

# The Miracle Worker

by William Gibson

## Teacher's Guide

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## Synopsis

### Act I

#### TUSCUMBIA, ALABAMA

Capt. Arthur Keller, a Tuscumbia, Alabama, marshal who owns a newspaper, hovers over a crib alongside his second wife Kate, and a doctor. Helen Keller, the couple's ailing tot, survives acute congestion of the stomach and brain. Alone with her infant, Kate passes the lamp near Helen's eyes and snaps her fingers in her face. With a scream, Kate summons Keller and demonstrates that Helen is blind and deaf.

#### THE YARD OF THE KELLER HOUSE

At age 6 and a half, Helen depends on her mother and overturns the cradle of Mildred, her baby sister. She plays with negro children, Martha and Percy, and with Belle, the family's setter. While enjoying paper dolls, she gropes Percy's lips. He bites her. Helen smacks Martha to the ground and grabs the scissors. Percy rings the bell for help.

Kate hurries to Helen and lets her keep the scissors. Aunt Ev presses Keller to consult Dr. Chisholm, a Baltimore oculist. Keller is exasperated with doctors and quarrels with his son James, who thinks Helen belongs in an asylum. Helen jerks two buttons from Aunt Ev's dress and deposits them on a doll's face. She overturns Mildred's crib and replaces her with the doll. Kate adores Helen, but realizes that she needs to develop speech.

#### PERKINS INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND

Dr. Anagnos agrees with Dr. Bell that Helen should be taught and recommends Annie Sullivan, who is partially blinded by trachoma. Anagnos conceals the testy temperament of Annie, who has come from the Tewksbury, Massachusetts, state almshouse. He lends her train fare and allows her to repay him from her \$25 monthly

salary. He gives her a garnet ring. She mourns the death of her brother Jimmie. From handicapped students, she accepts smoked glasses and a doll for Helen.

#### THE KELLER HOUSE

Helen is curious about the room prepared for Annie at their Ivy Green home. Kate subdues her with a treat. James drives Kate to the station. Keller, frustrated with Helen's handicap, roars when he learns that dinner will be delayed.

#### THE RAILWAY STATION

Annie has been on the train for several days and is eager to meet Helen. Kate welcomes her, but questions her preparedness. Annie declares that her knowledge of Dr. Samuel Howe's work and her own visual handicap and youth are advantages.

#### THE KELLER HOUSE

Helen explores Annie's suitcase and helps carry it upstairs. Kate relates that Annie has had nine eye operations. Keller doubts that an inexperienced Yankee can succeed. James resents Annie as a second blind person demanding attention. Meanwhile, Annie finger-spells "doll" and "cake" for Helen, who duplicates each letter. She grabs the doll, socks Annie in

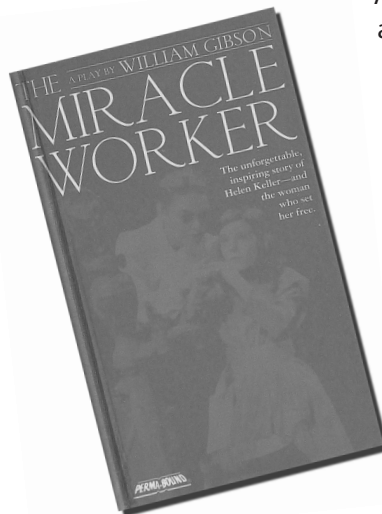
the jaw, and locks the door to her room. Annie spits up a tooth and waits to be rescued. She relives Jimmie's pain and death. The family holds up dinner while Keller carries her down a ladder. Helen drops the key into the well.

### Act II

#### THE KELLER HOUSE

That evening, Annie writes a letter while Helen plays with her doll. Annie teaches her to sew on a card and picks up fragments of a pitcher Helen broke. Kate is curious about how Annie spells into Helen's hand. Annie promises to teach her the alphabet.

At breakfast, Helen demands food from Annie's plate. Annie rejects spoiling and tantrums; she dismisses the



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family while she forces Helen to eat from a plate and fold her napkin. Outside the door, Keller demands an apology from Annie. The battle of wills leaves the dining area in disarray and Annie sore and disheveled. By noon, Helen avoids Annie. Kate weeps at Helen's progress. Annie returns to her room and thinks about Jimmie. Unsure of her job, she repacks the suitcase. Keller condemns her methods and insists on firing her. Kate intervenes.

## THE GARDEN HOUSE

Keller takes Annie to the garden house for a conference. Kate states that the family has considered an asylum for Helen. Annie knows that asylums are hellholes. Kate convinces Keller that Annie should have two weeks in the garden house for a private classroom to end family interference. They bring furniture and Helen's belongings and toys and offer Percy as errand boy. Helen, arriving after a two-hour buggy ride, is unfamiliar with the building. Annie spells words into her palm. Helen resists the lessons until Annie makes her jealous by teaching Percy.

## Act III

### THE GARDEN HOUSE

As the Kellers enjoy two weeks of quiet, Kate develops a closer friendship with James. Meanwhile, Annie teaches Helen to crochet, eat with a spoon, and learn eighteen nouns and three verbs. At the end of two weeks, Annie has tamed Helen. Spelling into Kate's palm, she asks more time, but Keller refuses. Annie feels defeated. Keller pays her a month's salary out of gratitude for Helen's cleanliness and polite demeanor. Annie insists that language is more important to Helen than discipline.

### THE MAIN HOUSE

Helen's good manners surprise the family. At dinner, she reverts to her old ways to test the adults. After she tosses water, Annie forces her to refill the pitcher. Keller tries to stop their tussle, but James and Kate side with Annie. While Helen pumps water, Annie spells "water" into Helen's hand. Recalling "wah wah," Helen recognizes the alphabet as a means of communication.

## Timeline

- 1860** The Braille writing system is endorsed and enters the U.S. in 1860.
- 1862** *February* U. S. Grant begins campaign to capture Vicksburg.

