



0. ANNE SULLIVAN - Story Preface

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2. CHILD OF THE SILENT NIGHT

**3. ANNE SULLIVAN**

4. THE MIRACLE WORKER

5. HELEN KELLER - ON TOUR

6. THEY DID NOT TAKE MY SOUL

7. HELEN KELLER IN WORDS AND SOUND - PART 1

8. HELEN KELLER IN WORDS AND SOUND - PART 2

Helen Keller's life changed, dramatically, after Anne Sullivan became her teacher in 1887. This photo depicts Anne as she appeared circa 1894. Image online via American Foundation for the Blind.

As their elder daughter continued to make life difficult in the Keller household, Helen's parents wondered if they would ever really be able to help her. What resources, after all, were available to them in their small Alabama town?

Then ... in 1886, when Helen was six years old, Kate read *American Notes*, a book by Charles Dickens (author of the famous story, *A Christmas Carol*). It contained a story which intrigued her about a young blind-deaf-mute girl named Laura Bridgman (who was still alive at the time).

Laura's problems sounded remarkably familiar to Kate:

*But what a situation was hers! The darkness and the silence of the tomb were around her; no mother's smile called forth her answering smile, no father's voice taught her to imitate his sounds; - they, brothers and sisters, were but forms of matter which resisted her touch, but which differed not from the furniture of the house, save in warmth, and in the power of locomotion; and not even in these respects from the dog and the cat.* (Charles Dickens, *American Notes*, 1868 edition, page 17.)

Laura, like Helen, had been ravaged by an illness which deprived her of sight, sound and speech. Moreover, Laura had mostly lost her sense of smell. Her sense of touch, however, remained intact - just what a Massachusetts physician named Samuel Gridley Howe (husband of Julia Howe, author of "Battle Hymn of the Republic") needed to try and reach her.

Inviting Laura to become a student at the Perkins Institution for the Blind, in Boston, Dr. Howe worked with the child. Her progress was remarkable as she learned how to communicate with a fingerspelling system Howe had developed. She learned language, in other words, by touch.

Kate wondered ... could her daughter be similarly helped?

In February of 1887, the Keller family traveled to Baltimore where they met with a doctor who confirmed Helen would never hear again. However, there was some good news.

The physician sent the Kellers to Alexander Graham Bell, the telephone inventor (then living in Washington, D.C.) who had a passion for helping deaf children learn. Dr. Bell suggested that the family contact Michael Anagnos, at the Perkins Institution, to learn whether he knew of a teacher who could help Helen.

As it happened, Anne Sullivan - who had graduated from Perkins as the valedictorian of her 1886 class - was available. She, herself, had vision difficulties and was having trouble finding work because of it.

Having learned Dr. Howe's manual alphabet directly from Laura Bridgman, Anne was particularly well-equipped to work with Helen. She accepted a position with the Keller family, arriving at their home in Tuscumbia on the 3rd of March, 1887. She moved into a small cottage, near the main house, with her new pupil.

Upon her arrival, Anne used her fingers to make signs in the palms of Helen's hands. She also tried to help her student learn how to properly eat. Initially resistant to this stranger, Helen threw tremendous temper tantrums - matched by her teacher's own strong will.

Helen began to show interest in what Anne was doing. Although she didn't understand the fingerspelling, she was intrigued by the process. Whenever the child misbehaved, however, Anne withheld the signing.

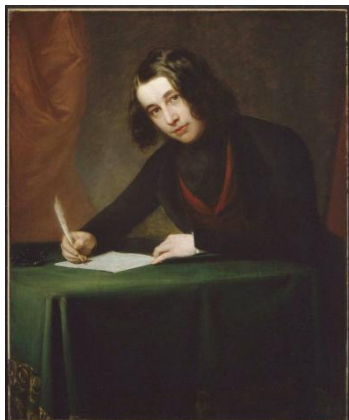
Within a few weeks, the new teacher and the non-hearing, non-seeing, non-speaking student began to bond.

On the 5th day of April, 1887, a miracle happened.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:  
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ANNE-SULLIVAN-Helen-Keller>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:  
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ANNE-SULLIVAN-Helen-Keller>

## Media Stream



### Charles Dickens - 1842

Portrait of Charles Dickens, 1842, by Francis Alexander (1800-1880).

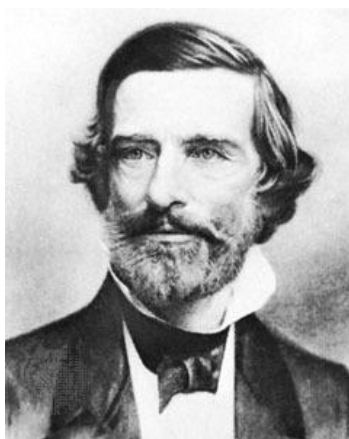
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Charles-Dickens-1842>



### Laura Bridgman with Dr. Howe

Laura Bridgman with Dr. Samuel Howe, image online courtesy Perkins for the Blind Museum.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Laura-Bridgman-with-Dr.-Howe>



### Samuel Gridley Howe

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Samuel-Gridley-Howe>



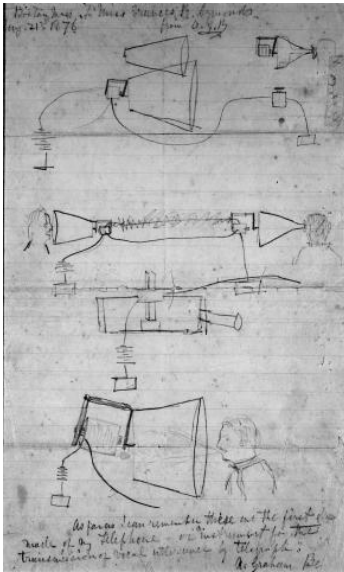
### Alexander Graham Bell - 1885 Family Portrait

Photo, Library of Congress - image LC-G9-Z4-116,794-T.

From the Gilbert H. Grosvenor Collection of Photographs of the Alexander Graham Bell Family.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Alexander-Graham-Bell-1885-Family-Portrait>



### Telephone Invention - First Drawing by Alexander Bell

Undated sketch with A.G. Bell's handwritten text added in 1876.

Box 273, "Subject File: The Telephone--Drawing of the Telephone, Bell's Original."

Alexander Graham Bell Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Telephone-Invention-First-Drawing-by-Alexander-Bell>



### Anne Sullivan - March, 1887

Anne Sullivan photo, March of 1887, online courtesy Perkins School for the Blind.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Anne-Sullivan-March-1887>



### Helen Keller - Her Cottage Home with Anne Sullivan

Photo online, courtesy the Collier Library, [University of North Alabama](http://www.collierlibrary.org) - William Lindsey McDonald Image Collection.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Helen-Keller-Her-Cottage-Home-with-Anne-Sullivan>



### Helen Keller - Age Seven

Photo online, courtesy the Collier Library, [University of North Alabama](#) - William Lindsey McDonald Image Collection.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Helen-Keller-Age-Seven>



### Julia Ward Howe - "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Image of Julia Ward Howe, from 1861, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Julia-Ward-Howe-Battle-Hymn-of-the-Republic->



### ANNE SULLIVAN

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/ANNE-SULLIVAN-Illustration->

### Breakfast Scene - "The Miracle Worker"

**Director:** Arthur Penn

**Writers:** William Gibson (play and screenplay)

Helen Keller (uncredited, *The Story of My Life*)

**Producer:** Fred Coe

**Studio:** MGM (Video & DVD)

**Run Time:** 106 minutes

**Release Date:** 28 July 1962 (U.S.)

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Breakfast-Scene-The-Miracle-Worker->

