



HELEN KELLER IN HER STORY

PHOENIX LEARNING GROUP, 1953
BLACK & WHITE
GRADES 5-12
48 MINUTES

DESCRIPTION

Portrays all parts of Helen Keller's life. Shows her early life, her education, and work. Also depicts her travel experiences, showing the notables she met. Ends with her speech lessons and dally living habits. 1955 Academy Award winner for best documentary.

GOALS

1. To examine the life of a person who is disabled.
2. To dramatize life lessons that one person can give others.
3. To draw parallels between deaf-blindness as it existed in the past and exists in the present.
4. To aid in the study of the biographical form of literature.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. State the effects of the onset of deaf-blindness on a person at birth, or during infancy.
2. Obtain facts about Helen Keller's life.
3. Deduce what lessons of life Helen Keller taught others.
4. Examine the medical, educational, and vocational services available to deaf-blind people today.



BEFORE SHOWING

Review the SCRIPT for vocabulary and language concepts.

DISCUSSION ITEMS AND QUESTIONS

1. What happened to Helen Keller when she was 15 months old? What was the result?
2. How do you rate the medical treatment she received then?
3. How long did Helen have to wait until she learned to communicate, read, and write? Describe her behavior at that time.
4. Under what circumstances did Helen Keller begin to understand the communication processes?
5. How did Helen learn to communicate? How did she learn, to read and write? How did she learn to read lips?

6. Helen wanted to learn to speak and had a good speech teacher, but her speech never was good. Why did this upset her?
7. What kind of work did she want to do?
8. Who did she live with for fifty years? What was the name Helen gave this person?
9. How did Helen develop her senses of touch, smell, and taste?
10. What help did she obtain in her work and travels?
11. What countries did she visit?
12. What celebrities did she meet?
13. What unique experiences did she have?
14. Describe what you think were her greatest accomplishments.
15. Explain her philosophy of life as described in the media.
16. What were Helen's goals in life? Did she accomplish all of them?
17. How did Helen obtain friendship and love? Draw parallels between her methods and other people's.



18. People talk about being "free to be me." Did Helen have the freedom of choice or opportunities to exercise her free will? State instances to support your opinion.
19. What transforming factor was most important in Helen's life? Think positively, then negatively.
20. How did Helen feel about being deaf and blind? Why did she say she would choose blindness over deafness?
21. If you had to choose, would you choose blindness over deafness or deafness over blindness? Why?
22. People consider Helen Keller a legendary figure, but she was also a human being. Cite one instance from the media that shows how lovable and human she was.
23. Who was Louis Braille and what is the Braille alphabet?
24. Why was Helen such a good communicator?
25. How did the media portray Helen's disability in 1953? How would it be portrayed today? Do you think the media would be produced the same way? Why? Why not?

APPLICATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. List what and how we learn through our sense of hearing and by our sight.
2. Blindfold yourself and attempt to communicate with classmates and to move throughout the classroom.
3. Write a letter to Helen Keller as if she were living today.
4. Write a personality profile of Helen Keller, describing her physical, mental, and emotional characteristics.
5. Write a brief biography of Helen Keller.
6. Analyze the stages of adjustment to a disability: shock, disbelief, denial, anger, bargaining, mourning, and acceptance. How does this apply to you?
7. Visit a class for the deaf-blind in your community. Observe how they are taught. In what ways is it different from the way you are taught?
8. Determine if your school or community offers these accommodations to deaf-blind persons: accessible public transportation, interpreters for educational or social activities, assistance with shopping and banking, and opportunities for employment.
9. Invite a medical person to speak about the causes of deaf-blindness, medical improvements to save hearing and sight, and assistive devices for the deaf-blind.
10. Research the services available for the deaf-blind throughout the United States.



RELATED RESOURCES

DCMP

[The DCMP Helen Keller Webpage](#)

[The Miracle Worker](#) (with Melissa Gilbert as Keller)

[The Miracle Worker](#) (based on the play by William Gibson)

[Tragedy to Triumph](#)

[Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan \(1928 Newsreel Footage\) & Helen Keller](#)

[Meeting First Lady Grace Coolidge \(1926 Newsreel Footage\)](#)

VIDEO

The World at His Fingertips. Library, Inc., New York. 1987.

