

***Helen's Big World: The Life of Helen Keller* by Doreen Rappaport illustrated by Matt Tavares.
Published by Disney-Hyperion, 2012.**

Summary:

This book tells the amazing story of Helen Keller's life using text that young readers can independently read, beautiful pictures, and real quotations from Helen Keller.

Awards:

- ALA Notable Book for Middle Readers
- Highly Commended, 2013 Charlotte Zolotow Award © Cooperative Children's Book Center
- CCBC Choices : Best-of-the-year.
- Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Platinum Award
- Oppenheim SNAP (Special Needs Adaptable Products) Award
- 2012 ABC Best Books for Children
- Entertainment Weekly Great New Historical Books For Kids 2012
- 2012 Nerdy Book Club Nonfiction Picture Book Award
- 2014 Amelia Bloomer Project
- Black-Eye Susan Picture Book Award Master list
- Illinois Monarch Award Master list

Book Review:

- From School Library Journal
- K-Gr 4-In a format similar to Martin's Big Words (Hyperion, 2001), Rappaport uses quotations from Helen Keller to provide the framework for this picture-book biography. A great design, incorporating the words in large type, makes this book visually striking. Large scale paintings, rendered in watercolor, pencil, and gouache, are presented on one and a half or double pages. The full images, without borders, invite children into Helen's world, while showing how big it truly became. The opening endpaper showcases the pivotal "water" moment, with teacher Annie Sullivan's and the child's hands accompanied by the quotation, "We do not think with eyes and ears, and our capacity for thought is not measured by five senses." The narrative begins at Keller's childhood home, but expands out to describe her experiences at college, with public speaking, and in championing social causes. A series of excerpts from letters demonstrates her growing proficiency in writing. A dramatic spread shows the pupil and teacher in a boat, majestically cresting a wave, emphasizing what the youngster does experience more than what she does not. While there are many books available about Helen Keller for this age group, this title offers a unique and beautiful perspective on her life.-Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, VA(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc.

Author's Webpage:

<http://doreenrappaport.com/helens-big-world/>

Illustrators Webpage:

<http://matttavares.com/helensbigworld.html>

Discussion Questions:

1. Before students read the book:
 - a. What do you think this book is going to be about?
 - b. What is a disability?
 - c. Do you know of anyone who has to overcome a disability?
2. During reading of the book:
 - a. How would you handle being blind and deaf like Helen?
 - b. Would it be easy for Helen to give up?
 - c. Do you think Braille would be hard to learn? Why?
3. After reading the book:
 - a. Why was Helen able to accomplish what she did?
 - b. If Helen can do what she did being blind and deaf, what can you accomplish?
 - c. Should we give up on people because of their disabilities?

Activities:

1. Reading:
 - Read, watch, and listen to the Nook book, *An Interactive Biography of Helen Keller for Kids*, to learn more about Helen Keller's life.
 - Use a Venn diagram to compare the two books. What did you learn from each book? What information did both books have in common?
2. Writing:
 - Free write prompt: Helen Keller is inspirational because...
3. Social Studies:
 - Study the time period of Helen Keller's life. What major events took place during her time?
 - Have students create a timeline with both events from Helen's life and major events in history.

Related Books:

- *An Interactive Biography of Helen Keller for Kids* by Charles River Editors
- *Helen Keller: A Determined Life* by Elizabeth MacLeod
- *Helen's Eyes: A Photobiography of Annie Sullivan, Helen Keller's Teacher* by Marfe Ferguson Delano
- *Helen Keller: The World in Her Heart* by Lesa Cline-Ransome, illustrated by James Ransome
- *Dear Dr. Bell... Your Friend, Helen Keller* by Judith St. George

Books by Doreen Rappaport:

- *To Dare Mighty Things: The Life of Theodore Roosevelt* illustrated by C.F. Payne
- *THE FLIGHT OF RED BIRD: The Life of Zitkala-Sa*
- *The School is Not White* illustrated by Curtis James

Books illustrated by Matt Tavares:

- *Becoming Babe Ruth* by Matt Tavares
- *There Goes Ted Williams: The Greatest Hitter Who Ever Lived* by Matt Tavares

Websites:

- <http://headoverheelsforteaching.blogspot.com/2013/06/helen-keller-social-studies-mentor-text.html>

This webpage includes videos, quotes, and teaching ideas related to *Helen's Big World*.

- <http://braillebug.afb.org/hkmuseum.asp>

This webpage is the Helen Keller Kid's Museum. Students can dive in and have all of their questions answered about Helen Keller as they explore. They can even email Helen's great grand-niece questions.

- <http://pbskids.org/arthur/print/braille/>

This webpage has a braille translator for students to learn some braille.

- The Classroom Bookshelf

<http://classroombookshelf.blogspot.com/2012/10/helens-big-world-and-annie-and-helen.html>

This website has a large list of teaching and related ideas/projects as well as additional web links.

- Timeline Lesson Plan for *Helen's Big World*

<http://coeweb.astate.edu/lparish/Parent/Lesson%20Plan%20Literacy%20Timeline.pdf>

Complete lesson using Inspiration Software and a timeline as well as the book *Helen's Big World*.