

# - NEVER SAY YOU CAN'T -

Imagine you couldn't see anything. Now imagine you couldn't hear anything either. What would your life be like? How would you communicate with other people? How would you look after yourself? Helen Keller was born over 100 years ago. She wrote 11 books, met 12 US presidents and travelled to 39 countries in spite of being blind and deaf.

Helen was born in the small farm town of Tuscumbia, Alabama, in 1880. She was a bright, healthy child but when she was 19 months old, she had a high fever. After she recovered, she couldn't see or hear anything. She had entered a dark, silent world. She could only recognise people by feeling their faces or their clothes.

Helen used to get very frustrated and angry. Her parents knew they had to get help. When Helen was seven, they found a special teacher named Anne Sullivan. Anne had once been blind too, but operations had restored her sight. Anne taught Helen the signs for letters of the alphabet and how to spell. Unfortunately, Helen didn't understand what the signs meant. One day, Anne held Helen's hand under a water pump and signed the letters for 'water' in her other hand.



The girl suddenly understood the connection between signs and things. She called it a miracle, and the experience changed her life forever. On the way home, Helen learnt the signs for 30 new words!

By the time she was 10, Helen had learnt to speak by feeling her teacher's mouth when she was talking. By the age of 20, she had learnt to read French, German, Greek and Latin in Braille - a system of raised dots representing letters. In 1900, Helen went to Radcliffe College and, while she was there, she wrote her first book: *The Story of My Life*. It became an international best seller!

For the rest of her life, Helen Keller gave speeches, did research and raised money for charities. She also campaigned to improve the lives of blind people who, at that time, were badly educated and lived in asylums. Two Oscar-winning movies were made about her extraordinary life. She died peacefully in her sleep in 1968, at the age of 87. Helen once said, 'Life is either a great adventure or nothing.' Obviously for Helen, life was truly a great adventure!

## 1. Read and listen to the story of Helen Keller. Then, read the sentences below and decide if they are TRUE or FALSE

- Helen became deaf and blind after a short illness.
- Helen could only recognise people by their voices.
- Anne Sullivan was blind when she met Helen.
- The first word Helen understood in sign language was *water*.
- Helen only knew 30 words.
- Helen learnt to read by using Braille.
- She wrote her first book after leaving college.
- Helen worked hard to improve the lives of other people.
- Helen starred in two Oscar-winning films.

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## 2. Match to complete the sentences

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Helen's life was a great                   | a. fever.      |
| 2. She entered a silent                       | b. dots.       |
| 3. She was born in a small                    | c. bestseller. |
| 4. She was a healthy                          | d. adventure.  |
| 5. Anne Sullivan was a special                | e. world.      |
| 6. As an infant, Helen had a high             | f. town.       |
| 7. Braille is a system of raised              | g. child.      |
| 8. Helen's first book became an international | h. teacher.    |

## 3. Read the question and choose the correct answer

① Hi! Our names are Chloe and Sam.

- a. Hi. Nice to meet you.
- b. How old are you?
- c. I just said that.

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② When did you arrive?

- a. We arrived at the station.
- b. This morning. And you?
- c. I've been waiting for an hour.

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③ We've just arrived too.

- a. What is whitewater rafting?
- b. Have you already seen the camp?
- c. I don't know.

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④ Yes. It's great.  
We'll show you around!

- a. Brilliant! Let's go.
- b. Have you made a film?
- c. No, I'm bored.

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