

# Who Can Be a Hero?

## Helen Keller, Annie Sullivan, and Discovering Strength of Character

Kathleen Dunlevy Morin and Rachel Oestreicher Bernheim

*A STUDY OF HEROES: Making a Difference Using Your Heart, Intellect, and Talents* is a program originally developed in diverse school communities. Public, independent, parochial, and private schools (K-12) in High Point, North Carolina, New York City, and suburban Long Island responded wholeheartedly to our call for volunteers to participate in the grassroots development of this program. Teachers, administrators, parents, students, guidance counselors, school secretaries, custodians, and other staff were among those who had direct input into the design and content of this instructional resource.

Students learn to distinguish between the concepts of hero and celebrity and to discover the real heroes in their own families, schools, communities, and most importantly—within themselves. This program was designed to complement mandated curricula and can be used to address national and state curriculum standards. Thirty units offer teachers rich content, engaging activities, teachable artwork, and most of all the flexibility to easily integrate these resources into their individual instructional settings.

Students explore the tradition of heroes drawn from diverse periods of history, ethnicities, and areas of accomplishment. This multicultural, interdisciplinary program (now K-adult) integrates social studies and language arts with character education. It fosters service-learning, critical-thinking skills and conflict-resolution strategies; moreover, it encourages intergenerational family and community involvement.<sup>1</sup>

We wish to share a selection of materials from one of our units of study: “Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan: The Miracle and the Teacher.” The 22 hero-profile units follow a similar format, offering biographies at three readability levels and a rich assortment of related activities. Eight companion units present creative resources to further develop “the basics” while building good character. We encourage teachers to review all handouts in this article and then select the materials that most appropriately meet their own classroom environment, teaching style, and students’ abilities. Infusing the topic of heroes into existing curricula, while addressing an array of standards, can be easy and enjoyable.

### Selecting Handouts

This article includes materials from all three levels. We only include Level I and II biographies due to the confines of space. The Level III biography is extensive and serves two purposes—background reading for teachers and reading for upper level students. All levels are presented in a non-childish tone, so that they appeal to a wide range of audiences: for example, second grade students; middle school English language learners; or adults who are learning to read. Today, because of its adaptability, *A Study of Heroes* is finding wide application: in schools (K-12+, from traditional to gifted, ESL, and special education classes) in 48 states and 3 foreign countries; after-school programs; counseling sessions; foster-care settings; camps; juvenile offender facilities; and adult prison classrooms.

#### Handout 1

“A Contextual Timeline of World Events.” The need for this non-traditional timeline was sparked when a fifth grade student asked, “Did Abraham Lincoln fax the Gettysburg Address to the battlefield?” Instantly, we realized that students need to place the featured individual within the curricular themes of social studies.<sup>2</sup> The entries in this timeline are not meant to be comprehensive, they are complemented by contextual timelines in all 22 hero profile units. The timelines provide students with a glimpse into and a feeling for the pace of history over the course of a single generation—in this case the lifetimes of Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller.

#### Handout 2

Reading Level II Biography.<sup>3</sup> This middle-

### **A Study of Heroes contains the following units:**

- ▶ Getting Started: Evaluating Personal Perspectives on Heroes
- ▶ Heroic Character Traits from A to Z
- ▶ Raoul Wallenberg
- ▶ Harriet Tubman
- ▶ Mahatma Gandhi
- ▶ Eleanor Roosevelt
- ▶ Rosa Parks
- ▶ The Dali Lama
- ▶ Anwar Sadat
- ▶ Mother Teresa
- ▶ Abraham Lincoln
- ▶ Pope John XXIII
- ▶ Chai Ling
- ▶ Roberto Clemente
- ▶ Martin Luther King, Jr.
- ▶ Andrei Sakharov
- ▶ Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan
- ▶ James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner
- ▶ Jacobo Timerman
- ▶ Cesar Chavez
- ▶ Albert Schweitzer
- ▶ Arthur Ashe
- ▶ Chief Wilma Mankiller
- ▶ Thomas Jefferson
- ▶ A Hero of Your Choice
- ▶ A National Tradition: Heroes, Holidays & Hoopla
- ▶ Heroes: Generation to Generation
- ▶ Educators as Heroes
- ▶ Researching Heroes: Ethical Strategies, Tools & Technology
- ▶ The Hero Within Yourself

## A Timeless Hero

*A Study of Heroes* was developed by The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States ([www.raoulwallenberg.org](http://www.raoulwallenberg.org)), a nonprofit educational organization, founded in 1981 to educate the American public about the nonviolent heroism and humanitarianism of Raoul Wallenberg, a Christian who is credited with saving the lives of at least 100,000 Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust. On January 17, 1945, the 32-year-old Wallenberg, a voluntary Swedish diplomat, was arrested by Soviet troops in the city of Budapest. He was taken to Moscow and has never again been seen as a free man. His ultimate fate still remains a mystery. *A Study of Heroes* is our living monument to the third Honorary Citizen of the United States, Raoul Wallenberg.

level, one-page, multi-purpose biography is designed for teachers when time and/or attention-spans are short. It can be used to develop and assess student comprehension, artistic interpretation, and character development through activities such as: designing a book jacket; narrating an impromptu dramatic enactment; creating an interpretive art form; stimulating discussion in advisory or counseling sessions; etc. It is also an effective tool for empowering students and building self-esteem. Before telling the students about whom they will study, engage them in a discussion posed by questions in the first paragraph. If students answer “yes” to most questions, they will feel a commonality with the featured hero and see that they also have the potential to make a positive difference.

