



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Biography Page Count: 16 Word Count: 716

Book Summary

Helen Keller is a biography about a girl who became deaf and blind at nineteen months of age. Readers learn about her relationship with her teacher, how she learned to communicate, and how she went on to defy the odds through perseverance and the help of a dedicated teacher. Photographs support the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of asking and answering questions to understand informational text
- Identify the author's purpose
- Identify and use commas in a list
- Recognize and use content vocabulary

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*Helen Keller* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- KWL chart, commas, content vocabulary worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

Vocabulary

- Content words:

Story critical: *Braille* (n.), *communicate* (v.), *disabilities* (n.), *inspiration* (n.), *senses* (n.), *survived* (v.)

Enrichment: *frustrated* (v.), *overcome* (v.), *sign language* (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Discuss what students already know about Helen Keller. Create a KWL chart on the board and hand out the KWL worksheet. As you discuss Helen Keller, fill in the first column (K) with information students know about her. Have students complete the same section of their KWL chart.
- As a group, brainstorm things students would like to know about Helen Keller and have them fill in the second column (W) of their chart. Write shared questions on the class chart as an example.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students a copy of the book. Show them the front and back covers and read the title.
- Review the title page. Talk about the information on the page (title of book, author's name).

- Direct students to the table of contents on page 3. Ask what information they can tell from looking at the section titles in the book (the book is about Helen Keller's entire life, from childhood through adulthood).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: Ask and answer questions

- Discuss how having prior knowledge about the topic, and asking and answering questions while reading, can help readers understand and remember information in a book.
- Direct students to the table of contents. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of the information in a book and how it is organized. After reviewing the section titles, model using the table of contents as a way to think of questions. Model asking questions.
Think-aloud: I can use the section titles to think of questions I'd like to have answered about Helen Keller. For example, the second section is titled "Helen's Early Years." This makes me wonder what Helen was like as a little girl. I think this is a good question. I'll write it on the chart. I'd also like to know how she became blind and deaf. I'll write that question on the chart, too.
- Ask students to share questions they have about Helen Keller, based on the covers and table of contents.
- Have students preview the rest of the book.
- Review or explain that the index contains an alphabetized list of topics in the book and page numbers that tell where to find information about each topic.
- Explain that the glossary contains a list of vocabulary words along with their definitions and page numbers indicating where the words are used.
- Invite students to use the index and glossary to help them think of questions to add to their KWL chart. Have students record their questions on their chart.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- As students preview the book, ask them to talk about what they see in the photographs. Reinforce the vocabulary words they will encounter in the text.
- Model how to apply word-attack strategies. Have students find the bold word *overcome* on page 5. Explain that students can look at the letter the word begins with and then use what they know about syllables and vowels (one vowel sound per syllable) to sound out the rest of the word. Tell students to look for a clue to the word's meaning in the sentence. Point out that clues are sometimes found in nearby sentences.
- Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to find a word's meaning. Have a volunteer read the definition for *Braille* in the glossary. Have students follow along on page 13 as you read the sentence in which the word *Braille* is found to confirm the meaning of the word.
- As necessary, preview other vocabulary, such as *disabilities*, *inspiration*, and *communicate*, in a similar fashion before students begin reading.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read the book to find answers to their questions about Helen Keller.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 9. Remind them to look for information about Helen Keller that will answer questions on their KWL chart. Encourage students who finish early to go back and reread.
- When they have finished reading, have students tell what each section is about and what they learned from their reading. Have students circle any questions on their KWL chart that were answered and add any new questions that were generated.

- Model answering a question on the KWL chart and filling in the final column (L).
Think-aloud: I wanted to know how Helen became blind and deaf, and what Helen was like as a little girl. I found out that she was able to see and hear as an infant but became ill and lost her hearing and vision when she was nineteen months old. I also found out that she did not like rules and that she was sometimes out of control. I'll write what I learned in the L column of my KWL chart. Write what you learned on the chart on the board.
- Ask students to share questions they were able to answer and have them write the answers in the L column of their chart. Record their responses on the class KWL chart as appropriate.
- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to look for answers to their KWL chart questions. Encourage them to add new questions they might have to their chart as they read.
- ✎ Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read and understand the word.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they could read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Ask students to share questions they added to their KWL chart while reading and ask them what questions were answered in the text. Discuss how keeping their questions in mind while reading helps them stay involved in the book and understand the information they read.
- Have students circle the questions on their KWL chart that were answered by reading the book.