- 1863** *May 22-July 4* Siege of Vicksburg: 40,000 Confederates, led by Pemberton, surrender to 20,000 Union troops led by U.S. Grant.
- 1866** *April 14* Annie Manfield Sullivan is born in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts.
- 1868** The Boston Public Library offers Braille texts for its patrons.
- 1880** *June 27* Helen Keller is born at Ivy Green in Tuscumbia, Alabama.
- 1881** *December* She is stricken with scarlet fever, which leaves her blind and deaf. Surgery restores partial sight to Anne Sullivan, whose vision is impaired by trachoma.
- 1886** Alexander Graham Bell advises the Kellers about Helen's handicap and suggests they consult the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston. Anne Sullivan graduates from the Perkins Institution.
- 1887** *March 3* Sullivan comes to Tuscumbia to teach Helen.
- 1889-93** Helen attends the Perkins Institution.
- 1890** Helen learns to speak at the Horace Mann School for the Deaf in Boston.
- 1892** Dr. Anagnos and Helen break over the publication of "The Frost King," which she is accused of plagiarizing.
- 1893** Helen becomes competent in reading and writing braille. She visits the World's Fair with Dr. Alexander Graham Bell.
- 1894** *Light in My Darkness* is published. Helen enters the Wright-Humason School for the Deaf in New York.
- 1896** Helen enters the Cambridge School for Young Ladies and studies history, English, German, Latin, and math.
- 1900** Helen graduates from the Cambridge School for Young Ladies.
- 1902** *The Story of My Life* is written.
- 1903** *Optimism* is published.
- 1904** Helen graduates cum laude from Radcliffe College.
- 1905** Annie Sullivan marries John Albert Macy, a teacher at Harvard.
- 1908** *The World I Live In* is published.
- 1910** *The Song of the Stone Wall* is published.
- 1913** *Out of the Dark* is published; Helen launches a lecture tour to raise funds for the American Foundation for the Blind.
- 1914** Polly Thompson comes to live with Helen and Anne outside Boston. Mysterious circumstances end Helen's plan to elope with her servant, Peter Fagan.
- 1915** Helen appears at the San Francisco Exposition

and launches Helen Keller International, a charity that assists the rehabilitation of Allied soldiers blinded in World War I.

- 1918** Charlie Chaplin films *Deliverance*, a biography of Helen Keller.
- 1921** The American Federation for the Blind is chartered.
- 1924** Helen becomes a spokeswoman for The American Federation for the Blind; she raises over \$2 million.
- 1925** Keller makes a speech to the Lions International Convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, requesting that they “adopt” her as a spokesperson for the visually handicapped.
- 1932** The braille system becomes the world’s standard.  
Helen receives the Pictorial Review Company achievement award.
- 1933** Nella Braddy publishes *Anne Sullivan Macy*.  
Helen writes “Three Days to See” for *Atlantic Monthly*.
- 1936** Oct. 20 Annie dies in Forest Hills, New York.
- 1937** Helen tours Japan.
- 1945** Helen travels to Europe to visit war casualties.
- 1947** May 22 Helen delivers a speech to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.
- 1954** The final version of *The Story of My Life* is published.  
A biographical movie, *The Unconquered*, details Helen’s life.  
Ivy Green is made a permanent historical site.
- 1955** Helen publishes *Teacher: Anne Sullivan Macy*.  
Katherine Cornell wins an Oscar for her role in a biographical film on Helen.
- 1957** October William Gibson writes *The Miracle Worker* as a television drama to be presented live on CBS’ Playhouse 90.
- 1959** Oct. 19 *The Miracle Worker* opens on Broadway.
- 1960** After Polly Thompson dies, two housekeepers stay with Helen.  
Arthur Hiller Penn receives a Tony for directing *The Miracle Worker* on Broadway.
- 1961** Helen suffers a stroke.
- 1962** *The Miracle Worker* is filmed, earning Penn an Oscar nomination for direction.  
The play opens for its first annual summer presentation at Ivy Green.
- 1963** Helen receives the Medal of Freedom.
- 1968** June 1 Helen Keller dies at Westport, Connecticut, and is inurned alongside Anne Sullivan at the National Cathedral in Washington, D. C. A choir from the Perkins Institution sings; mourners number 1500, including five guide dogs.

- 1992** A statue of Helen and her teacher is unveiled in Agawam, Massachusetts.

## Author Sketch



A multitalented playwright, poet, novelist, and critic, William Gibson is best known for *The Miracle Worker*, his most frequently performed play. He was born in New York City on November 13, 1914, to domestic worker Florence Dore and George Irving Gibson, a clerk at the Chase National Bank. Small for his age when he attended public schools in the Bronx and Queens, he was often pummeled at play. Before graduating from Townsend Harris Hall, he read pulp fiction and westerns. He enrolled for two years in the science department at the College of the City of New York; while writing, he worked as a piano teacher. He warred with his mother over regular church attendance and broke with the Catholic church. He later honored her in *A Mass for the Dead*, an intergenerational autobiography of his parents and youth.

After completing his education, Gibson studied criminology and the American presidency. He returned to school to master English education, but was expelled for his inability to meet deadlines. A first marriage ended disastrously, but he was cheered by selling a magazine story, his first in a long and satisfying career. His father’s death from cancer reunited the family. During a second marriage—to Dr. Margaret Brenman, a psychoanalyst and mother of sons Thomas and Daniel—Gibson played jazz piano at a café and worked at the Barter Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia, to learn scriptwriting. After she secured a position in the children’s division of the Menninger Clinic, the couple settled in Topeka, Kansas, where his first play was produced by the community theatre.

Publishing under his own name and under the pseudonym William Mass, Gibson produced a string of solid plays plus verse and critical essays and submissions to *Harper’s* and *Partisan Review*. His first success came from *The Cobweb*, a 1954 bestseller about a mental institution. MGM filmed the novel in 1955, featuring Richard Widmark, Lauren Bacall, Charles Boyer, Lillian Gish, John Kerr, Susan Strasberg, Tommy Rettig, and Oscar Levant. In 1966, Gibson co-founded the Berkshire Theatre Festival in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where his wife worked at the Austen Riggs Institute.

## Critic's Corner

Gibson's awards include the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize for poetry, a Topeka Civic Theatre Award for *A Cry of Players*, and the Sylvania Award for *The Miracle Worker*, which he drew from Anne Sullivan's letters. The 1962 film version starred Anne Bancroft as Annie, Patty Duke as Helen, and Victor Jory and Inga Swenson as her parents. The Academy nominated Gibson and director Arthur Penn; Bancroft and Duke won Oscars. That same year, United Artists filmed *Two for the Seesaw*, a view of a mismatched duo, starring Robert Mitchum and Shirley MacLaine. Gibson's difficulties in recrafting the play for the stage resulted in *The Seesaw Log: A Chronicle of the Stage Production*. The play was produced as a Broadway musical in 1973 with music by Dorothy Fields and Cy Coleman.

Critics describe *The Miracle Worker*, Gibson's masterpiece, as a satisfyingly well-made drama on a classic American theme—the student-teacher relationship. Less successful was a 1982 sequel *Monday After the Miracle*, a study of Helen Keller at age 21 when Annie married John Macy. First presented at Charleston's Dock Street Theatre during the annual Spoleto festival, the play reopened in New York on December 14, 1982, starring Karen Allen as Helen and Jane Alexander and William Converse-Roberts as Annie and John Macy

Gibson's tribute to Helen and Annie has kept alive a nation's pride in two of its treasured educators and humanitarians. He wrote *The Miracle Worker* three times: for live broadcast on CBS' Playhouse 90, starring Patty McCormack as Helen and Teresa Wright as Annie; for the stage version, starring Patty Duke as Helen and Anne Bancroft as her beloved "Teacher"; and for the 1962 United Artist screen version, which retained the stage cast. In 1979, a second television broadcast paired Patty Duke with Melissa Gilbert, in which Duke played Annie.