### Handout 3

Level II “Let’s Discuss.” Pick and choose elements of this resource, which is based upon the Level II Biography, to teach vocabulary; grammar; geography; career choices, as well as discussion and research skills. After each biography (Levels I, II, III) in any unit, there are “Let’s Discuss” activity sheets that offer teachers a myriad of opportunities to develop and assess, not only the basics, but also critical-thinking, problem-solving, and research skills.

### Handout 4

A Level II Activity “Sign Language and Braille.” This handout provides creative activities for students to learn and apply the Braille and Sign Language alphabets in meaningful and creative ways.

### Handout 5

“The Manual Alphabet” and “Braille Code” is a one-page reference sheet that can be used with Handout 4 or with other

activities.

### Handout 6

Level I Biography “Meet Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan.” This two-part biography provides a springboard for teachers to tell a story or lead students in round-robin or independent reading. Students analyze the illustrative content of the teachable art presented in the Level I biography. In this case, they discuss the fashions of the period; teacher-student roles; translation of the written word through Braille; and comprehension of the spoken word through the sensation of sound vibrations.

### Handout 7

Level I “Let’s Discuss.” The elements of this resource extend and enrich the learning experiences based on the Level I biography. Teachers can tailor the content and activities to their students’ strengths, needs, and interests. (This is a two-page handout).

### Handout 8

Level I “The Student and The Teacher.” Students are to imagine themselves with Helen Keller’s challenges and explore how this would affect a student-teacher relationship. Referring to the lead quotes from both Helen and Annie, discuss Helen’s perceptions of her “world” and analyze the physical, psychological, pedagogical challenges and rewards that faced Annie and Helen.

### Handout 9

Level I “Build a Monument for Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan.” This hands-on activity can be used as the foundation for creating a symbolic honor for a hero, a mobile, a multifaceted construction, place cards for a family dinner or Heroes Banquet; etc.

### Handout 10

Levels I, II, III “Heroes-In-Training: Meeting the Challenge Using Your Heart, Intellect, and Talents.” These problem-solving scenarios present challenging contemporary social situations drawn from all three levels in *A Study of Heroes*. In cooperative learning groups, students consider how they might react. What are possible ways to resolve the problem or conflict without resorting to violence? How would the featured hero approach the situation?

## Teacher Preparation

From the outset of the development of *A Study of Heroes*, teachers asked that we not give students any definition of hero. They preferred that students grapple with the concept of hero and come up with their own definitions, which evolve over time. Students are asked to nominate heroes; then defend their choices through comparing, contrasting, and debating; thereby, distinguishing between hero and celebrity—two concepts that are different, but not always mutually exclusive.

Using these resources, teachers creatively develop and assess cognitive and affective changes in their students. Strategies might include: storytelling; role-playing; designing a heroes quilt; debating; puppeteering; honoring local heroes; sending letters or packages to our nation’s troops; preparing Heroes Banquets; analyzing primary source materials; creating a play or musical; researching on the internet; planting a “Heroes Garden;” constructing a Heroes website for the school; holding a Heroes Fair; and resolving local conflicts by applying the wisdom of heroes they have studied. 🌐

## Notes

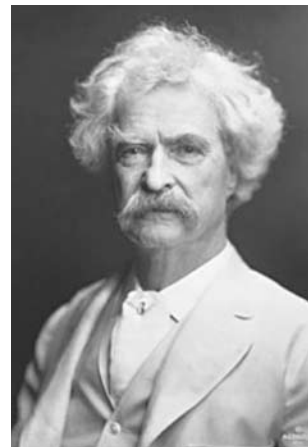
1. “Evaluation and Research Study” by Philliber Research Associates, 16 Main Street, Accord, NY 12404, tel. 845-626-2126. Their 2004 study finds that *A Study of Heroes* has a positive impact on both students and staff in a variety of settings.
2. National Council for the Social Studies, *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, Expectations of Excellence* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994).
3. Biographies written by Adele Ahronheim.

**Rachel Oestreicher Bernheim** is chairman, and **Kathleen Dunlevy Morin** is director of education, of the *The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of The United States*.

# Contextual Timeline 1866 – 1968

During the lifetimes of Helen Keller (1880 - 1968) and Annie Sullivan (1866 – 1936), the following events, inventions, and discoveries occurred.

