Annie and Helen

A children's book about
Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This book for children was written so that young readers would be able to read the story of Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller. During research for the project, I read other books for children written on this subject and quickly found that there were very few which could be read by early readers. I therefore planned to write a book at the independent reading level for third grade children, the instructional level for second grade children, and the listening level for first grade children.

The book is also accessible to students with disabilities - specifically hearing impairments - whose language delays may have led to low reading levels. I wanted these children to also be able to learn the story of Helen, because she is such an excellent role model for students with similar disabilities. I knew, though, that students in the upper grades (fourth, fifth and sixth) would not want to read a book for young children. I understood the embarrassment for them to be seen by their peers reading a picture book. For this reason, I wrote the book as a chapter book, so that it does not appear juvenile.

To make the book accessible to young readers and low readers, I very carefully controlled vocabulary, sentence length, grammatical and syntactical structure. I deliberately avoided structures such as idioms which are difficult for students with language delays. In designing the layout of the book, I was careful not to break sentences in the middle of concepts or phrases. In all these ways, I wrote the book so the children with whom I enjoy working most would be able to read it and learn the story of these two remarkable women.
Note on text format

The text on the following pages (the actual book content) has been formatted to appear as it would when printed in a book sized approximately 5¾ x 9.

Blank spaces appear on some of the pages because of the way I separated phrases so as not to break up the concepts. These spaces would be filled with areas of color extending from the closest illustration.
Annie and Helen

by Kati Sinclair
Introduction

This is a story about two women.

Their names were Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller.

Annie was a teacher,

and Helen was her student.

They both lived a long time ago.
When Annie was Young

Annie Sullivan grew up in Massachusetts.
She had a disease when she was young.
The disease hurt her eyes.
She went blind.

Annie’s mother also was sick. She died when
Annie was young. Annie’s father
could not take care of her.
So he sent her to live with another family.
But the family did not like Annie.

She was not nice. She was not happy there.

They sent her to live in another place.

It was a place for poor people.

Annie did not like that place.

She asked if she could leave.

One day she did leave.

She went to Perkins School.

It was a school for blind children.
First, the other kids did not like Annie.

She was sometimes mean.

She was still very sad.

But Annie learned a lot at her new school.

She started to be happy.

She learned to be nice.

Then the boys and girls liked her more.
Annie learned to read books.

The words in the books were made with dots.

This is Braille.

Annie used her fingers to feel the dots and read the words.

Annie also learned to see again.

She had many operations to fix her eyes.

Sometimes her eyes hurt.

But she was happy she could read books with her eyes.

She did not have to use Braille now.
Annie had a special friend at Perkins.
Her name was Laura Bridgman.
She could not see or hear.
Annie talked to her with a special language.
She used her fingers to spell words in Laura's hand.
This is fingerspelling.
Deaf people use it.
Annie stayed at the school for 6 years.

Then she graduated.

She did not know where to go next.
One day she got a letter.

It was from Captain Arthur Keller.

He had a little girl.

The little girl was deaf and blind.

Captain Keller asked Annie to come and teach the girl.

The girl's name was Helen.
Helen Keller was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama.

She was a healthy baby.

She learned to walk and talk.

She liked to play and eat.

She liked to hear the dinner bell.

It rang at dinner time.

After it rang, Helen always

ran to the table to eat.
But then Helen got very sick.

She had a high fever.

Her parents thought she would die.

But she got better.

She was healthy again.
One day Helen's mother opened the curtains.
The sunlight went in Helen's eyes.
It was very bright. But Helen did not blink.
Then her mother knew that she was blind.

Later, the dinner bell rang.
Helen did not run to the table to eat.
Then her mother knew that Helen was deaf, too.
Helen's fever made her deaf and blind.
Helen's parents were very upset.
They did not know what to do.
They asked many doctors.
But the doctors could not help.
Helen would always be deaf and blind.

Helen's parents decided to find
a teacher for Helen.
They did not know who could teach her.
So they talked to Alexander Graham Bell.
He knew about schools
for deaf and blind children.
He told them to write to Perkins School.
The people at Perkins School read the letter.
They remembered when Annie was there.
They thought that Annie could be a good teacher.
So they mailed the letter to her.

Annie read the letter.
She thought about the little girl.
She read books about teaching deaf and blind children.
Finally, she decided to go and teach Helen.
Annie went to Alabama on a train.

The trip was long.

She was very tired. The dust hurt her eyes.

But she was happy too.

