



# More Miracles for Helen Keller

**I**magine the most famous person you know. Michael Jordan. Britney Spears. Prince William. Now think of this: Not one of them is as famous as Helen Keller was in her day.

Back in the late 1800s, nobody believed that blind or deaf people could lead normal lives. Most were sent away from their homes. They lived in bleak schools that were more like prisons than places to learn and grow. Few people believed that a person who was both blind and deaf could ever learn to communicate. But Annie Sullivan believed she could teach 7-year-old Helen Keller language.

When Annie first met Helen in 1887, Helen was wild and angry. She spoke by grunting and screaming. Nobody, not even Helen's parents, believed Annie would succeed. And when she did succeed, news of this miracle spread far.

Helen often said that she had spent her early childhood in a "dungeon of silence" and loneliness. Freed from this dungeon by Annie, Helen blossomed. By the age of 10, Helen was able to write and read Braille—an alphabet system based on raised dots that people can feel on a page. In addition to English, Helen also learned French and Greek. She even learned to talk clearly enough so that Annie could understand her.

People all over the country wanted to witness Helen's miracle themselves. Writer Mark Twain, inventor Alexander Graham Bell, and President Grover Cleveland were just a few of the people who met with young Helen. When she got older, she went to Radcliffe College, the most selective women's college in the country. Annie went to all of Helen's lectures with her, and translated them into sign language. Helen graduated with honors.

She became an author, writing 13 books and hundreds of articles. She and Annie traveled around the world. She learned to ride a horse and a bike. When she died, just before her 88th birthday, she had become one of America's great heroes.

"Life," Helen once said, "is either a daring adventure or nothing."

By Lauren Tarshis, Editor, *Storyworks*  
Reprinted from *Storyworks*, October 2000