- 1866 A civil rights act granted citizenship to all people born in the United States with the exception of Native Americans. It passed over the veto of President Andrew Johnson.
- 1868 Louis Braille’s system of writing for the blind wins popular attention.
- 1870 The Central Pacific Railroad (from the west) and the Union Pacific Railroad (from the east) met at Promontory Point in Utah, forming the first transcontinental railroad.
- 1874 The Philadelphia Zoological Gardens opened. It was the first public zoo in the United States.
- 1876 Alexander Graham Bell’s experimental telephone is successful.
- 1878 The bicycle was commercially manufactured in the United States.
- 1879 An act of Congress permitted women attorneys to argue cases before the United States Supreme Court.
- 1880 House paint was manufactured for the first time.
- 1882 Handball became popular in the United States.
- 1883 A system of standard time was adopted.
- 1884 The first Labor Day was celebrated in America.
- 1885 The Washington Monument was dedicated.
- 1886 The Statue of Liberty was unveiled.
- 1886 A yellow fever epidemic breaks out in the United States.
- 1888 The political slogan “As Maine goes so goes the nation” became popular.
- 1890 Sitting Bull, chief of the Sioux Indians, was killed.
- 1893 Women’s suffrage was adopted in Colorado.
- 1895 “America the Beautiful” was published.
- 1897 The first Boston marathon was run.
- 1900 The International Ladies Garment Workers Union was established.
- 1903 The University of Puerto Rico opened.
- 1906 Voice and music were broadcast by radio.
- 1909 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established.
- 1910 Mark Twain, author of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, died.
- 1915 A transcontinental telephone call was made, connecting people in New York City and San Francisco.
- 1917 President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to declare war against Germany. The United States entered World War I.
- 1918 The U.S. Congress passed a compulsory school attendance law.

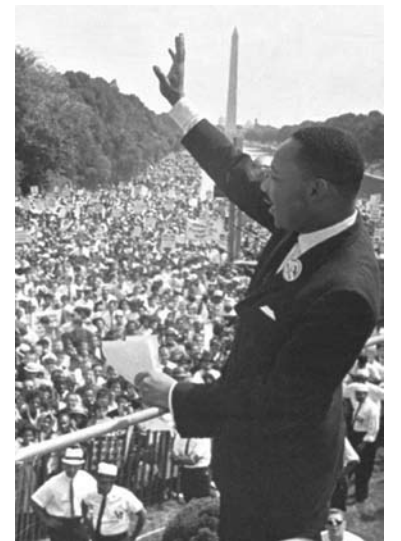




- 1922** The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, declaring women's suffrage, was ratified.
- 1925** America's first female governor, Nellie Ross, was inaugurated in the State of Wyoming.
- 1926** *Winnie the Pooh* was published by A. A. Milne.
- 1928** Herbert Hoover was elected U.S. president.
- 1929** The stock market collapsed and the Great Depression began.
- 1934** Nylon was produced.
- 1935** Alcoholics Anonymous was established.
- 1936** *Gone With the Wind* was published by Margaret Mitchell.
- 1939** Hitler invaded Poland on September 1 after having annexed Austria and conquered Czechoslovakia in 1938.
- 1940** Franklin D. Roosevelt was reelected president of the United States.
- 1941** The Japanese attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on December 7. Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Germany and Japan.
- 1943** The antibiotic penicillin was mass produced. Charles Drew perfected the modern blood bank.
- 1945** United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. World War II ended.
- 1949** The permanent headquarters of the United Nations was dedicated in New York City.



- 1953** The New York Yankees defeated the Brooklyn Dodgers four games to three in the 49th World Series.
- 1957** Teenagers across the nation watch "American Bandstand" on television. Dick Clark was the program's host.
- 1960** John F. Kennedy was elected president.
- 1961** U.S. military troops became the largest foreign presence in South Vietnam.
- 1962** IBM introduced a disk storage system for computer data.
- 1963** Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered the "I Have a Dream" speech at a protest march in Washington, D.C.
- 1964** Head Start was established as an educational program for preschool children from disadvantaged homes.
- 1965** Soft contact lenses were developed.
- 1966** The first of the U.S. Endangered Species Acts restricted trade of endangered animals and their products.
- 1968** Quartz watches (a new invention) were marketed for as much as \$1,000.



# Title:

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**Directions to Students**

After reading the following article, write a Title for it on the line above. Fold the page in half, with the text facing in. You now have a book jacket. Design a front cover for the book. On the back cover, write a letter to a local organization for the blind and/or deaf. Write in your letter about how you have been affected by the story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Then share the story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan with others at home and in your neighborhood.

Do you believe in self-discipline, persistence, and a “can-do” attitude? Do you believe in setting high and realistic standards for yourself and others? Do you love challenges? Do you have an insatiable curiosity? Do you believe in yourself? Would you like to help people who have lost hope, who face the hardships of illness and poverty, or who feel limited by disabilities? Do you believe that it is important to educate the public to the needs of those who face physical challenges?

If you have answered “yes” to most of these questions, then you may one day walk in the shoes of Helen Keller or Annie Sullivan.

