

Name: _____

Great Minds: Helen Keller

by Lydia Lukidis



Life is very different when you can't see or hear. Most people can only imagine what it would be like for everything to be dark and silent all the time. Helen Keller never had to imagine it, because she lived it. She was born on June 27, 1880, in Alabama. She was very healthy and had no medical

the Blind in Boston to get advice. The director said Anne Sullivan might be able to help. Anne used to attend the school. She became mostly blind after she got sick at age five. Then she got a special surgery when she was 15 and could



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contracted scarlet fever or meningitis. She survived, but she lost her sight and hearing at the same time. Her parents were shocked.

As Helen grew up, she tried to communicate with her family and friends. It was sometimes frustrating for her because it was hard to let others know what she needed. At times, she would get angry and throw tantrums. Helen quickly realized she was different, and her parents recognized she needed help.

They called the Perkins School for

words using some special tricks. For example, let's say she wanted to teach her the word cup. Anne would place a cup in one of Helen's hands and she would press the letters C-U-P in the other hand.

Helen started learning some words this way. It was not easy and things didn't really click just yet. Helen would get very frustrated and even once knocked out one of Anne's teeth during a lesson. But then one day, Helen really started to grasp it. Anne put Helen's hand in water, then spelled out W-A-T-E-R in her other hand. Helen

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finally understood how the process worked. It was a big day for her, and she learned many words after that.

The next challenge was learning how to read. Anne taught Helen how to read braille. Braille is a special reading system for blind people. Letters are made out of little bumps on a page that you can touch. Helen caught on fast and was able to read entire books and use a typewriter by the age of 10. She was determined to persevere.

At that point, Helen was ready to

child and teenager: Perkins School, two schools for the deaf, and a school to prepare for college. When she was 20 years old, she started at Radcliffe College for women in Massachusetts. Anne went to class with her to help her. Helen graduated with



Helen Keller at age 8 with Anne Sullivan



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and sounds. She was ecstatic. This was the first time in her life she was able to do that! Eventually, she learned complete words. And with hard work and determination, she was able to say full sentences.

Helen was an excellent student. She attended four different schools as a

and her mission was to inspire others. She spent her life raising money and awareness for the rights of women and people with disabilities. She wrote many articles and books about her unique experiences. She traveled all over the world and lived until she was 87 years old.

The Braille Alphabet

●○ ○○ ○○	●○ ●○ ○○	●● ○○ ○○	●● ○● ○○	●○ ○● ○○	●● ●○ ○○	●● ●● ○○	●○ ●● ○○	○● ●○ ○○	○● ●● ○○	●○ ○○ ●○	●○ ○○ ●○	●● ○○ ●○
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
●● ○● ●○	●○ ○● ●○	●● ●○ ●○	●● ●● ●○	●○ ●○ ●○	○● ●○ ●○	○● ●○ ●○	●○ ○○ ●●	○● ●○ ●●	○● ●● ○○	●● ○○ ●●	●● ○○ ●●	●○ ○○ ●●
n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z

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1. According to the article, how did Helen Keller become blind and deaf?
 - a. She was born blind and deaf.
 - b. She was in a terrible horseback riding accident.
 - c. She became blind and deaf later in life due to old age.
 - d. She contracted a serious illness as a child.
2. Based on the information in the article, why did Helen Keller become angry and



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4. Who was Sarah Fuller?

5. Which of the following statements about Helen Keller is *not* correct?
 - a. Helen Keller learned how to read braille, use a typewriter, and even speak.
 - b. Helen Keller lived a very isolated life, surrounded only by family and a couple friends.
 - c. Helen Keller lived until the age of 87 years old.
 - d. Helen Keller became an author and a political and social activist.

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Great Minds: Helen Keller



The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. ____ braille | a. help or guidance from a knowledgeable person |
| 2. ____ ecstatic | b. a person who campaigns for social change |



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- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 6. ____ persevere | f. outbursts of anger or frustration, often by a young child |
| 7. ____ vibrations | g. encourage; motivate |
| 8. ____ grasp | h. overwhelming excitement or happiness |
| 9. ____ activist | i. tremors or quivering that occur when sound travels |
| 10. ____ inspire | j. methods or strategies for mastering a skill or task |

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Great Minds: Helen Keller

In the article, "Great Minds: Helen Keller," you learned how Helen Keller overcame challenges with the help of two women who served as her teachers and friends.

On the lines below, write about someone who taught you something valuable in your life. You could write about one of your school teachers, a coach, a music teacher, a tutor, or even one of your parents or older siblings. Describe what they taught you and why it is important to you.



**Helen Keller with
Anne Sullivan**



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ANSWER KEY

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