PAMPHLET

"Facts About Deaf-Blindness." Washington. D.C.: Hearing-Vision Impaired Programs. Gallaudet University, 1985.



The marvelous richness of human experience would lose something of rewarding joy if there were no limitations to overcome.

The hilltop hour would not be half so wonderful if there were no dark valleys to traverse.

-Helen Keller

WEBSITES

The following websites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the DCMP do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

[Helen Keller Kids Museum](#)

[Helen Keller Services for the Blind](#)

[The Time 100 profile for Helen Keller](#)

[Google timeline results for Helen Keller](#)

[Helen Keller Foundation for Research and Education](#)



SCRIPT

This desk belonged
to Helen Keller.

It is now in a room

at the American Foundation
for the Blind.

I'm Patty Duke Astin.

I have a special interest
in Helen Keller.

I played her
in *The Miracle Worker*,

in the play,
and the film.

The uncontrollable child
of *The Miracle Worker*

grew to be world-famous,

bettering the lives
of millions of blind

and deaf-blind people
around the world.

She is the subject
of more than 400 books,

thousands of articles,
and many, many films.

Here in the Helen Keller Room,
along with her desk,

are many mementos
of her life and work:

awards, medals, letters, citations,

gifts from blind
and deaf-blind people.

Of special interest
is this Academy Award Oscar

presented in 1955 to the best
theatrical documentary of the year,

the film you're about to see,
Helen Keller In Her Story.

Produced by Nancy Hamilton

and narrated by
Katharine Cornell,

both friends
of Ms. Keller,

the film is fascinating

as a portrayal
of an extraordinary woman

and as a documentary
at its best.

The film takes Keller's life
through 1953,

though she lived
until 1968.

In the intervening years,

she continued her work
for blind and deaf-blind people,

usually with the American Foundation
for the Blind,

which continues
that work today.

Wherever and whenever
there was an opportunity

to champion the rights
of blind people,

the foundation and
Ms. Keller were there.

She was the guiding spirit
of the organization

and continues so today.

To perpetuate that spirit,

the foundation
is reissuing this film.

We hope it will serve
as a reminder

that blindness, deafness,
or any other handicap

need not be a deterrent

to a useful, busy,
and happy life.

Ms. Keller had such a life.

I'm sure you will agree

that this film preserves

the indomitable spirit
of Helen Keller.

I hope you enjoy this film
as much as I have.

Thank you.

♪

(female narrator)
In this room sits
a remarkable woman.

She is Helen Keller.

She does not see
the book she is reading.

She sees nothing.

She does not hear the rustling
curtains behind her.

She hears nothing.

She is deaf, deaf and blind.

But if you enter her room,
she will know.

Your footfall will tell her
you are coming.

They'll tell her who you are
if she knows you,

as she knows Polly Thomson.

Polly has been
with Helen 40 years.

For half of these, she's been
Helen's only companion,

Helen's eyes and ears.

She talks with Helen
by a finger system

in which each letter
has a sign, like this.

In reaching out beyond
her dark and soundless night,

Helen depends most on touch.

It is the acute disappointment

Two other senses remain:

in not being able
to speak normally.

There is taste,
and there is smell.

It is the acute disappointment

The scent of objects
and places and people

in not being able
to speak normally.

tells Helen much that we learn
with eyes and ears.

Longingly, I think how much
more good I might have done

Her hand is her chief link
with the world:

if I had only acquired
natural speech.

with Polly, with Anne,
the part-time helper,

Longingly, I feel how much more good
I could have done

with everyone she encounters.

if I had acquired
normal speech.

With her hand,
she reads Anne's lips.

But out of this
sorrowful experience,

She answers with her voice.

I understand more fully...

It is an unnatural voice
and her great sorrow.

But out of this
sorrowful experience,

Helen has never learned
to speak clearly.

I understand more fully...

This isn't strange,
for since she was a baby,

all human strivings...

she has not heard a word
nor seen lips forming one.

all human strivings...

Let Helen,
with Polly's help, tell you.

thwarted ambitions...

thwarted ambitions...

It is not blindness or deafness
that brings me my darkest hours.

and the infinite capacity
of hope.

It is not blindness or deafness
that bring me my darkest hours.

and the infinite capacity
of hope.

(narrator)
The story of Helen Keller

has become a legend
that belongs to the world.