ANNIE SULLIVAN was born on April 14, 1866, in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts. She was the daughter of poor Irish immigrants. When Annie was five, she contracted trachoma, a disease that left her partially blind. Her childhood was tragic. Her father beat her. Her mother died when she was only nine years old. She was sent with one of her brothers to the state poorhouse. Soon her beloved brother died, and Annie felt completely alone in the world.

A kind priest at the poorhouse read to Annie and spent time talking with her. With his help, Annie became determined to be educated and to learn to read. In 1880, Annie was sent to be educated at the Perkins Institution for the Blind.

Annie was an angry student who talked back to her teachers when circumstances made her feel ashamed or insecure. But as Annie’s confidence grew, her behavior and performance improved. At age 19, Annie Sullivan was recommended to be the teacher for a blind and deaf child in Tuscumbia, Alabama. The child was Helen Keller.

HELEN KELLER had been born a healthy baby in 1880 to a “well-to-do” and caring family. She was learning how to mimic sounds and facial expressions at six months of age. When she

was 19 months old, Helen fell ill with “congestion of the brain and stomach.” She almost died. Within a short time, the illness left Helen blind and deaf. Helen was thrown into a confusing and frightening world of darkness and silence. She tried to communicate through gestures and sounds, but no one understood her. Helen expressed her frustrations through violent tantrums. Only Annie Sullivan understood her. Annie wanted to reach Helen to expose the bright, spirited child within her. Over time Annie gave Helen hope.

Through determined repetition, Annie Sullivan taught Helen Keller the names of objects. She did this by pressing her fingers into the palms of Helen’s hands. The different signs represented letters. The letters spelled the names of the objects. Annie would press. Then Helen would feel the object. Finally, Helen realized what Annie was doing. A whole new world opened up for Helen. She understood language!

Helen was a quick and eager learner. Next, she learned to read and write in Braille. Around age ten, she wanted to learn to speak. Sarah Fuller, a principal of a school for the deaf, taught Helen to feel her larynx to learn the vibrations associated with sounds. Then she would feel her own throat and try to imitate the vibrations by making the correct sounds.

Helen Keller graduated with honors from Radcliffe College in Boston in 1904. Annie attended classes with her, translating the lectures and lessons through the manual alphabet. In her adult life, Helen Keller wrote many books. She tried to educate people around the world about the special needs of the blind, deaf, and disabled, as well as those struggling to improve their lives in the face of poverty.

Annie Sullivan, who had selflessly given so much to her student, died in 1936 in Queens, New York. Helen Keller died in 1968 in Westport, Connecticut. Their story lives on in the work, hearts, and hopes of many.

# Let's Discuss...

## Vocabulary

Define the following terms. Identify the part of speech in which each is used in Handout 2.

ashamed	disabilities	lectures	self-discipline
autobiographical	to educate the public	to mimic	selflessly
blind	environment	“miracles”	shame
bright	ethnicities	nourishing	speaking engagements
“can-do” attitude	frustrations	nurturing	spirited
challenge	gestures	optimistic	standards
circumstances	to graduate with honors	persistence	status
communication	hopes	physical challenge	tantrums
confidence	immigrants	poorhouse	ultimate
curiosity	insatiable	poverty	vibrations
deaf	insecure	pursuit	“well-to-do”
devotion	larynx	realistic	

## Geographic Locations

Locate the following places on a map. Explain how they relate to Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Then locate where you live.

- Boston, Massachusetts
- Feeding Hills, Massachusetts (now called Agawam)
- Ireland
- Queens, New York City
- Tuscumbia, Alabama
- Westport, Connecticut

## People You Should Know

Identify each of the following people and tell how they affected the lives and/or times of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Research those whom you do not know.

- Alexander Graham Bell
- Louis Braille
- Sarah Fuller
- Samuel Gridley Howe
- Polly Thomson

## Careers

Discuss with your instructor and classmates the following careers. (With your instructor, visit with or invite to your classroom people working in these areas.)

- teacher for people with vision or hearing impairments
- translator/signer
- nurse
- social worker
- therapist
- surgeon
- inventor

## Discussion Questions

1. What do you think a “miracle” is? Do you believe in “miracles?” Why do you think Annie Sullivan has been called a “miracle worker?”
2. What is Braille? How is it used? Why are there Braille numbers in elevators today?
3. What is your opinion of the quality of Helen and Annie’s relationship? Would you like to be such a friend to another person? Why or why not?
4. Do you think Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan are both heroes? Why or why not?

## Research Questions

1. Research the history of Braille. How is it used today? Where do you see it in public places? What other resources are there today for people who are blind and deaf?
2. What is the Pulitzer Prize? When and why is it awarded? Research the history of this award. Read the play *The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson, which is based on the lives of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Why do you think this play was awarded a Pulitzer Prize?

