

Listening 2: The Story of My Life

Helen Keller: I cannot 1. _____ what happened during the first months after my illness. I only know that I sat in my mother's lap or clung to her dress as she went about her 2. _____. My hands felt every object and observed every motion, and in this way I learned to know many things. Soon I felt the need of some communication with others and began to make 3. _____. A shake of the head meant "No" and a nod, "Yes." A pull meant "Come" and a push, "Go!" Was it bread that I wanted? Then I would 4. _____ the acts of cutting the slices and buttering them. If I wanted my mother to make ice cream for dinner, I made the sign for working the freezer and shivered, indicating cold. My mother, moreover, succeeded in making me understand a good deal. I always knew when she wished me to bring her something, and I would run upstairs or anywhere else she indicated. Indeed, I owe to her 5. _____ all that was bright and good in my long night. ...

I do not remember when I first realized that I was different from other people, but I knew it before my teacher came to me. I had noticed that my mother and my friends did not use signs as I did when they wanted anything done, but talked with their mouths. Sometimes I stood between two persons who were 6. _____ and touched their lips. I could not understand and was vexed. I moved my lips and 7. _____ without result. This made me so angry at times that I kicked and screamed until I was exhausted....

Many 8. _____ of those early years are fixed in my memory, isolated, but clear and distinct, making the sense of that silent, 9. _____, day-less life all the more 10. _____

Meanwhile, the desire to express myself grew. The few signs I used became less and less 11. _____, and my failures to make myself understood were 12. _____ followed by 13. _____ of passion. I felt as if invisible hands were holding me, and I made 14. _____ to free myself. I struggled-not that struggling helped matters, but the spirit of 15. _____ was strong within me; I generally broke down in tears and 16. _____. If my mother happened to be near, I crept into her arms, too 17. _____ even to remember the cause of the tempest. After a while, the need of some means of communication became so urgent that these outbursts occurred daily, sometimes hourly....

The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the 18. _____ between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

On the afternoon of that 19._____ I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed 16._____ from my mother's signs and from the hurrying to and fro in the house that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. The afternoon sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch, and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost 20._____ on the familiar leaves and blossoms which had just come forth to greet the sweet southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. 21._____ had preyed upon me continually for weeks, and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.

Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a 22._____ white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with 23._____ for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbor was. "Light! Give me light!" was the 24._____ of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

I felt 25._____ I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Someone took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to 26._____ all things to me, and more than all things else, to love me.

The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a 27._____. The little 28._____ children at the Perkins Institution had sent it ... but I did not know this until afterward. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-l-l". I was at once interested in this 29._____ and tried to imitate it.

When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with 30._____ and pride. Running downstairs to my mother, I held up my hand and made the letters for doll. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like 31._____. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this 32._____ a great many words, among them pin, hat, cup and a few verbs like sit, stand, and walk. But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name....

Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is mug and that "w-a-t-e-r" is water, but I 33._____ in confounding the two. In despair, she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her 34._____ and seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the 35._____ of

the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived, there was no strong 36._____ . I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my 37._____ was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a 38._____ may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the 39._____ of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water, and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the 40._____ of her fingers.

Suddenly I felt a misty 41._____ as of something forgotten-a thrill of returning thought-and somehow the 42._____ of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul; gave it light, hope, joy; set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. ...

I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that mother, father, sister, teacher were among them-words that were to make the world 43._____ for me, "like Aaron's rod, with flowers!' It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me and for the first time longed for a new day to come. . .

I recall many incidents of the summer of 1887 that followed my soul's 44._____. I did nothing but explore with my hands and learn the name of every object that I touched and the more I handled things and learned their names and uses, the more 45._____ grew my sense of kinship with the rest of the world.