She was born in 1880
in Tuscumbia, Alabama,

the eldest child
of Capt. Arthur H. Keller

and Kate Adams Keller.

Born a normal, healthy baby,

she had an illness
at 19 months

that left her blind,
deaf, and mute.

Until she was nearly 7,

she lived in darkness
and silence,

alone beyond human reach,
unaware, untaught.

Then Helen's mother
read a travel book

by a great Englishman.

The author spoke of a school
where a deaf-blind girl

had learned miraculously
to read and write.

From the Perkins Institute
for the Blind

came Helen's liberator,
young Anne Mansfield Sullivan.

Annie Sullivan, herself
half blind as a child,

her vision
never fully restored,

broke through the darkness
and silence of Helen's life.

With minute,
painstaking steps,

she led Helen into realizing
that around her

was an unimagined world
of sight and sound,

that communication was possible
between human beings.

Once Helen's quick intelligence
was freed, it leaped ahead.

She learned the meaning
of reading.

Within three months,
with ruler and pencil,

she had written
her first letter.

At 9, she was corresponding

with a famous preacher,
Phillips Brooks.

At 10, she could call herself
a published writer.

With Annie always beside her,

fingerspelling every lesson
into her hand,

Helen was going to school.

From Annie's hand to Helen's flowed
the classroom lectures.

She learned to read
in five languages.

Helen learned
the seemingly impossible.

She learned to speak.

Now she and Annie both voiced
one ambition:

that Helen should try
for college.

Educators shook their heads
as the two settled to their task,

summers and winters
of tireless preparation

from Annie's hand
to Helen's.

♪

In 1904, Helen Keller
graduated cum laude

from Radcliffe College.

Blind, deaf,
but no longer mute,

she was ready to face
the world.

Now she began writing
articles and books

about the needs
of the deaf and the blind.

She also wrote a poem
in blank verse.

"Come walk with me,
and I will tell

"What I have read
in this scroll of stone;

"I will spell out this writing
on hill and meadow.

"It is a chronicle wrought
by praying workmen,

"The forefathers
of our nation--

"Leagues upon leagues
of sealed history

awaiting an interpreter."

Helen was living now
in a farmhouse near Boston.

Annie Sullivan
had married John Macy,

and they shared the house
with her.

Old friends visited them:

her classmates
from college;

great men who had
long championed her:

Alexander Graham Bell,
inventor of the telephone,

who had encouraged Annie
during Helen's early training;

Mark Twain, who called
Helen and Napoleon

the most interesting figures
of the 19th century.

She was visited
by her sister, Mildred,

and by her mother.

Helen was working hard
to improve her voice

so that she might lecture
as well as write.

Of this first lecture
she wrote:

"I wonder if anyone has ever made
his first appearance

"upon the platform
with keener anguish.

"Terror invaded my flesh.

"My mind froze,
my heart stopped beating.

I kept repeating,
'What shall I do?'"

With outward calm, she and Annie
went on the platform.

She spoke,
Annie interpreted,

and together they showed
how Helen had learned to speak.

For all Helen's fears,
the audience rose to her.

It was the beginning
of a five-year lecture tour.

By now she was one of
the most famous women in the world.

With letters pouring in,
there began that bondage
to the mailbag

that Helen Keller
was never to escape.

Soon she and Annie
needed a secretary,

and they found one,

a young Scotswoman
named Polly Thomson.

1919 saw them in Hollywood.

They were welcomed
by Hollywood's royalty,

Douglas Fairbanks
and Mary Pickford.

Helen had agreed
to make a picture.



The movie was called
Deliverance.

With the exception
of a manufactured plot

to provide romance

and an elaborate Hollywood attempt
at symbolism,

the picture was a forerunner
of the documentary film.

It showed how Helen
could type

and write braille

and how she could dance.

It showed her
with her mother

and with her brother,
Phillips Keller.

It showed her first
aeroplane ride,

a daring feat at that time.

[engine roaring]
rrrrr

Then, of course,
the movie climaxed

with a typical
Hollywood spectacle finish.

Many people were shocked

that Helen
would make a movie.

They were aghast
at her next step, vaudeville.

♪

For two years,
Helen and her teacher

trouped the vaudeville circuit,
earning their daily bread.