“All about me may be silence and darkness, yet within me, in the spirit, is music and brightness, and color flashes through all my thoughts.” — *Helen Keller*

# Sign Language and Braille

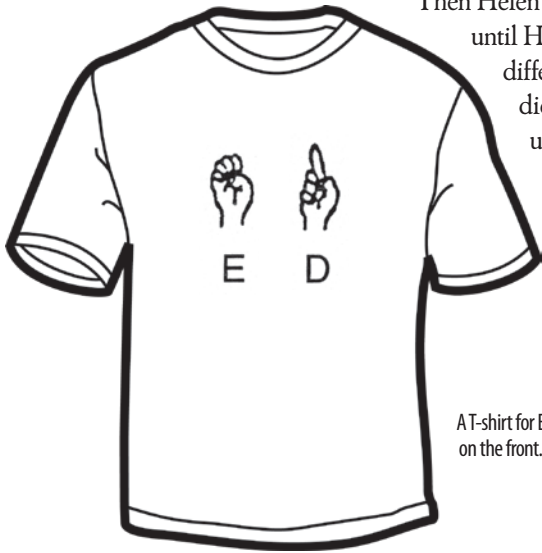
## Sign Language

Annie Sullivan used a form of sign language called the manual alphabet to help Helen Keller learn the names for objects. With her fingers, Annie would press into the palm of Helen's hand different symbols to spell out letters. The letters would spell a word—the name of an object.

Then Helen would feel and sense the nature of the object being spelled. This process would be repeated until Helen made the association between the sequence of symbols and the object. There are many different types of sign language. The type Helen learned was particularly challenging because she did not have the sense of sight, as most deaf people who use sign language do. She had to rely upon her sense of touch.

### Activities

Study the manual alphabet on Handout 5. Practice using this form of sign language. Spell the names of objects in your classroom, as well as the names of your classmates. Then make a design for the front of a T-shirt showing the symbols for your name.



A T-shirt for Ed: manual alphabet letters on the front...

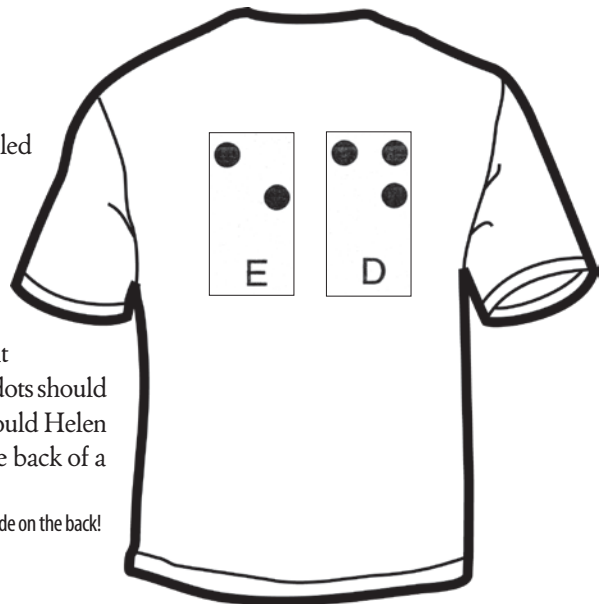
## Braille

Helen Keller also learned to read and write using another form of language, called Braille. Study the Braille code on Handout 5.

### Activity

Write a one-sentence message you would send to Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan if they were alive today. Then write it in Braille. First, draw the dot pattern for all the letters in the words of the message. Then poke a small, blunt object (like a dull pencil) up through the back of the paper under each dot. The dots should raise up on the front of the paper. Now feel the dots with your eyes closed. Would Helen Keller or Annie Sullivan be able to read your message? Make a design for the back of a T-shirt using a Braille pattern.

...and Braille code on the back!



## Enrichment

Research other forms of sign language and ways of communicating by those who are deaf or blind.

## Sharing

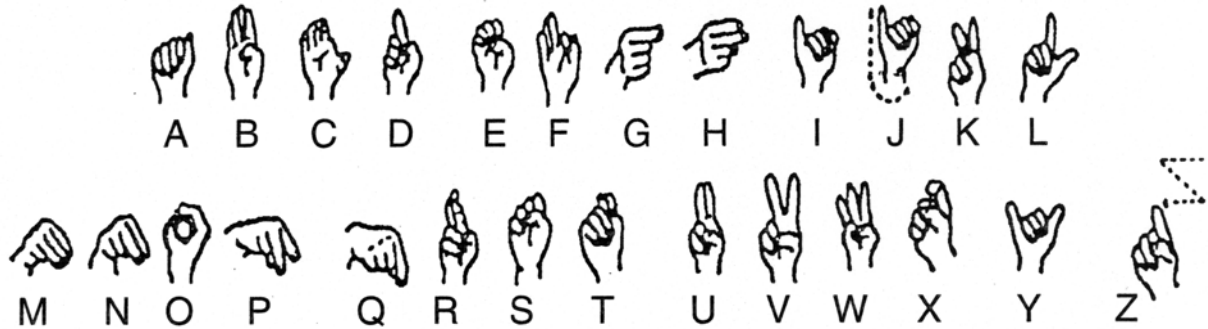
Share the story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan with others whom you know. Tell them about the special challenges Helen faced because she was both deaf and blind. Share how Annie helped Helen to meet these challenges. Discuss whether or not Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan are each heroes.

