

Helen Keller

From a Newslea Article

Helen Keller

Helen Keller was the first of two daughters born to Arthur H. Keller and Katherine Adams Keller. Keller was born with her senses of sight and hearing and started speaking when she was just 6 months old. She started walking at the age of 1. In 1882, however, Keller contracted an illness that produced a high body temperature. Within a few days, Keller had lost both her sight and hearing. She was just 19 months old. As Keller got older, she became very wild and behaved badly. She inflicted raging fits on her parents. Many family relatives felt she should be institutionalized.

Educator Anne Sullivan

In 1886, looking for answers, Keller's parents traveled to a famous school for the blind in Boston, Massachusetts. The head of the school suggested Helen work with a teacher who had attended the school. The teacher's name was Anne Sullivan. On March 3, 1887, Sullivan went to Keller's home in Alabama. She began by teaching 6-year-old Helen finger-spelling. They started with the word "doll," to help Keller understand that she had been given a doll. At first, Keller was curious. Then she became defiant, refusing to cooperate with Sullivan's instruction. However, Sullivan did not give up. One day, Sullivan taught Keller the word "water" by helping her learn the letters in the word by placing Keller's hand under the water at the water pump. While Sullivan moved the lever to wash Keller's hand with cool water, she spelled out the word w-a-t-e-r on Helen's other hand. Keller moved to other objects with the help of Sullivan. By nightfall, she had learned 30 words.

A Formal Education

In 1890, Keller began speech classes in Boston. She became determined to go to college and later would attend Radcliffe College. By this time, Keller had learned how to speak and write and, with the help of Sullivan, Keller wrote her first book. It was called "The Story of My Life." The book covered Keller's transformation from when she was a child to her days as a 21-year-old college student. Keller graduated from Radcliffe in 1904, at the age of 24. After college, Keller set out to discover more about the world. She wanted to learn how she could help improve the lives of others. News of her story spread beyond Massachusetts and New England. She became well-known by sharing her experiences with audiences and working for others living with disabilities. In 1924, she joined the American Federation for the Blind. There, she helped raise awareness, money and support.

Work And Influence

In 1946, Keller went to work for a group that assisted blind people all over the world. Between 1946 and 1957, she traveled to 35 countries on five continents. Through her many speeches and appearances, she inspired and encouraged millions of people. Keller's "The Story of My Life" was made into a television movie called "The Miracle Worker." In 1959, the story was developed into a Broadway play of the same title, and in 1962, an award winning movie based on the play was released. During her remarkable life, Keller stood as a strong example of how hard work and creativity can allow a person to conquer hardship. By not giving up when faced with difficulty, she became respected and world-famous. She was known for working hard to better the lives of other people.