A part of their so-called act
was later filmed.

It is the only existing record
of Annie Sullivan's voice.

When I saw
Helen Keller first,

she was six years
and eight months old.

She had been blind
and deaf and mute

since her 19th month
as the result of an illness.

She had no way of communicating
with those around her,

except a few imitative signs

that she had made
for herself.

A push meant "go,"
and a pull meant "come,"

and so on.

She had observed
that we did not use the hands

when we were talking
to each other,

and I let her see,
by putting her hand on my face,

how we talk with our mouths.

She felt the vibration
of the spoken words.

Instantly, she spelled,
"I want to talk with my mouth."

That seemed impossible,

but after experimenting
for a time,

we found that placing her hand
in this position--

the thumb resting on the throat,
right at the larynx,

the first finger on the lips,
the second on the nose--

we found
that she could feel

the vibration
of spoken words.

For instance,
the throat:

She feels the *g*,
the hard *g*.

[g]

[g]

And on the lips, she feels,

the, uh--and
the *k* sound.

[k], [k]

[k], [k]

On the lips,
she feels the *b*.

[b]

[b]

And the [p].

[p]

And with the second finger
on the nose,

the nasal sounds,
the [n].

[n]

The [m].

[m]

The first word
she learned to articulate

was the little word *it*.

With the hand in this position,

I made the vowel [i].

[i]

She felt it.

[i]

[i]

Then I made the *t*.

[t], [t]

[t]

She feels it with the finger
on her lips--

on my lips.

Then I put
the two letters together

to form the word *it*.

it

And the first word was learned.

After her seventh lesson,

she was able
to speak the sentence

word by word:

I

I

am

am

not

not

dumb

dumb

now.

now.

(narrator)

Calling attention to the needs
of the blind and the deaf,

Helen worked endlessly

to gain for their
more enlightened treatment,

more schools, more homes;

above all, to make people understand

that the greatest service
to the blind

is the prevention
of blindness.

In a day
when venereal disease

was not a topic for discussion
among women, Helen spoke out.

She was recognized
not just as a wonder,

but as a wonder worker.

Great men and women of her time
wished to know her.

She made Coolidge smile.

President Hoover received her
and her fellow members

of the First World Conference
for the Blind.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
befriended her

in her efforts
for the handicapped.

Like all the great, she was asked
to launch a ship.

Like all the great,
she was made an Indian.

♪

Writers wondered at her.

Artists sculpted her.

Poets drew inspiration
from her.

To the world, the miracle
was Helen Keller.

To Helen, the miracle
was Annie Sullivan.

Then in 1936,

Helen's teacher, companion,
and beloved friend

for nearly 50 years,
Annie Sullivan, died.

Polly Thomson--

warm, devoted, well-trained
for this unique job--

was there to take Annie's place
at Helen's side.

From that day,
she has never left it.

♪

Together they follow
Annie's star,

from continent to continent
they go.

To Britain, Italy, Greece,
New Zealand.

Perpetual beggars,
they call themselves,

in the cause
of the handicapped.

The newsreels of the world
have come to know Helen.

(male newsreel announcer)
Helen Keller arrives
at Kingsford Smith Airport

to begin an Australian-wide
lecture tour.

She has brought light
and hope and courage

to thousands
of afflicted people.

Blind and deaf,

Ms. Keller could never learn
to speak normally.

When she addresses
young students,

her artificially acquired monotone

is interpreted
by Ms. Thomson

for children with partial
or aided hearing.

I know every step of the road
you are traveling...

I know every step of the road
you are taking...

and I rejoice at your cheer
and determination...

and I rejoice at your cheer
and determination...

because the obstacles
you meet are many.

because the obstacles
you meet are many.

And when you go out to life's struggles
and adventures...

And when you go out to life's struggles
and adventures...

you will raise a banner...

you will raise a banner...

for the deaf who follow you.

for the deaf who follow you.

(male newsreel announcer)
At Wahroonga School
for Blind Children,

Helen meets Alice Betteridge
of Victoria,

also blind, deaf, and dumb.

Today, Ms. Betteridge achieves
a lifelong ambition

as Helen Keller speaks to her

in the only language
she can understand.

[indistinct conversation]

I'm glad to see you at last.

I'm glad to see you at last.

