

0. HELEN KELLER - ON TOUR - Story Preface

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Despite Helen Keller's inability to see or hear, she and Anne Sullivan (then later Polly Thomson) toured the world. Over the course of nine tours, Keller visited thirty-nine countries on five different continents. She also met with every U.S. President from Glover Cleveland to Lyndon Johnson. In this image, we see her on one of her global tours. Image online via Helen Keller International. Click on the image for a better view.

After Annie Sullivan worked a miracle at the Keller's water pump, Helen continued to make stunning progress. Soon she was learning Braille (developed by Louis Braille, a French teenager).

For a time, she studied at the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston's South End. (The school later moved to Watertown, Massachusetts.) Thereafter, she was the first blind-deaf person to enroll at an institution of higher learning and soon became the first to graduate. Her Bachelor of Arts degree was from Radcliffe College.

Throughout those amazing events, Ann Sullivan remained at Helen's side, facilitating her learning process. Helen knew her friend best from the word Sullivan first finger-spelled in her student's palm:

t-e-a-c-h-e-r

The story about this blind-deaf girl, and her teacher, became "big news" throughout the country. At first, she met dignitaries and notable people in America. Then her fame spread elsewhere.

Helen and Anne were asked to make appearances, give lectures and then participate in a vaudeville show in which they recreated the water-pump story. Traveling throughout the world, they were earning about \$2,000 a week - an impressive sum for the time.

A silent movie (Deliverance) was made about Keller's life, in 1918. She even flew to Los Angeles to participate in publicity about the film.

As she worked hard to support herself, Helen also concentrated on one of her strongest desires - to verbally speak. Anne later explained how that skill came about, and the rare recording (of Helen and Anne talking together) survives.

Along the way, Sullivan married John Macy (in May of 1905). Her new husband understood Anne's role as Helen's teacher, and the three lived together - first at their home in Wrentham (Massachusetts) and then in Forest Hills (New York). It was John Macy who introduced Helen to socialism, thereby impacting and shaping the political philosophy she expresses in Out of the Dark (published in 1913).

The strain of travel, and all the work required to help Helen, began to take a toll on Anne. In 1914, the women hired a secretary - Polly Thomson. After Anne became sick, in 1921, Polly took on a larger role. Soon she was the one who translated Helen's words to enthralled audiences.

Anne Sullivan died in 1936. Her ashes are interred at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Thereafter, Helen and Polly moved to Keller's final home - Arcan Ridge, in Westport (Connecticut).

Polly and Helen continued to tour the world, and meet famous people and dignitaries, until Polly's death in 1957. In that year, *The Miracle Worker* was first performed - as a live television play.

Four years previously, in 1953, the two women were filmed in an award-winning documentary originally called *The Unconquered*, then revised (for television viewing, in 1955) and renamed *Helen Keller: In Her Story*. In it, we meet the 74-year-old Helen Keller and hear her speak.

What we know about Helen Keller's personal thoughts, and how she viewed her life, comes to us from her

autobiography. Let's take a look at (and have a listen to) her words.

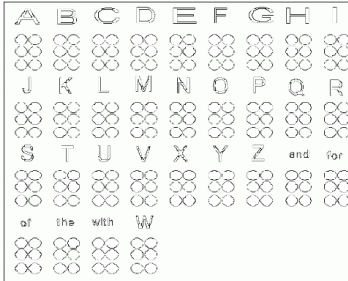
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HELEN-KELLER-ON-TOUR-Helen-Keller>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HELEN-KELLER-ON-TOUR-Helen-Keller>

Media Stream



Braille - Alphabet in English

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Braille-Alphabet-in-English>



Helen Keller - Radcliffe Student, 1900

Photo online, courtesy Helen Keller Foundation.

Quoted passage from *The Story of My Life*, 1905 edition, [pages 87-88](#). Online, courtesy Google Books.

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Helen Keller with Anne Sullivan, 1902

Photo online, courtesy [Helen Keller Archives](#), AFB (American Foundation for the Blind).

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Helen Keller - With Mark Twain

Photo online, courtesy Helen Keller Foundation.

Quoted passage from *The Story of My Life*, 1905 edition, [page 139](#).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Helen-Keller-With-Mark-Twain>



Helen Keller - With Anne Sullivan and A.G. Bell, 1894

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress - Alexander Graham Bell Family Papers, Gilbert H. Grosvenor Collection, Prints and Photographs - Reproduction Number LC-G9-Z1 137 816-A.

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Helen Keller - With John Macy and Anne Sullivan

Photo online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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Helen Keller - With Anne Sullivan and Polly Thomson

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Anne Sullivan, 1935 - Year Before Death

Photo of Anne Sullivan Macy, online courtesy Perkins School of the Blind.

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HELEN KELLER - ON TOUR

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Helen Keller - In Her Story

Clip online, courtesy [Phoenix Learning Group](#) via the Phoenix Film and Video Channel at YouTube.

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