## Other Works by William Gibson

*The Body and The Wheel* (1974)  
*The Butterfingers Angel* (1974)  
*The Cobweb* (1954)  
*A Cry for Players* (1969)  
*Dinny and The Witches* (1957)  
*Golda* (1977)  
*Golden Boy* (co-authored by Clifford Odets) (1964)  
*Goodly Creatures* (1980)  
*Handy Dandy* (1984)  
*I Lay in Zion* (1943)

*John and Abigail* (1969)  
*Mass for The Dead* (1968)  
*Monday after the Miracle* (1982)  
*Notes on How to Turn a Phoenix into Ashes* (1978)  
*Raggedy Ann* (1985)  
*The Ruby* (1957)  
*A Season in Heaven* (1974)  
*The Seesaw Log* (1959)  
*Shakespeare's Game* (1978)  
*Two for The Seesaw* (1958)  
*Winter Crook* (1948)

## Related Reading

James Agee, *A Death in the Family*  
Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die*  
Jane Campion, *The Piano*  
Robert Cormier, *Fade*  
Kaye Gibbons, *Ellen Foster*  
Joanne Greenberg, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*  
John Gunther, *Death Be Not Proud*  
Alex Haley, *Queen*  
Robert Heinlein, "The Green Hills of Earth"  
Ron Jones, *The Acorn People*  
Marjorie Kellogg, *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon*  
Daniel Keyes, *Flowers for Algernon*  
Margaret Landon, *Anna and the King of Siam*  
Lois Lowry, *The Giver*  
John Neufeld, *Lisa Bright and Dark*  
Cynthia Rylant, *Missing May*  
Cynthia Voigt, *Izzy Willy Nilly*  
H.G. Wells, "The Country of the Blind"  
Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*

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## General Objectives

1. To discuss sibling rivalry
2. To describe the physical, mental, and emotional effects of coping with a hostile family environment
3. To characterize advice and counseling from experts
4. To characterize honest communication
5. To discuss the nature of recovery
6. To account for verbal clashes
7. To discuss human foibles and talents

8. To account for war imagery
9. To outline different types of manipulation
10. To enumerate examples of improvement

## Specific Objectives

1. To outline the interconnected lives of the people who love Helen
2. To recount how Annie gets a job as teacher
3. To explain how Annie intends to teach a blind and deaf child
4. To describe Helen's curiosity and cleverness
5. To evaluate changes in Helen's behavior
6. To define the roles of the Keller family and their servants
7. To analyze Helen's sudden understanding of communication
8. To justify Annie's forceful methods
9. To contrast home before and after Annie's arrival
10. To account for Keller's hostility
11. To study the causes and implications of James' sarcasm
12. To describe the epiphany that changes Helen

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of William Gibson's style, present the following terms and applications to his play:

**Characterization:** the creation of full-fledged human motivation, behavior, and response in fictional people. Significant to the drama is the interplay of a family trying to attain normalcy without institutionalizing Helen for her disruptive behavior. The strain on normal activities pits James against his father and places Kate in a difficult situation as mother to James' half-sisters, Helen and Mildred. At the family's outer edge are Aunt Ev and servants, all intent on helping Helen.

**Foreshadowing:** an object, statement, action, or motif that anticipates, prefigures, or predicts a significant event. In *The Miracle Worker*, Helen dashes a pitcher on the floor during her initial encounter with Annie. At a low point in Annie's tutelage, she rinses her eyes with an eyecup, a reduced image of the pitcher. The struggle for dominance precedes a lengthy series of forays involving water and leading up to the pivotal scene in which Helen pumps water into a pitcher and recalls saying "wah wah" in babyhood. Thus, water becomes Helen's link with communication.

**Motif:** a pattern or predictable arrangement of elements in a story, drama, dance, painting, or other artistic work. A motif orders events and defines characters' behaviors and expectations, such as frequent references to Grant, Lee, Vicksburg, Stonewall Jackson, and war imagery, all segments of the post-Civil War milieu and evidence of Captain Keller's militancy. Significantly, he and James discuss the fight for Vicksburg as Annie launches her battle with the Kellers for the right to discipline Helen. The battle motif continues as Annie rejects Helen's uncivil behaviors at the table and forces her to refill the pitcher of water that Helen empties on her teacher.

**Symbol:** a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship. In *The Miracle Worker*, references to a crocheted wool chain and door keys stress the role of language as the end of Helen's confinement and her entree to communication. The scene in which Helen tosses Annie's room key into the well ties the key to water, the sensory impression that jolts her memory of a baby word, "wah wah," which she learned before illness took away her hearing and sight. The chain that she crochets suggests the undisciplined state in which she has lived, a lack of socialization that chains her to her family like a dog on a leash.

## The Importance of Setting

The settings of William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker* enhance the biographical encounter between Helen Keller and a determined teacher, Annie Sullivan. In the opening scenes, Helen lives in comfort on a country estate. Servants and relatives see to her needs and defend her from self-harm or menace to others. The home includes gardens, a gracious porch, and a well and pump, a common image that takes on symbolic meaning as the story progresses.

Opposite Helen is Annie, an indigent ward of the state of Massachusetts in her early twenties who battles eye disease at the same time she mourns her brother Jimmie, who died in a substandard institution. The flashbacks to the poorhouse glimpse a squalid childhood where orphans grow up among the elderly and witness illness, mental distress, and cadavers as daily fare. Annie's escape by train requires the loan of ticket money, but her arrival in Tuscumbia places her on the receiving end of more charity in a temporary room and as a guest at the Keller dinner table.

In the Keller house, the dining room becomes no man's land as Annie battles both Helen and her indulgent parents. Against the backdrop of genteel manners, Helen rages and disrupts like an untamed beast, sniffing, grabbing, and gobbling to employ her working senses of smell, touch, and taste. Brief withdrawal to Annie's room relieves her of duty to Helen, but does not end the mental search for methods to teach her how to function in her dark and silent world.

After a sobering conference between teacher and parents, the two-week departure to the summer house is a curious blend of the familiar and new. Helen lives apart from family with Annie amid familiar toys and furniture. Percy is the only known human form in a fourteen-day trial that deprives Helen of pampering and forces her to behave, learn, and subdue her physical and emotional urges with courtesy and appropriate demeanor. At the end of the trial, Annie and Helen's successes are manifold, but Helen still lacks the key to Helen's brain.

On return to the tense, unsettling dining scene, Annie is angered at Helen's regression and the family's insistence that the child enjoy her favorite foods as a welcome home party. Because Annie is willing to breach the wall of family collusion in Helen's wild ways, she stumbles on the answer to teaching word communication. By dragging Helen to the pump, she produces the tactile clue that connects with spelling. The life-giving flow of water symbolizes the importance of simple setting clues known to Helen as a normal toddler before her catastrophic illness.



## Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about Helen Keller, William Gibson, Annie Sullivan, being physically challenged, and other subjects and issues deriving from the play, consult these sources:

Sally Hobart Alexander, *Taking Hold: My Journey Into Blindness*

Margaret Davidson, *Helen Keller's Teacher*

Russell Freedman, *Out of the Darkness: The Story of Louis Braille*

Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life*

Lois Nicholson, *Helen Keller*

Linda Lee Ratto, *Coping with a Physically Challenged Brother or Sister and Coping With Being Physically Challenged*

Time-Life Editors, *Vicksburg*

Also, consult these websites:

"Helen Keller International," <[www.hki.org](http://www.hki.org)>

"The History of Reading Codes for the Blind,"

<[www.nyise.org/blind/barbier.htm](http://www.nyise.org/blind/barbier.htm)>

"Writings by Helen Keller" <[www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)>

## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker* should include these aspects:

### Themes

- impairment
- grief
- family dissension
- hostility
- conflict
- intervention
- separation
- schooling
- obedience
- challenge
- success

### Motifs

- asserting control over family and daily life
- reshaping behaviors to express a changed outlook
- grasping at communication
- rejecting socialization
- recovering childhood communication
- recognizing that words have meaning

## Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Act and page numbers allow you to re-read the passage from which the item is taken.

1. Call it acute congestion of the stomach and brain. (Act I, p. 6)  
(*The doctor treats scarlet fever in the style of the mid-19th century. The internal inflammation is acute because it began suddenly and quickly rose to dangerous suppression of the body's ability to fight fever. He correctly identifies Helen's vitality, the quality that keeps her going during a difficult period of socialization and training.*)
2. The dog is a setter named *Belle*, and she is sleeping. Two of the children are Negroes, Martha and Percy. The third child is Helen, six and a half years old, quite unkempt, in body a vivacious little person with a fine head, attractive, but noticeably blind, one eye larger and protruding; her gestures are abrupt, insistent, lacking in human restraint, and her face never smiles. (Act I, p. 8)  
(*Gibson juxtaposes Helen with a well trained setter named Belle, the Southern term for an appealing young woman, and two well schooled house servants. The multiple handicaps, distorted features, and disheveled appearance prove that the family has a long way to go before turning Helen into a belle.*)
3. The, greatest, problem, I, have, is, how, to, discipline, her, without, breaking, her, spirit. (Act II, p. 47)  
(*In Annie's letter on her first evening with the Kellers, she begins the job by spelling the word "doll" into Helen's hand. The one moment of triumph quickly vanishes when Annie tries to retrieve the doll and angers Helen. To stop the rampaging, Annie offers cake, but makes Helen spell it. The clever Helen gets the doll back after imitating Annie's spelling and immediately smashes it into Annie's face. The theft of the key, which Helen holds in her mouth, then drops into the well, indicates how clever she is. Annie is pleased to see intelligence, but knows that channeling it will require a deft balance of instruction and restraint.*)
4. She's a hiring! (Act 2, p. 57)  
(*Keller's reaction to Annie's request that the family leave the dining room is typical of snobbery. The family attempts to persuade Annie to give in to Helen's mannerless eating. When she refuses, Keller accuses her of lacking pity. Annie retorts that the only pity she feels is that Helen will never taste life. She accuses the family of taking the easy way out by giving in to tantrums and will-*

*fulness. The hard-headed Annie runs counter to the imperious military captain, who has disliked Annie from his first sight of a too young, blind, and inexperienced Northerner.)*

5. The room's a wreck, but her napkin is folded. (Act II, p. 65)  
*(Kate picks up Annie's phrase and echoes with awe the fact that Helen has accepted an abstract rule of deportment, which requires that a napkin be folded by the place setting after the meal. Until this time, Helen has done nothing civilized. The small victory releases some of Kate's grief that she has submerged.)*
6. I'll have to live with her somewhere else . . . Till she learns to depend on and listen to me. (Act II, p. 75)  
*(Annie summarizes her intent to the Kellers prior to telling them she has almost decided to leave. She reconsiders when she examines the garden house and recognizes a method of reaching Helen to change her lifestyle.)*
7. Two weeks. For only one miracle? (Act II, p. 78)  
*(Keller gives in to Annie's request that she and Helen live together in the garden house apart from the rest of the family. Against his better judgment, he consents and stipulates that she has only two weeks. Annie recognizes that a time limit cannot be put on her task, but she agrees to any time that might help her tame and educate Helen.)*
8. Now all I have to teach you is—one word. Everything. (Act II, p. 88)  
*(Annie epitomizes the teaching method as one simple connection, between the abstract spelling of a word and an association with an object or action. Once Helen grasps this principle, she will begin to think, to associate, and to communicate.)*
9. Eighteen nouns and three verbs, they're in her fingers now. I need only time to push *one* of them into her mind. One, and everything under the sun will follow. (Act III, p. 99)  
*(Annie enumerates her triumphs in terms of nouns and verbs that Helen has mastered. However, Annie knows that if she cannot teach the relationship between word and object, Helen will have accomplished little more than mimicry of her teacher. As she summarizes to herself, she will have returned a trained child, but not a thinking child.)*
10. Annie with her own load of emotion has retreated, her back turned, toward the pump, to sit; Kate moves to Helen, touches her hand questioningly, and Helen spells a word to her. Kate comprehends it, their first act of verbal communication, and she can hardly utter the word aloud, in wonder, gratitude, and deprivation; it is a moment in which she

simultaneously finds and loses a child. (Act III, p. 118)

*(The miracle opens Helen's mind to a world beyond. Kate is overjoyed that her daughter has triumphed, but is aware of bitter-sweet joy. Now Helen turns from Kate, her fount of assurance and comfort from birth, to Annie, her teacher.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the play.

### Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. What are Annie's qualifications as a teacher of the handicapped?  
*(Annie, at age twenty, is energetic and well educated in the latest methods of training the deaf to use the hand alphabet. She is free to travel because she has no home or family. She lacks experience, but knows enough about state institutions to fight for Helen to save her from incarceration. To meet day-to-day challenges, Annie is skilled at negotiation, compromise, and compensation. She prepares for her first meeting with Helen by packing a doll and a piece of cake to interest the child while she evaluates her capabilities.*

*When the home situation stymies her teaching, Annie maneuvers a concession from the domineering captain to allow Helen a two-week respite from home and family. Even though Annie makes significant gains, she is true enough to her principles to admit that Helen has not mastered the one concept that will make her literate. On return to the infamous dining room, Annie again confronts the willful, spoiled child and demands that she fill a pitcher with water. The use of simple teaching tools is enough for Annie to grasp the moment, acknowledge the childhood word for water, and spell the abstract in Helen's hand. The bright mind quickly accommodates new learning and understands that words are a way to communicate.)*

2. How has Kate coped with Helen?  
*(A subservient wife and devoted mother of two girls, Kate has tolerated Helen's uncivilized behaviors and compensated for her shortcomings by cramming treats into her mouth to end a tantrum or thwart a confrontation. The tender rub on the cheek that Helen uses to indicate her mother suggests a face to face contact that Helen remembers from babyhood. As she grows into childhood without socialization, Kate becomes more frantic and insists on writing yet another expert to add to the lengthy list of failed doctor's appointments and evaluations of Helen's handicap. When Annie demonstrates the finger alphabet, Kate*



volunteers immediately to learn. After Helen demonstrates her first word, Kate acknowledges her triumph with love and encouragement.)