## Note

*The T-shirt design activity was created by Todd Johnson, a high school student in New York who does volunteer work with deaf students.*

**The Manual Alphabet**

Many words have their own signs. But all words can be signed by finger-spelling using the manual alphabet.



**Braille Code**

Blind people learn to read by feeling raised dots with the tips of their fingers. Each group of dots stands for a letter. This is called Braille.




# Meet Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan

Helen Keller was born in 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Her family was “well-to-do.” Her parents loved their healthy and happy baby. Helen began to mimic sounds she heard and faces people made when she was six months old. When she was one year old, she began to walk. Helen was a quick learner. But when she was 19 months old, Helen fell ill. She almost died.

When Helen recovered, she could no longer hear. Pretty soon, she lost her sight. She lived in a world of darkness and silence. She tried very hard to communicate with others. She would point. She would make gestures. She would make sounds. But people did not understand her. Helen became very frustrated. Soon she began to throw tantrums and scream for attention. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell befriended Helen and her family. He helped them to find a teacher.

Helen’s parents hired a teacher to help her. The teacher was Annie Sullivan. Annie was only 19 years old, but she was a powerful teacher. She demanded a lot from her students. She had unlimited patience. Helen was confused at first. Her lessons did not make sense. But Annie demanded that Helen work hard and not give up. To teach Helen, Annie would press her fingers into Helen’s palm. The different ways of pressing meant different letters. Annie was spelling out words to name the objects in Helen’s life. After much repetition, Helen learned that every object had a special name. She learned that the names of objects could be spelled out by hand gestures. A whole new world opened up for Helen.

Helen Keller also learned how to read and write in Braille. Braille is a code of pressed dots on paper that spell out words and numbers. (Sometimes you will see Braille next to the floor numbers on elevators today.) At age ten, Helen begged to learn how to speak. She used her sense of touch to feel the vibrations

in the larynx of Annie’s neck as Annie said different words. Helen would then feel her own larynx. She would try to imitate the sounds until the vibrations matched those she had felt on Annie’s neck.

Helen went to college in Boston. She was an excellent student. With the help of Annie, Helen wrote essays and gave speeches all over the world. She wanted others to know about the challenges faced by the deaf and blind. She wanted people to understand the full potential of the deaf and blind. She encouraged everyone she met to help others to reach their full potential. She also visited soldiers in hospitals during World War II. She wanted to help the poor, the ill, and those who had lost hope due to hardships and disabilities.

After nearly 50 years with Helen, Annie Sullivan died in 1936. After her death, Helen was helped by her secretary, Polly Thomson. Helen Keller lived until 1968. She died in Westport, Connecticut.



## Activity

Imagine that you met Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller when they were working together. What would you want to ask them? List your questions on another sheet of paper. What do you think their answers would be? With a classmate, role-play an activity between these two women. Then describe to the class what the women are doing, thinking, and feeling. Discuss what heroic traits, if any, you think they possessed.

## Sharing

Share the story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan with others whom you know. Ask them if they think that Helen and Annie are both heroes, and why. Tell them what you think.

# Let's Discuss Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan

## Vocabulary

Discuss the definitions of the following words and phrases

attention	essays	loss of hope	secretary
audience	fears	to make sense of	sight
blind	fell ill	to mimic	speech
challenges	gestures	object	tantrums
code	hardship	palm	traits
college	healthy	patience	to translate
to communicate	hopes	potential	vibrations
deaf	to imagine	poverty	“well-to-do”
disabilities	to label	reacting	
dreams	larynx	repetition	

## Geographic Locations

Locate the following places on a map. Then locate where you live.

- Tuscumbia, Alabama
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Westport, Connecticut



Continued on next page

**People You Should Know**

With your teacher, identify each of the following people and tell how they affected the lives and/or times of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Research those whom you do not know.

- Louis Braille
  - Polly Thomson
  - Alexander Graham Bell
- 

**Careers**

Discuss with your teacher and classmates the following careers. (With your teacher, visit with or invite to your classroom people working in these areas.)

- teacher for people with vision or hearing impairments
  - physician
  - translator/signer
  - nurse
  - inventor
- 

**Discussion Questions**

1. When did Helen Keller become blind and deaf? What caused her to lose her sight and hearing?
2. How did Annie Sullivan come into Helen's life? What did she do to help Helen?
3. Why is it important for everyone to know that people with disabilities can and should reach their full potential?
4. How did Annie teach Helen to learn the names of objects around her?
5. How did Helen learn to speak?
6. Were self-discipline and patience important to Helen's development? How do you think she learned self-discipline and patience? Did Helen give up when learning was difficult for her?
7. Do you think Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan are heroes? If so, why? If not, why not?\*

“It is by battling with the circumstances, temptations, and failures of the world that the individual reaches his [or her] highest possibilities.”

—Annie Sullivan

“All about me may be silence and darkness, yet within me, in the spirit, is music and brightness, and color flashed through all my thoughts.”

—Helen Keller

\* Note: We use the word “hero” as a gender-neutral description. The term “heroine” appears in many historical documents.