She wanted to meet Helen.
The blind children at Perkins School bought a doll for Helen.
Annie brought it with her on the train.
She gave it to Helen.
She taught Helen the word "doll".
She spelled it into Helen’s hand.
Helen copied Annie’s hand movements.
But she did not understand.
She could spell the word "doll".
But she did not know what the word meant.
Helen liked the doll. She wanted to keep it.

Annie tried to take the doll away.

She wanted Helen to fingerspell "doll".

But Helen did not understand. She got angry.

She threw the doll on the floor.

She kicked Annie.

Then Helen hit Annie’s face. She hit her hard.

She knocked out Annie’s tooth!

Annie thought Helen was not a very nice girl.
But Annie still wanted to teach Helen.
She wanted Helen to be happy.
So she gave her a piece of cake.
This made Helen happy.
Then Annie spelled "cake" in Helen's hand.
Helen fingerspelled the word.
But she did not understand it.
Helen wanted more cake.
Annie did not have any.
Helen got very angry.
So she locked Annie in the bedroom.
She hid the key.
She would not show anyone where she hid it.
Finally, Annie had to climb out the window.

Annie did not have a good first day
with Helen. But she did not leave.
She still wanted to teach Helen.
She knew Helen was stubborn.
But she was stubborn, too.
Annie woke up late the next morning.
She was still tired. But she was also hungry.
She went downstairs to eat breakfast.

Annie sat down at the table. She watched Helen.
Helen used her fingers to eat.
She also took food from her Mom’s plate.
Annie did not like this.
Helen tried to take a sausage from Annie’s plate.
Annie moved Helen’s hand away.
Helen tried again.
Annie moved her hand away again.
Helen got very angry.
She hit Annie.
Annie asked Helen’s parents to leave the room.

She decided to teach Helen a lesson.

She made Helen sit in a chair.

She gave Helen a spoon.

Helen threw it on the floor.

Annie made her pick it up.

Helen threw it down again.

Annie made her pick it up again.

They did this for a long time.

Finally, Helen ate with her spoon.
Then Annie gave Helen a napkin.

Helen threw it on the floor.

Annie made her pick it up.

Helen threw it down.

Annie made her pick it up.

After many hours, Helen folded the napkin.

Finally, Helen and Annie came out of the dining room.

It was almost time for lunch!
Annie knew that Helen was not a bad girl.
She was just frustrated.
She could not tell people what she felt.
So she got upset and angry.
Annie wanted to help Helen.
But she had to control her
before she could teach her.
She had an idea about how to do that.
Annie asked Helen’s parents if she could take Helen away. They did not like the idea. But then Annie explained why she wanted to take Helen away. Finally, Helen’s parents agreed. They knew it would be good for Helen. They said that Annie could take Helen for two weeks. Helen and Annie moved into a small cottage near the big house.
Annie and Helen lived together
in the cottage for 2 weeks.
Then they went back to the big house.
Helen’s parents were happy Helen was home.
They had a special dinner for her.
At dinner, Helen threw her napkin on the floor. Annie made her pick it up. Helen got angry. Helen poured the water on Annie. Annie wanted Helen to get more water. So she took Helen outside. They went to the pump for more water.
Helen pumped the water. It spilled on her hand.

Annie spelled "water" in Helen’s hand.

Helen suddenly understood.

She spelled "water". She knew what it meant.
Helen asked Annie to spell
the names for other things.

Annie spelled ground, flowers and house.

Then Helen asked for Annie's name.

Annie spelled "teacher".
Helen was a very smart girl.

She learned many new words.

She also learned to read and write.
Annie taught Helen many things.

They went for walks.

They learned about the animals and plants outside.

Helen touched everything.

A baby chicken was born in her hands.

Annie made maps in the mud so Helen could feel them.

Helen learned a lot.
Then she went to Perkins School to learn more.

She was in a classroom
with other boys and girls.

Annie helped her at school.

Helen liked the school.

She stayed there for 10 years.

Then she graduated.
Helen is a Grown-Up

Helen later went to Radcliffe college.

Annie helped her again.

Helen learned many more things.
Then she wrote a book about herself.

She called it *The Story of My Life*.

Later she wrote another book.

It was about Annie.

She called this book *Teacher*.

Helen also wrote many other books.
Annie died in 1936. Helen was very sad.

But she still did things.

She helped many blind people.

She talked to big groups of people.

She met some famous people.
Helen died in 1968.