(male newsreel announcer)
If Helen Keller could see

the excitement
on Ms. Betteridge's face,

it alone would make the trip
worthwhile.

(male newsreel announcer #2)
As guest of Israel,
the famous Helen Keller

visits a village
set apart for the blind.

Keller's visit marks
a new era.

When she explains segregation
is bad for the blind,

authorities act promptly.

Seeing inhabitants are being
encouraged to settle there.

The name has been changed
from Ha'ivrim,

meaning "Village of the Blind,"

to Or Adonai,
meaning "Light of God."

(male newsreel announcer #3)
In Johannesburg, the children
of St. Vincent's School for the Deaf

have been rehearsing their
percussion band for weeks

for the visit
of Helen Keller,

the deaf-blind American
who surmounted her cruel handicaps

to become world-famous.

The band is a triumph
of patience,

for none of these children

can hear a single note
they're playing.

[bells ringing]

[whistle tweets]
tweet, tweet, tweet

[cymbals crash in rhythm]
clang, clang, clang, clang

From the blind children
of South Africa,

Helen Keller takes home
a message in braille

bearing cordial wishes
to the children of America.

(male newsreel announcer #4)
For the first time
since before the war,

Helen Keller pays a visit
to Japan

as a guest
of the United States government.

In Tokyo and other cities,

the population turns out
to cheer this American

left blind and deaf
by an affliction.

To the Japanese people,

Ms. Keller's life
is an example

of what hope and determination
can do,

for she has conquered darkness
and isolation

to become a world figure.

(narrator)
Nowhere is Helen
more widely appreciated,

more deeply honored,
than in Japan.

The needs of their blind
and deaf have been great,

and twice she has toured
their islands

in aid of their afflicted.

Schoolchildren line
each route she takes,

singing songs especially written
for her.

Rich and poor alike
cherish her.

She is respected as a woman
and revered as a saint.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki
were still recovering

from the atomic bomb

when Helen Keller went there
on pilgrimage.

♪

In a lake of shrines,

the Japanese created
an everlasting shrine

to the memory of the great teacher
Annie Sullivan.

Helen lights the first candle.

The people of Japan will see
that the light never goes out.

When Helen is not on public errands,
she's at Arcan Ridge,

the Connecticut house
built by friends

so that she and Polly
might have

a roof and walls
of their own.

Mornings at Arcan Ridge
begin around 5:00.

For Helen, they begin
as they end, with a Bible.

"The heavens declare
the glory of God,

"and the firmament showeth
his handiwork.

"Day unto day
uttereth speech.

"Night unto night
showeth knowledge.

"There is no speech
nor language

where their voice
is not heard."

Polly, meanwhile,
has brought up the breakfast.

Sometimes something is missing
from the tray,

and it is Helen
who goes to fetch it.

Polly knows it pleases Helen
to wait upon her.

Everywhere else,
except in her own house,

Helen must be waited upon
by Polly.

Here, where every table,
every chair,

every dish in the cupboard
is her friend,

Helen can move freely
and independently.

♪

Though in this quiet house

Polly need not speak aloud
to Helen, she usually does.

It helps to drive back
the silence.

The first concern of the day
is the weather,

to know how to dress for
the morning walk with her dog.

Clear but cold.

She checks with
her braille thermometer.

She is right.

In her dressing,
Helen is completely independent.

She knows her clothes
and where to find them,

even to a stray belt.



Every morning
Helen goes for a walk

along a thousand-foot handrail

built by a friend
to guide her.

A thousand feet where
she is alone and free.

The walk seldom varies,

but for Helen it is always full
of small, unexpected events.



Helen has known
from childhood

what those with sight
cannot realize,

that one does not need eyes
to see the world.



A patch of herbs that was here
last summer is gone.

By 8:00, Helen and Polly
have made their beds,

Polly has finished
household tasks,

and their business
of the day begins.



Even at home, they carry
the responsibilities

and obligations
of public figures.

Their desk is never clear.

The mail piles up
while they are away,

and every morning,
more comes in.

The bulky packages
are books in braille.

They must wait.

The letters will be
gone through

after Polly finishes spelling out
the morning headlines.

Helen is emphatic about keeping
in touch with world events.

But the mail looms large.

A few of the letters
are personal ones,

but most of them are requests
for something.

