lamps, increasing the bugs' damage to vegetation and other species. Lights dimmed by 50 percent attract fewer insects.

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Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Helen Selsdon, archivist, American Foundation for the Blind, for help with this issue.

Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html

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