3. Why doesn't Helen eat supper the first night of Annie's employment?  
(In the unsettled hours that precede Annie's arrival, Helen senses that something is different about the making of the guest room and attendant bustle in Kate and Viney. Uneasy at change and the unpredictable, Helen grows agitated. Kate offers her a peppermint drop to compensate for leaving by buggy to pick up Annie at the train station. When Helen searches for Kate, Viney takes pity on her and offers a tea cake. Captain Keller, who loves Helen but lacks his wife's tenderness, substitutes a candy stick to turn the child's mind from missing her mother. By the time Annie and Kate appear, Helen has had too many sweets and is no longer hungry for dinner.)
4. What does Annie first spell to Helen?  
(As a test of Helen's mental acuity, Annie gives Helen a key and allows her to unlock and explore her suitcase. Helen immediately plays dressup in smoked glasses, bonnet, and shawl. When Helen turns to Annie's drawers, she discards them in favor of the doll that the students of the Perkins Institute for the Blind sent as a gift. The amazing skill of the doll at opening and closing its eyes intrigues her. To assure herself that the doll is hers, she puts her hand on it and nods. Annie replies that, yes, the doll is hers. To turn the gift into a lesson, Annie spells the word doll into Helen's hand. Because of Helen's quick grasp of finger spelling, Annie exults, "Ho. How bright she is!")
5. How does Helen eat her meals?  
(At the beginning of Annie's employment, Helen walks around the table, grasping food from diners' plates, sniffing, and sampling at will. Individual family members allow this conduct so they can have some peace and freedom from tantrums. When Annie objects to Helen's barbaric behavior, Captain Keller informs her that this is the only way in which they can have adult conversation.

On return from the summer house, Helen has altered her method of dining. Annie has taught her to spell "cake" by teaching the alphabet to Percy and making Helen jealous. To Kate on their return, Annie summarizes, "She's learned not to throw things on the floor and kick. It took us the best part of two weeks and—." The statement ends unfinished because Helen has immediately regressed to her former unruly behavior.)

**Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)**

6. Who suggests that the family write to the Baltimore doctor?  
(Aunt Ev suggests that the Baltimore doctor is a good possibility

because he has helped so many blind people overcome their handicaps. The captain, weary of consultations, ironically replies that it is a refreshing suggestion that something be done for his daughter. Kate has written many letters and consulted specialists throughout Tennessee and Alabama. Because the results have been unremittingly negative, he believes that Helen's case is hopeless. Another consultation would just let in a ray of hope and extinguish it when the expert could do nothing for Helen. Captain Keller cannot tolerate another defeat, and he can't bear to see Kate's heart broken again.)

7. How does James facilitate the miracle?  
(Immediately after returning from the summer house, Helen overturns Annie's rules and misbehaves. She realizes that her family will indulge her extremes and determines that she is going to take advantage of the welcome home party and her favorite foods. Another duel between Annie and Helen begins at the table. The Kellers implore her to let Helen go this one time. Annie angrily rejects their weakspined discipline. A high-pitched argument breaks out between Annie and the Captain. It appears as if the father will destroy the good that Annie has accomplished. At this critical moment, James accuses his father of failing to assess Annie's accomplishment in handling Helen. He dares the Captain to intervene. The shock of James' impertinence jolts Keller into seeing his interference as counterproductive. Thus, he allows Annie to escort Helen to the pump, the site of the miracle.)
8. How does Helen prove she is intelligent?  
(From the beginning, Helen establishes her fine mind by learning words at age six months. Six years later, she is dismayed to note that the towel doll Aunt Ev sews has no eyes. To fill in the blank spaces, she yanks buttons from her aunt's dress and plunks them on the doll's face. Helen catches on quickly to finger spelling and thwarts Annie's instruction by locking her in the bedroom, hiding the key in her mouth, and dropping it down the well. Instead of infuriating her teacher, she delights Annie for the display of an eager, creative mind.

Helen enjoys word games and learns each new combination quickly. She seems to suspect there is something important about the game. When she returns from the summer house, she realizes she can revert to tantrums and manipulation. She restores the dining room keys to her mother as if to indicate that nobody can restrain her. Then she violates table manners that Annie has forced on her as a test of the family's reaction to her uncivilized behavior.

The miracle arises from Helen's ability to make connections. When she associates water with a word she learned in infancy, she is frantic to learn other words for solid objects around her. She spells rapidly, demanding more and more information. The

*magnitude of her capacity to learn leads her not to the doting mother, but to Annie, the teacher who has introduced her to the world.)*

## Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. How does Annie's background help her teach Helen?

*(Like the successful classroom teacher, Annie recognizes potential in her pupil. She is ready for Helen with Dr. Howe's instruction, her own handicap, and a young and energetic body, which she will need to cope with tantrums and physical attack.*

*Because Annie has spent years learning and working with blind children, she knows how to plan lessons and strategy. She has her own streak of obstinacy and combativeness and refuses to give up to a headstrong child. Her rapport and compassion help her to assess what Helen needs most—discipline—and to insist that she receive adequate restraint to ready her for education.*

*Annie is honest about her shortcomings. She admits to being frightened by the monumental task of training a multi-handicapped child. She willingly admits errors and tries new approaches when the first ones fail. She uses simple person-to-person methods and educational tools—a slice of cake, a doll, a sewing card, crocheting, a newborn chick. When dining proves to be Helen's weakest point, Annie makes it her test of civility.)*

10. Why do students enjoy reading *The Miracle Worker*? *(The play has much to recommend it to teenagers. Most have lived through tests of temper and arguments with parents and are old enough to view them with some detachment. In a second round of testing limits, they can apply Helen's eruptions and bad manners to their own battlefields at home and to the hardships caused by younger siblings. In addition, some will see themselves as future parents and teachers and may apply Annie's skill and flexibility to the question of how to subdue willful children. Most important, teenagers often feel compassion toward handicapped people without knowing how to apply altruism. By reading a play about goals and challenges, they can recognize that aiding the handicapped is not a mushy, sentimental task. Helen is pathetic, but she needs the same educational stimuli that all children require. The removal of the story from the usual tear-jerkers is a satisfying experience because of its emphasis on pragmatism and determination.)*

## Questions 11 and 12 (Creative Level)

11. Compose a descriptive paragraph about a sense impression—a rainstorm, mint ice cream cone, fragrant dish of lasagna, furry rabbit, game of touch football—from the point of view of a handicapped person. Consider color blindness, diminished hearing, or paralysis.