From New Zealand:

(man #1)
"Would you send a message
to the Royal Blind Institute?"

(narrator)
From Massachusetts:

(woman #1)
"I have written a pamphlet
on teaching the deaf.

Please let me have
your comments."

(narrator)
From India:

(man #2)
"I am going blind.

Can you help me?"

(narrator)
From New York:

(girl)
"I have chosen you
as the subject of my paper.

Would you write me a letter
about yourself?"

(narrator)
After the mail, Helen goes
to her study to work.

There are reports
to be made,

speeches and articles
to be prepared.

So far as possible,
she does her own research.

She locates
her reference books

by the braille lettering
along the edge.

In her work,
she will not indulge herself

because she is handicapped.

"Everyone has his own handicaps,"
Helen says.

"It just happens to be
the handicap of the blind

that they cannot see,
for the deaf that they cannot hear."

She does her own typing.

Her speeches she does
on her braille typewriter

so she can go over them
herself for corrections.

The machine
has only six keys

because all braille letters
are made

by the combination and placement
of six raised dots.

For her letters, she uses
a regular typewriter.

She is fast and accurate,

but she has Polly
check her letters.

Being blind, she cannot
permit herself

casual mistakes
of the seeing.

If there are mistakes,
Helen types the letter again.



From the vibrations
of a buzzer,

Helen knows when it is time
for lunch.

The glint of crystals
is the one thing

Helen thinks she remembers seeing
before she went blind.

Flowers are among
her greatest pleasures.

Helen's home
is not a sad place,

because she is not
a sad woman.

She's extraordinarily gay.

She goes toward each experience
with the joy of a child.

On weekdays, there are
only three for lunch,

Helen and Polly and Anne,

who comes in to help
with housework.

Their days are too full
for social engagements.

But at teatime,
they relax

and catch up
with their personal mail.

Friends may come in.

The talk may turn to politics
or world affairs.

Helen has strong views

and has the courage
to express them,

even when they're not popular.

She also likes a good story

and appreciates a joke
as much as anyone else.

So they spend their days
at home.

Scarcely a week goes by

that Helen's calendar
doesn't call them

to a conference
or lecture.

In this case,
it is to a meeting

of the American Foundation
for the Blind.

Today, the foundation
is submitting for her approval

a device for communicating
with the deaf-blind

and for enabling the deaf-blind
to communicate with each other.

The keyboard activates
little metal prongs

that speak directly
to the fingertips in braille.

It is perhaps the most
direct means yet invented

of making contact with those
who are both deaf and blind.

"Now," Helen types out,
"anyone can speak to us directly."

Helen is interested in a great deal
that is being done

to find new ways
of helping the handicapped.

At the Dyker Street Nursery,
they are experimenting

with placing sightless children
and seeing children together.

It is important to accustom
the blind

to normal, everyday life.

At the Lexington School
for the Deaf,

she watches children at play.

Today they have a new game.

From blowing a piece of paper,

they are learning to say
"who," "what," "when," "why,"

like ordinary children.

She follows the progress
of older girls learning to talk.

Watching their struggles
with speech,

we can perhaps
more easily understand

why Helen says if she had
a choice between afflictions,

she would choose blindness.

The deaf, cut off
from the world

by lack of hearing
and speech,

need all the encouragement
she can give.

But perhaps those to whom Helen gives
her time most gladly

are those who, like herself,
are both deaf and blind.

There are perhaps 25,000
of them in this country.

In the 50 years
since Helen graduated,

there is only one other
to have achieved a college degree,

Robert Smithdas of St. John's
in Brooklyn.

They enjoy life and work
like the rest of us.

Their fortitude should
make us recall,

in respect to our own
small difficulties,

a truth spoken long ago:

"I cried because
I had no shoes

until I met a man
who had no feet."

The newly handicapped
young men

who have come back
from Korea disabled

command as much attention

as did their brothers
in the Second World War.

Then, as now, she and Polly

tramp the corridors
of our military hospitals,

bringing hope to the amputees,
the blind, and the disabled.

Meeting Helen, seeing what
she has made of her life,

gives them more courage
to reshape their own.

For her services, she was cited
at the close of World War II.

Then the leader of our armies,
later the leader of the nation,

Dwight D. Eisenhower welcomed her
to the White House

and thanked her himself.

