



Teaching with *Helen Keller*: *Inspiring Opportunity for All*

CONNECTION TO STANDARDS

Students will identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.2)

DIFFERENTIATION FOR ESL

- Review these additional vocabulary words in context: *resisted*, *patient*, *enrolled*, *accept*, *impossible*, *defend*, *rights*, *demand*, *achievements*, *obstacle*.
- Allow students to complete word maps for any term for which they have limited understanding. Have students say or write the definition in their own words and think of words related to the term.
- Provide each student with sticky notes. While reading, encourage students to put a sticky note next to any phrase or word in the text that they find confusing. After reading, pair students with a partner and allow them to help each other clarify the confusing points in the text.



Lexile: 790L
Words: 632

GRL: TK

BEFORE READING

Build Background Knowledge: Write the words *deaf* and *blind* on the board. Explain to students that being deaf means you cannot hear, and that being blind means you cannot see.

- Ask students to raise their hands to share some things it might be hard for a person to do if they are deaf. Then have them share some things it might be hard for a person to do if they are blind. Once they are finished sharing ideas, explain that people who are deaf and blind can do all of those things, just in different ways.
- Explain that Helen Keller was a woman who was able to accomplish many things despite being both deaf and blind. Tell students they will read about some of those accomplishments and how Helen was able to achieve them in the book.

Preview

- Show the cover of the book. Read the title and ask students to define *inspiring* and *opportunity*. Have students name someone who inspires them.
- Explore the cover illustration. Ask students to describe what they see, and to guess what the people in the picture are doing.

- Lead students in a brief picture walk of the book, exploring the illustrations and photos on each page. Have students identify one or two details in each illustration. Point out the text features.

Predict: Ask students to predict some of Helen Keller’s accomplishments they will read about in the book. Have students support their predictions with evidence they discovered while previewing the book.

Vocabulary: Turn to page 23 (“Words to Know”). Review each vocabulary word and the provided definition. For each word, have students.

- give a thumbs-up if they know the word well.
- give a thumbs-sideways if they don’t know the word well.
- give a thumbs-down if they don’t know the word at all

Strengthen understanding of words students do not know well by modeling how to use the word in a sentence. Create sentences with rich context clues, then review how the context clues help students understand the meaning. Have students come up with their own sentences for each word.

Skill Introduction: Turn to page 4 and point out the word “communicate.” Invite volunteers to define “communicate.” Then ask students to share various ways people communicate and list them on the board. Once you are finished, review the list and cross off any ways in which a person who is blind and deaf would not be able to communicate.

Explain that by writing the book, the author is communicating information about Helen Keller to readers. Students will receive that information by reading the book. But how would they be able to read the book if they were blind?

Turn to page 10 and point out the word “Braille.” Then turn to the glossary on page 23 and read the definition of “Braille.” Tell students they will learn more about Braille after they finish reading the book.

DURING READING

Check for Understanding: Ask students the following questions as they read.

- p. 4, *How and at what age did Helen lose her sight and hearing?* (A mysterious illness; age 1.5)
- p. 6, *What happened when Helen was 6 that changed her life?* (Her parents hired Anne Sullivan to be her teacher.)
- pp. 8-11, *What are some ways in which Helen learned language?* (Finger spelling, Braille, printing block letters, lip reading, speech classes)

- pp. 12-13, *What big milestone did Helen achieve in 1904?* (She became the first blind and deaf person to ever earn a college degree.)
- pp. 14-15, *What are some things Helen did to help others with disabilities?* (She spoke to audiences about her experiences, raised money and support for blind people, helped begin Helen Keller International, and helped start the American Civil Liberties Union.)
- p. 16, *Which important right did women receive in 1904 thanks in part to Helen's work?* (The right to vote)
- pp. 18-21, *What were some of Helen's other accomplishments?* (She wrote many articles and 12 books. She traveled to 35 countries to speak and advocate for the blind. She was elected to the Women's Hall of Fame.)

Reinforce Vocabulary

- p. 18, Review the definition of advocate. Ask students to share a time they advocated for something or someone, or that another person advocated for them.
- p. 21, Have students reveal a time they showed determination to learn or do something. Were they able to learn or do it?

AFTER READING

Theme: Explain that one theme of the book is how Helen learned to communicate and to receive communication despite being deaf and blind. Challenge students to try to communicate something to the class without speaking or making any sounds. They can use facial expressions, hand gestures, etc. The other students can try to guess what they're communicating.































Then, explain that many deaf people communicate using American Sign Language. Show students this video so they can learn how to say some school-related words in sign language: <https://youtu.be/HgccKNug1tI>

Skill: Remind students that Helen Keller learned to read using Braille. Give each student a copy of the following chart of the Braille alphabet: (courtesy of Education.com).

Using the Braille alphabet as a guide, have students write their names in Braille. They can then turn their papers over and gently push the tip of their pencil onto each dot so that the dots become raised (without poking holes in the paper). Next they can turn their paper back over, close their eyes, and practice "reading" their names in Braille.

The Braille Alphabet

Flip over the paper and poke the black dots with a pencil, just enough to create a bump so that you feel the braille.

 a	 b	 c	 d	 e
 f	 g	 h	 i	 j
 k	 l	 m	 n	 o
 p	 q	 r	 s	 t
 u	 v	 w	 x	 y
 z	 .	 ,	 ?	 !

Can you spell your name using the braille alphabet?