12. Make an oral presentation on taking Helen for a train ride. Name elements of the trip that Annie will have to prepare for, such as the lurch of the cars and the smell of smoke. Suggest ways Helen can enjoy the ride without being able to see out the windows.

## Across the Curriculum

### Art

- Using desktop publishing or other media, design a pair of smoked glasses or a railway car, a banner announcing the inventions of Alexander Graham Bell, a business card for Mr. Anagnos or Dr. Samuel G. Howe, first aid for a paroxysm, an epitaph for Jimmie Sullivan, a list of items needed in the garden house, a uniform for a Confederate veteran, a schematic drawing of a railroad line from Boston to Tuscumbia, a textbook sketch of granulation of the eyes, an extended definition of flashback or teleplay, an advertisement for a doll with moveable eyes, a wall chart displaying the alphabet for the deaf, and a pattern for a towel doll.
- Draw settings for an outdoor drama of *The Miracle Worker*. Show the placement of actors, music, costumes, props, sound effects, and lighting. Include classroom discussions of how to stage dining room scenes, family violence, instructions from Mr. Anagnos, Annie's first glimpses of Helen, arrival at the Tuscumbia train depot, the buggy ride to the garden house, and flashbacks to the almshouse at Tewksbury.
- Create a bulletin board illustrating visual scenes from the story. Include the movements of the needle in the sewing card, slapping Helen's hand, teaching Belle the alphabet, cutting paper dolls, packing a suitcase, serving biscuits, offering Helen a treat, rocking Mildred, ending a buggy ride, comforting Jimmie, pumping water, picking up pieces of a broken pitcher, and crocheting a wool chain.
- Draw an animated television or Internet advertisement for Gibson's stage play emphasizing the interaction between Annie and Helen. Indicate the tension and curiosity that cause Helen to shift from aggressor to compliant student.

## Drama and Speech

1. Write several conversations that are only implied, such as Mr. Anagnos' discussion with Annie about the job of tutoring Helen, Viney's attitude toward parents who indulge misbehavior, James' disdain for his stepmother, the doctor's instructions on how to care for Helen during convalescence, Percy and Martha's conversation with Viney about Helen's rough behavior, Aunt Ev's declaration that she is a member of the family and not an outsider, and Jimmie's pleas that Annie not leave him to go to school.
2. Compose a short speech in which you describe the function of each family member. Comment on James' growing regard for Kate and on his courage in facing down his father's tyranny and bluster. Express Aunt Ev's assistance with the two girls and Viney's supervision of domestic matters. Analyze the family's relationship with Viney, Martha, and Percy, who seem like house slaves of the antebellum South.
3. Compose a short outline on these female roles: Annie, Helen, crones, Viney, Beatrice, Mildred, Kate, Martha, and Aunt Ev. Note when each player appears onstage. Determine which roles have the greatest influence on Annie's development into a successful teacher.

## Education

1. Explain briefly the concept of words. How do children learn words? How do they apply them to sentences? Why does Annie compare the process to a bird learning to fly? Sketch a lesson on computer or chalkboard that teaches a preschooler a necessary word such as fire, sleep, drink, clean, or love.
2. Survey the critical response to *The Miracle Worker* as live television play, stage play, movie, and television revival. Express how current attitudes toward educational psychology influence critical appraisals.
3. Create ways that the family might help Annie introduce Helen to math, science, music, physical education, sports, personal hygiene, and crafts.
4. Compose a lesson in table manners for six-year-olds that employs flashcards, cartoons, or charades.

## History and Social Studies

1. Create a bulletin board listing places mentioned in the play. Include Baltimore, Boston, Vicksburg, Washington, D. C., Tewksbury, Massachusetts, and Tusculumbia, Alabama. Provide a map of Annie's journey south on the train.
2. Discuss the play as a classroom tool and as an introduction to two major figures in women's history.
3. Role-play the part of a male teacher explaining to the Kellers the importance of cleanliness, obedience, manners, and courtesy. Discuss with the family the kinds of behavior post-Civil War Southern society expects of young ladies.
4. Lead a debate about the best way for the state to provide for indigent children like Annie and Jimmie. Express opinions about the deadhouse and about leaving adult-size problems for young children to solve. Suggest ways that siblings can remain together while living outside the nuclear family unit.
5. Prepare a report on other historical figures who made significant achievements while suffering from impaired vision, such as John Milton or Horatio Nelson. How did these individuals cope with their problem?
6. Prepare a report on the Vicksburg campaign of 1863. Why do most historians consider this the critical battle of the Civil War? List the key errors that were made by the Confederate leadership.

## Language Arts

1. With a group, list and explain these terms: Good Book, Jacob, Grant, tyrant, hireling, mull over, John L. Sullivan, Old Stonewall, sotto voce, Papist, deadhouse, garden house, marshal, asylum, pinafore, ironic, tea-cake, climax, claim check, Bragg, oculist, haymaker, Perkins Institution for the Blind, acute congestion, vitality, trachoma, granular growth, smoked glasses, and Pemberton.
2. Present posters that illustrate these expressions: southern gentlewoman, Buffalo girl, Yankee money, catch flies with honey, Champion's Hill, give her notice, lost lamb in the parable, spatial counterpoint, working-class Irish, dessicated spinster, and Irish battle.

3. Compose an extended definition of insecurity in which you compare Annie to the focal character in Yoko Kawashima Watkins' *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, or Edward Arlington Robinson's "Mr. Flood's Party."
4. Divide the class into small groups to list identifiable parts of the story and to place them on a Freytag diagram. Include exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion. Why is the change in James significant in an assessment of Annie's emergence as a teacher and role model?
5. Draw a Venn diagram representing the parallel lifestyles and activities of Annie and Helen. Note the aspects they share, for example, gender, diminished expectations for women, blindness, and willfulness. List their differences, particularly family, social status, age, education, and experience.
6. Suggest ways this story could be written as a novel. Add characters to the plot, such as Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, the Kellers' pastor, or neighborhood children. Write a chapter on ways to expand Helen's circle of friends.
7. Compose an informal essay on writing biography. List figures you would like to describe in a teleplay, novel, or short story. Explain to a small group how you would balance the admirable qualities of each with weaknesses, character flaws, and shortcomings, such as Helen's bad temper, Kate's grief, Aunt Ev's prejudice toward Northerners, James' rudeness and sarcasm, and Captain Keller's tyranny.
8. View various films featuring handicapped subjects, e. g. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Elephant Man*, *Mask*, *Sunrise at Campobello*, *Places in the Heart*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Rainman*, *Queen*, *Tell Me That You Love Me Junie Moon*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Discuss why filmmakers focus on physical impairments or diseases.
9. Interview minor characters to learn the significance of these incidents: Annie loses a tooth, Percy bites Helen, James is disrespectful to Annie at the depot, Beatrice begs Annie not to leave Boston, Annie weeps before leaving Mr. Anagnos, the doctor declares Helen out of danger from

acute congestion, James says that Helen is ticklish, and Viney welcomes Helen back from the garden house.