Many people will always remember her.
Annie Sullivan
Helen Keller
8 years old

Helen Keller graduating from college
Helen Keller
80 years old
Perkins School

Ivy Green
Helen's house
Massachusetts
• = Boston

Alabama
• = Tuscumbia
The Fingerspelling 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

1
Glossary

blind - cannot see

college - school you go to after high school

deaf - cannot hear

to help a person be good

cottage - a small house

decided - made up your mind to do something

famous - well known, important

fever - the way a person's body gets hot when

they are sick

fingerspelling - using your hands in different

shapes to spell words, one shape for each letter

of the alphabet

frustrated - upset because you can't do

something

graduated - finished school

healthy - not sick; well

operation - a way doctors make people better
parents - mom and dad

pump - a machine to take water out of the ground

stubborn - trying to get what you want no matter what happens

suddenly - quickly

understand - to know in your mind
Books about Annie and Helen


Journal

The following is the journal I kept to record my thoughts in the beginning of the book writing process.

2-8-95

I have been giving the book a lot of thought, but tonight was the first time I wrote anything down. The challenge immediately became obvious! Writing the possible chapter titles really made me think about the grammatical structure of a children’s (especially a young children’s) book. I had to give a lot of thought to each chapter title, because, since most are phrases and not full sentences, the idea might be hard for kids (especially those unfamiliar with chapter books) to understand.

I have decided to aim for a 2nd grade readability level, so the book can be read to 1st graders, with 2nd graders (with needed teacher support depending on instructional reading level), and by 3rd graders. For deaf children with lower reading levels, the book will also be appropriate for higher grades (4-5, maybe 6).

I am glad I am making the book an early chapter book for a few reasons. First, there aren’t enough chapter books at this level to introduce young children to the idea. Also, if older children with lower reading levels read this book, they will be able to do so without the fear of ridicule and embarrassment that too often comes from reading "picture books" (usually the only ones easy enough) at that age. Finally, I feel that only through a chapter book can I do justice to the whole story of Helen and Annie. I knew for sure this was true as I developed a table of contents and very quickly had seven chapters!

As I worked on listing topics to be covered in each chapter, I realized the power an author has. I was thinking about Helen’s attempt to learn to speak (with her voice). This has always bothered me. Most accounts make a great big deal out of it, which implies that Helen was not "whole" or did not communicate effectively through only the manual alphabet. I don’t like this sentiment, especially if this book might be read by deaf children who don’t speak well (or like to use their speech). So, I decided to leave this part of Helen’s story out of my book. Through this decision, I realized my power as an author to influence what children know about and think of Helen. I realize that many more such decisions will need to be made in the development of the book, and I will try to keep in mind my power (and my responsibility) as I make each one.

2-9-95

I have been thinking today about how I will have to control both the length of my sentences and the number of syllables per word to reach my 2nd grade readability level goal. It is fairly easy to take a readability level of an already written work, but not nearly as easy to write to a particular level. I also know the limitations of typical readability measures such as Fry’s in that they don’t take into account grammatical structure (other than by the loose assumption that shorter sentences are less complex). I need to consider grammar as I write
(especially for my target audience of older deaf kids with low reading levels). I wish there were an easy way to measure this! I will need to review many of my class notes to find which structures are hard for kids to understand at certain ages and stages of reading development in order to write a book they can read.

I also keep thinking about how difficult it will be for me to write short sentences! By now, as you read this journal, you may have noticed my penchant for long (yet still grammatical) sentences! All of my thoughts about the difficulty level of this project do not change at all my desire to see it completed. I am excited by the challenge.

2-11-95

I thought of a way to help myself with the readability issue. I plan to read many 2nd grade level books to get a feeling for the vocabulary and sentence length. I also need to get a hold of a few good vocabulary development lists (such as Dolch's) to compare and to keep myself on track.

I was thinking some more about the content and the length of the book. I was worried that by telling primarily the story of Helen's early life, I was not doing her story justice. But then I realized there were many good reasons for not writing too much. One is sheer logic. Obviously, an early chapter book cannot be too long! Also, an overly long (and therefore thick) book might prove too overwhelming (and therefore not be read at all) for both young and low readers. Also, since children are my intended audience, I should write something they will want to read. And children love to read about other children. Finally, though all of Helen's story is interesting and worth telling (hence the many books already written!), the most dramatic and story worthy part of her life is the early years during which she learned and changed so much. Oh, I thought of another reason. I want this book to be as much about Annie as about Helen. This is easier to do by just writing of the early years, when they each played a role in the story as big as the other's. It seems unavoidable that, in a story of their later life together, Helen stands out while Annie fades into the background. Indeed, most biographies of Annie (with the possible exception of Helen's book called Teacher) seem to focus mostly on her life before Helen and the few years right after she began teaching. Okay, those are all the reasons I can think of (right now) for my content decision.