# The Student and the Teacher

## Lead Quotes

“All about me may be silence and darkness, yet within me, in the spirit, is music and brightness, and color flashes through all my thoughts.”  
—*Helen Keller*

“It is by battling with the circumstances, temptations, and failures of the world that the individual reaches his [or her] highest possibilities.”  
—*Annie Sullivan*

## Directions

To get an idea of what Helen Keller’s world of darkness and silence must have been like, close your eyes tightly. Then open your eyes and cover your ears tightly. Next, do both at once and imagine that you are blind and deaf. In the space below, list five words that describe how you would feel if you lived in darkness and silence.

## Activity

How I would feel in a world of darkness and silence?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

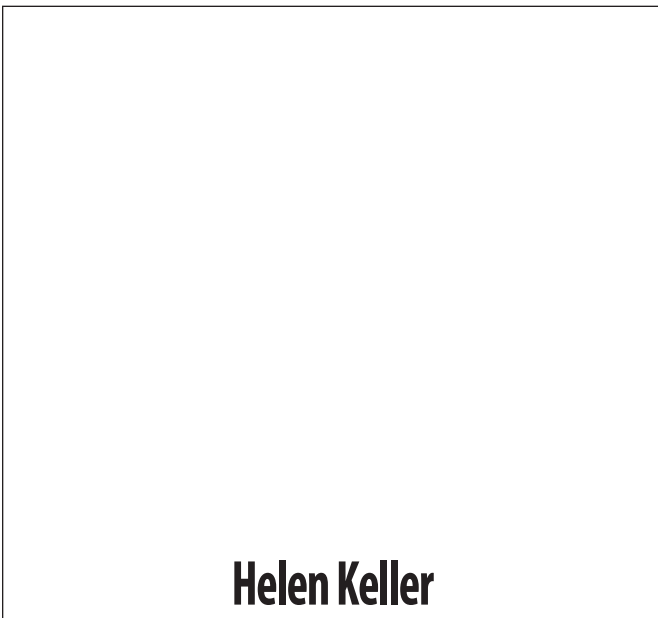
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

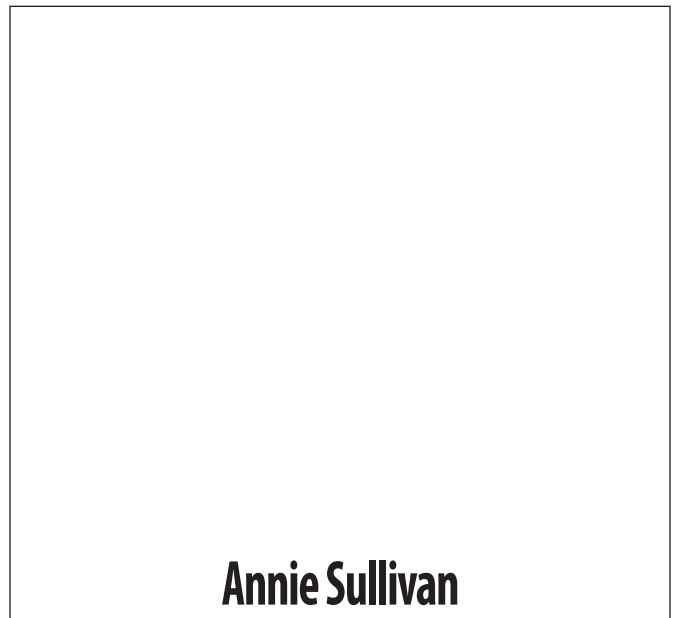
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Conclusion

Discuss with your teacher and classmates the relationship between Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Ask yourself what a student is and what a teacher is. In the boxes below, design a medal to honor Helen Keller as a student, and a medal to honor Annie Sullivan as a teacher. Remember, medals have two sides and can be any shape.



**Helen Keller**



**Annie Sullivan**



# Build a Monument for Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan

## Directions

Pretend you have been asked to design a pyramid-shaped monument to honor Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. In each triangle, draw pictures or symbols that describe Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan's lives and achievements.

