

## A Teacher for Helen Keller



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### **Anne teaches Helen the sign for “doll”**

Helen Keller was born a healthy baby in 1880. At the age of two, Helen became very sick. The illness caused her to become blind and deaf.

As Helen grew, life became very difficult. It was not just difficult for Helen, it was difficult for her family, too. Helen did not have a way to communicate with them. She couldn't understand what they were saying. They couldn't understand what she wanted. She had a lot of temper tantrums.

Helen's parents decided to find someone to teach their daughter. They searched for a special teacher all over the country. They found a woman named Anne Sullivan. Anne was a teacher for the blind in Massachusetts. She was also partially blind herself.

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Anne moved to Alabama to live with Helen and her family. She became Helen's teacher. She brought a doll with her to give to Helen. When she gave Helen the doll, she spelled the word "doll" into Helen's hand using sign language. Anne continued trying to teach Helen this way for some time. She let Helen hold something in one hand while she spelled the word for that object into Helen's other hand. Helen had a hard time understanding what Anne was trying to teach her. But Anne was patient and did not give up.

Then one day everything changed. Anne brought Helen to a waterspout. She poured water over one of Helen's hands and spelled the word "w-a-t-e-r" into the other one. Helen made the connection between the feeling of the water and the letters on her hand. Finally! Helen understood what the signs meant! She was delighted. She wanted to learn more and more.

By Norman (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons



**Anne teaches Helen how to read lips**

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Anne stayed with Helen for the rest of her life. She taught Helen how to read and write using Braille, a type of writing for people who can't see. Each letter of the alphabet has a different pattern of raised dots and you read Braille with your fingertips. Anne taught Helen how to speak. She taught her how to read people's lips as they speak. To do this, Helen put a few fingers over their lips as they spoke. Now Helen could understand people and they could understand her.

Helen became an excellent student. When she went to college, Anne stayed with her during her classes. Anne signed everything the teacher said into Helen's hand. Helen graduated college with honors.

Helen wrote books, starred in plays, and met presidents. She showed the world that a person with disabilities can live an amazing, full life. She helped blind and deaf people all over the world. She showed the world how much blind or deaf people can do if they have the right teacher.