Helen Keller asked
the president

if she might have the privilege
of seeing him.

Afterwards, of his face,
she said,

"I felt the courage
and thought that carried him

through such great years
of the world's history."

From a life lived
mostly for others,

Helen manages to save
some part for herself.

There are necessary things
like shopping.

The excitement of the city,

its vibrations under
her feet, she loves.

She enjoys the labor
of choosing and buying.

♪

She and Polly must shop
with economy.

Though it is Helen's job
to look well in public,

they must also shop
with care.

Helen's hats,
back through the decades,

are a minor footnote
on the history of our times.

Like her hats, the artists
she has encountered

also summarize an era:

Joe Jefferson when
he played Rip Van Winkle,

Caruso at the height
of his fame,

Ethel Barrymore when she was
in *Declasse*,

Melchior as Siegfried,

Benny Goodman
at Carnegie Hall.

Years ago, the young Heifetz
played for her.

Years later, Gladys Swarthout
sings for her.

♪ Bless the roofs
and chimneys tall ♪

♪ Let thy peace
lie over all ♪

♪ Bless us all
that we may be ♪

♪ Fit in order
to dwell with thee ♪

♪ Bless us all ♪

♪ That one day
we may dwell ♪

♪ On high with thee ♪♪

That is beautiful.

It is like my daily prayer.

(Polly)
That is beautiful.

It is like my daily prayer.

(narrator)
When Helen takes time to relax,
she is a merry companion.

She is interested in everything
and everybody.

Spending an evening with
Robert Helpmann, the dancer,

and Guthrie McClintock,
the director,

she seizes the opportunity

to catch up
with the amusement world.

The theater gives
her full measure,

for she reads a play
before she goes.

Dance forms she must feel,

so Helpmann volunteers
to show her the difference

between classical ballet
and the modern dance.

Mr. McClintock does not feel
Mr. Helpmann made his point

and suggests they take Helen
to study modern dancing

at close range.

Helen has been to
Martha Graham's recitals,

but this is the first time
she has been to a rehearsal.

♪

Polly must spell the action
into Helen's hand,

but she is aware
of the rhythm and movement

through vibrations
in the floor.

[resonating]
bong, bong, bong

As Martha Graham realizes,

Helen's hands need not
even touch the drums

to feel intensely
their vibrations.

[lively piano music]

Though Helen has been
to their performances,

it is only in a rehearsal
that she is able to discover

the line of body and limb

that is the living pattern
of the dance.

Once Helen wanted
to feel a lion.

Annie Sullivan informed
the zoo.

A lion was fed.

Helen entered the cage

and felt the lion
from its head to its tail.

♪

Obviously, Helen's sense
of the world--

its shape, its textures,
its forms--

comes to her
through her sense of touch.

But her knowledge of the world
comes to her through books,

and for books
she is indebted,

as are all the sightless,

to a blind Frenchman,
Louis Braille,

by whose invention the blind
of all nations can read.

It was to honor his memory

that Helen, in 1952,
went to France.

At the Paris Foundation
for the Blind,

she writes the address
to give

on the 100th anniversary
of his death.

"A notre maniere.

"In our way, we the blind are
as indebted to Louis Braille

as mankind is to Gutenberg."

Helen's speech is only a part
of the world's tribute.

Today, 100 years
after his death,

he is being taken to lie
in the Pantheon,

the burial place
of France's great.

Behind his coffin
march the blind of Paris.

♪

And later, at the Sorbonne,

Helen Keller delivers
the address in his honor.

[speaking in French]

[speaking in French]

(narrator)
Afterward, Helen Keller,
Louis Braille's great disciple,

is made Chevalier
of the Legion of Honor.

[man speaking in French]

[applause]

♪

(narrator)
Then, from time to time,
there is home again,

where they sit among familiar things
with curtains drawn

and are simply old friends.

There is peace and quiet.

There is music.

[jazz piano tune plays]

There are also the dishes
to be washed.

As Polly washes the dishes,
Helen shells pecans.

Helen keeps a careful check
on Polly.

But when the radio
is playing,

it is hard to keep
Helen's hands on her work.

Then there is bed.



"This then is the message
which we have heard of Him

"and declare unto you,

"that God is light

and in Him
is no darkness at all."

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