## Activity

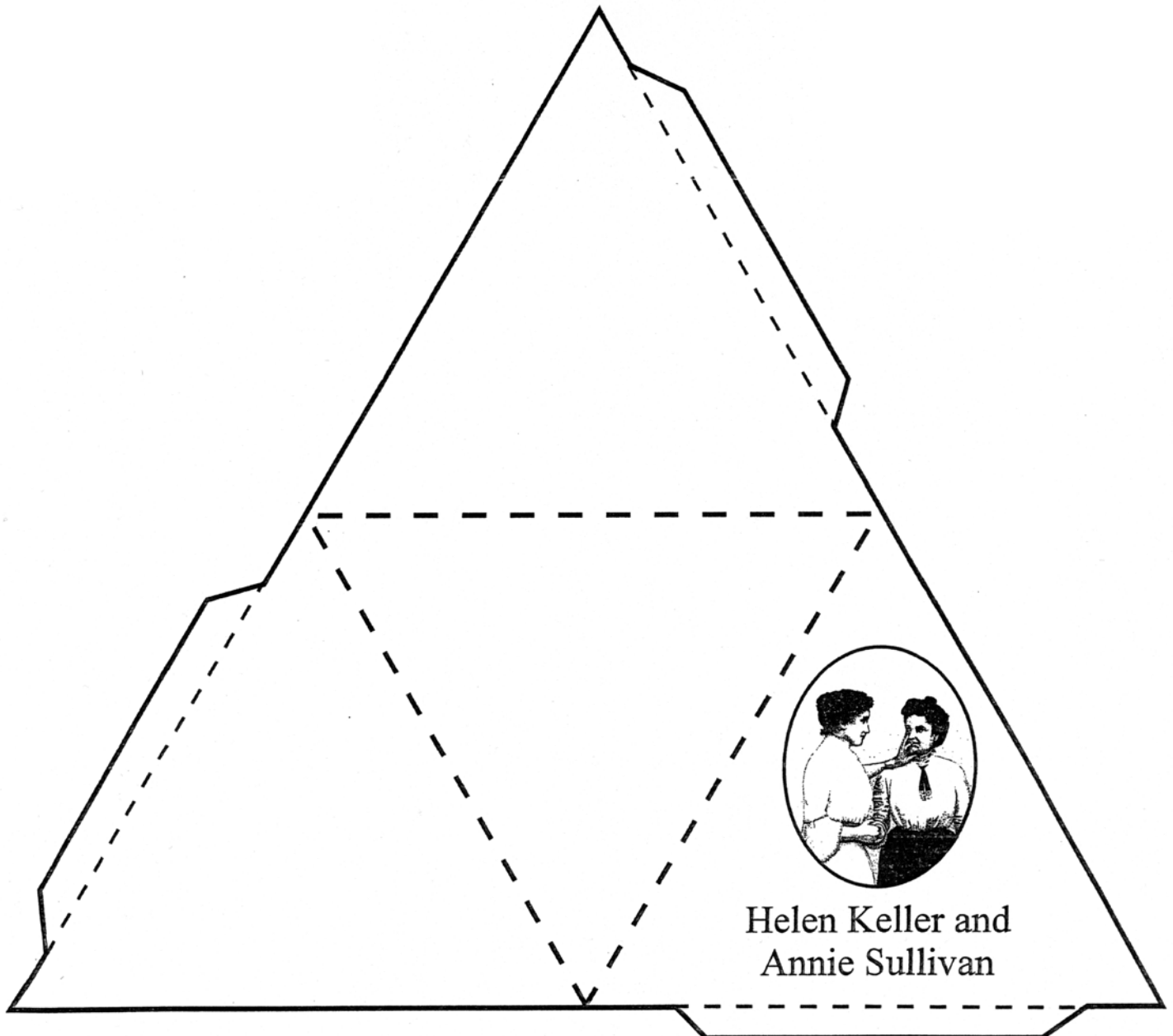
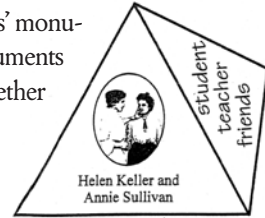
Cut out the large triangle shape below. Fold along the dotted lines. Glue the flaps to the underside of each triangle to make a pyramid like the one shown.

## Conclusion

Display your monument with your classmates' monuments. Or make a hanger mobile of all the monuments with your teacher. Or, glue all your pyramids together to build a three-dimensional monument.

## Sharing

If your monument hasn't been made into a mobile or a three-dimensional class monument, take it home and share it with others whom you know. Use it as a place card at a Family Heroes Banquet. Tell them the story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Discuss with them whether Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan are heroes. Why or why not?



# Heroes in Training: Meeting the Challenge with your Heart, Intellect, and Talents

## Directions

With two other classmates, talk about the following problems.

### *Problem A*

You and a friend are sitting on a park bench. You see some of your classmates calling a “seeing eye” dog over to them. The dog’s owner, who is blind, asks them to please not call the dog. The dog ignores your classmate’s calls. One of your classmate’s throws a stone at the dog.

### *Problem B*

You have a substitute teacher in your class. She does not know that a boy in your class is deaf and does not speak well. This teacher becomes angry when the student does not respond to a question she asks. The deaf student does not like people to treat him differently from others. He is easily embarrassed by his deafness.

### *Problem C*

A new student enrolls in your school. The student is blind and uses a cane. There are many obstacles in your school, and the student has difficulty getting around. You see the student trip over a backpack left on the floor.

## Activity

With your two partners, talk about and answer the following questions. Think about how you could make a difference using your heart, intellect, and talents (HIT).

- What is the problem?
- How do you feel about the problem?
- What do you want?
- Without using violence, how would you solve the problem?
- What risks would you have to take to solve the problem?
- What would be the consequences of your plan?
- Whom would you ask for help? Why?
- What talents would you use?
- How do you think Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan would solve this problem?

## Sharing

Tell adults whom you know the story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. Ask them what they would do to solve the problem described above. Share your plan and the adults’ solutions with your classmates. Remember, all solutions must be nonviolent.