## Psychology

1. Explain to a small group why the family situation in the Keller home is testy and, at times, explosive. Suggest ways that the family can develop trust and amity, for example, by airing all opinions on asylums and on appropriate care for Helen. Make a mobile of a daily schedule to include privacy, quiet conversation, and activities that involve Helen, Mildred, and Belle.
2. Discuss with a group the theme of isolation. How does the garden house provide Annie with a teaching microcosm? Why does Annie succeed away from the Keller family? How does the end of isolation jeopardize Helen's progress? What does the atmosphere of a public classroom provide that homeschooling lacks?
3. Characterize a rescuer's relationship to a victim. Include Annie's insistence on spelling each word, repetition of lessons, comfort to Jimmie, counseling for indulgent parents, and discipline for taking food from other people's plates. Describe Helen's initial response to her rescuer. Why does Annie think that God owes her a resurrection?
4. Read aloud other descriptions of handicaps. Discuss victories over isolation and low self-esteem.

## Science and Health

1. Present to the class a two-column chart detailing how trachoma and scarlet fever compromise vision. Include facts about fever, infection, and damage to parts of the eye. Explain how surgery can restore vision.
2. Using computer graphics, determine the percentage of children born blind and deaf and the number who lose their sight and hearing from disease or accident.



## Student Involvement Activities

1. Make an oral report on the theme of compassion. Summarize lines that indicate Kate's unselfishness and concern for Helen. Justify Annie's disdain for too much sympathy and not enough discipline.
2. Describe aloud the difference between Captain Keller as father, husband, mediator, comforter, military leader, Southerner, editor, and employer. What clues suggest that he is more capable in some areas than in others?
3. Contrast minor characters in terms of action, control, and compassion. Include Beatrice, Jimmie, Viney, Martha, Percy, Aunt Ev, crones, doctor, and Belle. Which characters are stereotypes? Which seem like real people? Which have the most influence on the action?
4. Compile and discuss a list of images from the story that appeal to the five senses, for instance "Helen in reply pinches Annie's thigh, a good mean pinchful that makes Annie jump."
5. Analyze character interaction by simplifying the events and meaning of a single scene. For example, give a detailed sketch of Annie looking up a word in the dictionary, Helen playing with paper dolls, Aunt Ev's work on the eyeless towel doll, James' comments on Helen's dominance of the household, and Kate trying to protect Mildred from Helen's callous misbehavior.
6. Describe in a short speech the effects of loneliness, insecurity, low self-esteem, isolation, disease, frustration, and poverty on characters in the play. How does Helen's condition force the family to examine its inner chain of command? Why does the family enjoy a respite from Helen? How does Annie's insistence on table manners improve family relations? Why does Helen's excitement over learning a word bode well for the Keller family's health and contentment?
7. Make a time line of events in the story. Emphasize the period of time that doctors examine and study Helen, lapse of time since the battle for Vicksburg, Annie's train ride from Boston, Annie's supervision of Jimmie, the length of the breakfast lesson, and residence in the garden house.
8. Explain in a theme how the author characterizes Helen's wild behavior. Why does she sniff and grope from plate to plate? How do frequent treats affect her behavior? Why does she need play-mates? What effect does the reunion with Belle have on her? Why does physical handicap predispose Helen to rage and tantrums?
9. Compose a first person account of Annie's arrival at the depot. Make a list of questions for Kate to ask, such as Annie's needs, interest in children, family background, experience, expectations, salary, and aims. Append a brief description of Ivy Green and its residents from Kate or Aunt Ev's point of view.
10. Discuss your reaction to Helen's anger, violence, frustration, motivation, and tyranny of family members. Explain how she changes after Annie insists on table manners. What behaviors would you demand of Helen? How would you express your love for her while forcing her to conform to normal socialization?

## Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of regrets, fear, insecurity, intimidation, loyalty, poor judgment, genius, and manipulation in Annie.
2. Compile a list of actions that demonstrate why Helen needs a teacher.
3. Compose a scene in which James learns the finger alphabet.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of each.
5. Account for the popularity of Helen Keller as an American hero.

## Vocabulary

Choose the correct answer from the list below to complete the following scene directions:

abrupt	bizarre	frantic	litter	restraint
amusedly	caresses	granular	murmur	saucy
attends	commences	groping	noticeably	setter
baffledly	crescendo	inarticulate	obstinate	text
belfry	flanked	indolent	pantomime	unkempt
benign	folly	intercept	protruding	wearily

- A. Time, in the form of a slow tune of distant (1) \_\_\_\_\_ chimes which approaches in a (2) \_\_\_\_\_ and then fades, passes; the light comes up again on a day five years later, on three kneeling children and an old dog outside around the pump.
- B. The dog is a (3) \_\_\_\_\_ named Belle, and she is sleeping. Two of the children are Negroes, Martha and Percy. The third child is Helen, six and a half years old, quite (4) \_\_\_\_\_, in body a vivacious little person with a fine head, attractive, but (5) \_\_\_\_\_ blind, one eye larger and (6) \_\_\_\_\_; her gestures are (7) \_\_\_\_\_, insistent, lacking in human (8) \_\_\_\_\_, and her face never smiles. She is (9) \_\_\_\_\_ by the other two, in a (10) \_\_\_\_\_ of paper-doll cutouts, and while they speak Helen's hands thrust at their faces in turn, feeling (11) \_\_\_\_\_ at the movements of their lips.
- C. Helen is scowling, the lips under her fingertips moving in ghostly silence, growing more and more (12) \_\_\_\_\_, until in a (13) \_\_\_\_\_ rage she bites at her own fingers.
- D. Inside, the lights have been gradually coming up on the main room, where we see the family informally gathered, talking, but in (14) \_\_\_\_\_; Kate sits darning socks near a cradle, occasionally rocking it; Captain Keller in spectacles is working over newspaper pages at a table; a (15) \_\_\_\_\_ visitor in a hat, Aunt Ev, is sharing the sewing basket, putting the finishing touches on a big shapeless doll made out of towels; an (16) \_\_\_\_\_ young man, James Keller, is at the window watching the children.
- E. Obviously not hearing, Helen (17) \_\_\_\_\_ to go around, from person to person, tapping for eyes, but no one (18) \_\_\_\_\_ or understands.
- F. She bats her brows at the (19) \_\_\_\_\_ of speaking, but James, now downstairs, hears her and turns to see Helen with the key and doll (20) \_\_\_\_\_ her way down the steps; James takes in the whole situation, makes a move to (21) \_\_\_\_\_ Helen, but then changes his mind, lets her pass, and (22) \_\_\_\_\_ follows her out onto the porch.
- G. Upstairs, Annie enters her room, closes the door, and stands back against it; the lights, growing on her with their special color, commence to fade on Kate and Helen. Then Annie goes (23) \_\_\_\_\_ to her suitcase, and lifts it to take it toward the bed. But it knocks an object to the floor, and she turns back to regard it. A new voice comes in a cultured (24) \_\_\_\_\_, hesitant as with the effort of remembering a (25) \_\_\_\_\_.

## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the correct setting to complete each statement. On the line that follows, explain the circumstances of each episode.

1. At the (**train station, well, summer house, dining room pitcher, ladder**), Helen jettisons the key to Annie's room. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Helen pulls the shawl from the (**sewing chest, cradle, bedroom window sill, basket, suitcase**).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In the summer house, Helen falls over a (**glass of milk, box of toys, sewing card, crocheted chain, pile of paper dolls**). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The previous day, a chick was born in (**the deadhouse, the Kellers' yard, Helen's hand, a story, Helen's memories of Jimmie**). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. At Anagnos' desk stands a small replica of a (**human skeleton, smoked glass, garnet ring, granular trachoma, train**). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Part II: Character (30 points)

Check each description that applies to both Helen and Annie.

- 1. are born normal.
- 2. are intelligent.
- 3. are demanding.
- 4. lose a brother.
- 5. frequently witness death.
- 6. travel the east coast.
- 7. have doting parents.
- 8. need to prove themselves.
- 9. hate snobbery.
- 10. are energetic.
- 11. need time to grasp a difficult concept.
- 12. depend on Kate.
- 13. enjoy knitting.
- 14. travel by horse and buggy.
- 15. rely on sense of smell.

**Comprehension Test A (Page 2)**

**Part III: Short Answer (20 points)**

Supply a phrase or sentence in answer to each question below.

1. What aspects of training are brutal? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How does Helen learn patience? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why does James irritate and argue with his father?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How does Anagnos characterize Annie's faults?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What does Helen notice about the towel doll?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Why does the Battle of Vicksburg come up in conversation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What aspects of maturity hamper Helen's schooling?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How does Annie anger and annoy Captain Keller?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How does the family welcome Helen after her absence?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Why is Helen excited to recall "wah wah"?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain why Helen needs an outsider to discipline her.
2. Describe the hardships of growing up in a state institution.
3. Discuss evidence that Helen is intelligent.
4. Characterize Annie's preparations for meeting Helen.
5. Contrast life in the summer house with life at home.



## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Supply terms to complete each of the following statements.

1. Helen conceals the key in her \_\_\_\_\_, then loosens a \_\_\_\_\_ and drops the key into the water.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is overwhelmed to learn that Helen folded the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ does not overvalue Helen's mastery of verbs and nouns because she hasn't learned the importance of a single \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ intervenes when Kate asks the Captain's permission to write one more \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ asks Annie if it hurts to be \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Who discovers that Helen is blind?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who stops believing in wonders?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What does James think is the "kindest thing"?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who tumbles from the cradle?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What does Annie think God owes her?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Who is working-class Irish?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What is the name of the Keller house?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. How many operations has Helen had on her eyes?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What does Annie spell after she knocks the doll's head on the floor?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who goes on a two-hour ride in the country?

## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

### Part III: True/False (30 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- 1. Helen recognizes foods by smell and touch.
- 2. James insults his mother at the summer house.
- 3. Annie writes a triumphant letter to Anagnos.
- 4. Percy rings the bell because Helen has grabbed the scissors.
- 5. Keller is prejudiced against northerners.
- 6. Annie uses a piece of cake to lure Helen from the doll.
- 7. The students present Annie a garnet ring as a going-away present.
- 8. Annie asks for \$25 a month until she repays the cost of a train ticket.
- 9. The doctor hides the fact that he believes Helen will die.
- 10. Helen's attack on Mildred prompts Captain Keller to write to Mr. Anagnos.
- 11. Annie hits Helen for stabbing her with a needle and for knocking out her tooth.
- 12. Annie was valedictorian of her class.
- 13. Annie disagrees with Dr. Howe's writings on educating the deaf.
- 14. At the homecoming party, Helen tests her family by misbehaving.
- 15. Annie is the miracle worker.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Explaining the meaning of "miracle" in the title.
- 2. Discuss the importance of "wah wah" to Helen.
- 3. Describe the value of physical handicap to Annie's teaching.
- 4. Propose other ways of helping Helen to learn words.
- 5. Account for contrasting types of stubbornness in the play.

## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. belfry     | 14. pantomime |
| 2. crescendo  | 15. benign    |
| 3. setter     | 16. indolent  |
| 4. unkempt    | 17. commences |
| 5. noticeably | 18. attends   |
| 6. protruding | 19. folly     |
| 7. abrupt     | 20. groping   |
| 8. restraint  | 21. intercept |
| 9. flanked    | 22. amusedly  |
| 10. litter    | 23. wearily   |
| 11. baffledly | 24. murmur    |
| 12. frantic   | 25. text      |
| 13. bizarre   |               |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- well
- suitcase
- box of toys
- Helen's hand
- human skeleton

#### Part II: Character (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. X | 6.    | 11. X |
| 2. X | 7.    | 12.   |
| 3. X | 8. X  | 13.   |
| 4.   | 9.    | 14. X |
| 5.   | 10. X | 15.   |

#### Part III: Short Answer (30 points)

Answers will vary.

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- mouth, board
- Kate, napkin
- Annie, word
- Aunt Ev, letter
- Jimmie, dead

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

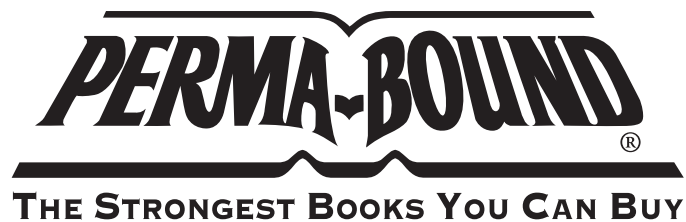
- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Kate           | 6. Annie     |
| 2. Keller         | 7. Ivy Green |
| 3. an asylum      | 8. nine      |
| 4. Mildred        | 9. bad girl  |
| 5. a resurrection | 10. Helen    |

#### Part III: True/False (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  | 11. F |
| 2. F | 7. F  | 12. T |
| 3. F | 8. F  | 13. F |
| 4. T | 9. F  | 14. T |
| 5. T | 10. F | 15. T |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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