



0. A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE - Story Preface

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Human beings have five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. Because of an illness she had as a baby, Helen Keller permanently lost her ability to see and hear.

Doctors did not expect the baby to live when she became extremely ill in February of 1882. Helen Keller was nineteen months old, and she had developed an intense fever.

No one knew, for sure, what was wrong. Physicians who treated her said she was afflicted with "acute congestion of the stomach and brain" or "brain fever." Doctors today say she probably had scarlet fever, or meningitis.

When she actually survived the ordeal, her parents rejoiced. Thinking their child had come through a near-death experience, without any after effects, was a short-lived reality, however. Soon Kate Keller sensed that something was very wrong with her baby daughter.

Helen no longer responded when the dinner bell summoned everyone to the dining room. It was like she didn't hear it. Her eyes no longer followed her mother's hand movements. It was like she didn't see them.

Kate Keller was right. Helen's illness had removed her sight and eliminated her hearing. And when it came time for the child to speak, she couldn't.

Years later, Helen wrote about the effects of her illness:

I was too young to realize what had happened. When I awoke and found that all was dark and still, I suppose I thought it was night, and I must have wondered why day was so long coming. Gradually, however, I got used to the silence and darkness that surrounded me and forgot that it had ever been day. (The Story of My Life, by Helen Keller, John Albert Macy and Anne Sullivan, page 421.)

Helen Keller, at age nineteen months, had completely lost two of her five senses.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-NEAR-DEATH-EXPERIENCE-Helen-Keller>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-NEAR-DEATH-EXPERIENCE-Helen-Keller>

Media Stream



A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

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