2-13-95

I found an early readers book about Helen Keller this weekend and read it. It seemed to be very simple and to just barely tell the story. But when I did a readability on it, it came out as 3rd grade! This told me two things: 1) I have my work cut out for me on this project; and 2) writing the book is important because so far the only books for young readers about these remarkable women don't tell us much! The book I found was also very "Helen focused".

2-16-95

I wrote Chapter 1 today. It really was not quite as difficult as I had previously thought it might be. I think this may be because I have done so much research and reading
about Annie and Helen already, and now I am ready to share all I know. Well not all ... I have to leave something out!

I was still worried, though, that when Joan read it she would find a lot of hard language structures I hadn't even realized I put in there. But it wasn't too bad (although I do have a fondness for passive!)

After this date, I became more involved in the actual writing of the book and stopped keeping the journal.
Possible illustration ideas

I have listed here, by page, the ideas I have for what illustrations could be added to this work at a later time. Although this is not typical for a chapter book, I have included a picture for every page because of the age child I want to read the book. The phrase "page 1" refers to the first page of a chapter, not the page number in the entire book. This continues for page 2, page 3, etc.

Introduction page - picture of Annie and Helen as adults, sitting close together and talking

When Annie was Young

- page 1 - Annie playing in a dirty looking area
- page 2 - Annie walking up to Perkins School
- page 3 - Annie in a classroom
- page 4 - Annie in a hospital bed, bandages on her eyes
- page 5 - Annie sitting with Laura Bridgman, spelling to her
- page 6 - Annie with a diploma, in a white dress with a pink sash (this is what Annie really wore to graduate)
- page 7 - a letter in a hand (as if viewed from Annie’s point of view as she reads it)

Helen is Sick

- page 1 - Helen playing in a yard with a bell in the background
- page 2 - people looking down into a crib, worried faces (picture would be from Helen’s point of view in the crib)
- page 3 - Helen sitting up in crib, sunlight streaming through a window onto her face
- page 4 - a view over Helen’s father’s shoulder of a letter in progress on a desk (the same letter we saw at the end of chapter 1)
- page 5 - Annie sitting at a table in a library, studying a book

Annie Comes to Helen

- page 1 - Annie sitting on a train looking tired and dirty and with red eyes
- page 2 - Helen holding a doll, Annie spelling into her hand, a blank look on Helen’s face
- page 3 - a broken doll (smashed ceramic head) on the floor
- page 4 - Helen holding cake in one hand, fingerspelling a "c" with the other, blank look on her face
- page 5 - Annie climbing out of a window onto a ladder
Helen and Annie Live Together

page 1 - Annie sitting at a table, Helen standing next to her, reaching to put her hand in Annie's food
page 2 - Annie holding Helen down in a chair, forcing a spoon into her hand
page 3 - Helen throwing a napkin onto the floor
page 4 - Helen sitting outside, looking sad and frustrated, people standing a distance from her, talking
page 5 - Annie and Helen walking up the steps of a small cottage, Annie holding her suitcase

Water

page 1 - Helen sitting at a festively decorated table
page 2 - Helen throwing water on Annie
page 3 - Helen holding a jug under the pump, water running onto her hand, Annie spelling into her other hand, look of sudden understanding on Helen's face
page 4 - Helen and Annie standing together outside, Annie spelling teacher into Helen's hand

Helen Learns and Grows

page 1 - Helen sitting reading a book with her fingers
page 2 - a chicken hatching out of an egg in hands
page 3 - Helen sitting with other blind children in a classroom

Helen is a Grown-Up

page 1 - Helen sitting in a college classroom, Annie sitting next to her, spelling into her hand
page 2 - Helen at a typewriter, typing a book
page 3 - Helen standing on a stage at a podium, speaking
page 4 - a profile of Helen at approximately age 20, holding a flower (would be based on a photograph)
A Note on the use of photocopies

Pictures shown in the information section of the book were photocopied from various sources. Permission was obtained from the Bracken Library Copyright Clearance Office as this work was for educational purposes and not to be published. All sources from which photographs were taken are cited in the bibliography.
Bibliography