Teach the Comprehension Skill: **Identify author's purpose**

- **Discussion:** Ask students what they think the author's purpose was for writing *Helen Keller* (to inform).
- **Introduce and model:** Write the following terms on the board: *to inform, to entertain, to persuade*. Invite students to define the terms in their own words. Encourage them to give examples of times they might have said something to inform, entertain, or persuade. Point out that writers often have one or more of these three purposes for writing.
- **Check for understanding:** Ask students to think of a book they've read recently that taught them something (science book, biography, and so on). Ask them to think of something they've read that was funny, scary, silly, or mysterious (comics, fiction books). Ask students for an example of something they've read that attempted to get them to believe or do something (an advertisement or poster). Write students' responses on the board under the appropriate category.
- **Extend the discussion:** Ask students whether they still have questions about Helen Keller that the book did not answer. Discuss resources students can use to learn more (books, encyclopedias, Internet, and so on).

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: **Commas in a list**

- Explain that when writers list a series of items in a sentence, the words need to be separated by commas. Without the commas, the sentence would be difficult to read and understand.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *Anne made Helen eat from a plate pick up after herself and dress herself*. Ask students to explain why this sentence doesn't make sense (there is no such thing as "a plate pick"). Direct students to page 8. Ask them to locate this sentence and identify the proper placement of the commas in the sentence. Ask a volunteer to come to the board and add commas in the correct places, separating the phrases *eat from a plate*, *pick up after herself*, and *dress herself*. Point out that the last phrase (*dress herself*) is joined to the list by the word *and* following the comma.

- Have students turn to page 9 and ask them to follow along as a volunteer reads aloud the last sentence in the first paragraph: *She could touch, smell, and taste.* Ask a volunteer to identify the listed words (*touch, smell, and taste*). Discuss the location of the commas within the list and the word *and*, which joins the last word to the list after the comma. Point out that the sentence makes much more sense with the correct punctuation.



Check for understanding: Write the following sentence on the board: *Anne taught Helen how to communicate with sign language how to read Braille and how to feel the lips of a speaking person.* Have students copy the sentence on the inside front cover of their book, adding commas to separate the phrases. Check individual answers for understanding.

- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [commas worksheet](#). Discuss answers aloud after students finish.

Word Work: Content vocabulary

- Discuss difficult words in the text, such as *disabilities* and *inspiration*. Ask students to share any other words from the text that they found difficult to understand or pronounce. List the words on the board and model using appropriate word-attack strategies to work out the words.
- **Check for understanding:** Provide opportunities for students to say the new vocabulary words from the book and to use the words in sentences. Refer them to the glossary or dictionary as necessary.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [content vocabulary worksheet](#). Allow time for discussion when they are finished.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, allow partners to take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends.

Extend the Reading

Writing Connection

Have students write a diary entry from the perspective of Helen, Anne, or Helen's parents that discusses their feelings about Anne's arrival as Helen's teacher. Have them write about how Anne's first day on the job went. Remind students to write from the perspective of their chosen character and to write how he or she felt about Anne's first day and how he or she may want things to change in the future.

Visit [Writing A-Z](#) for a lesson and leveled materials on narrative writing.

Social Studies Connection

Provide print and Internet resources for students to research services available for blind and/or deaf people. Ask them to find out about special technology, schools, libraries, and employment opportunities that were inspired by Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller. Have them prepare a brief report and share their findings with the class.

Skill Review

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently ask relevant questions about the topic prior to and during reading; locate answers to their questions in the text and understand that not all answers are found in one source
- thoughtfully analyze the author's purpose; discuss different writing purposes
- recognize and use commas in a list
- correctly use and understand content vocabulary

Comprehension Checks

- **Book Quiz**
- **Retelling Rubric**