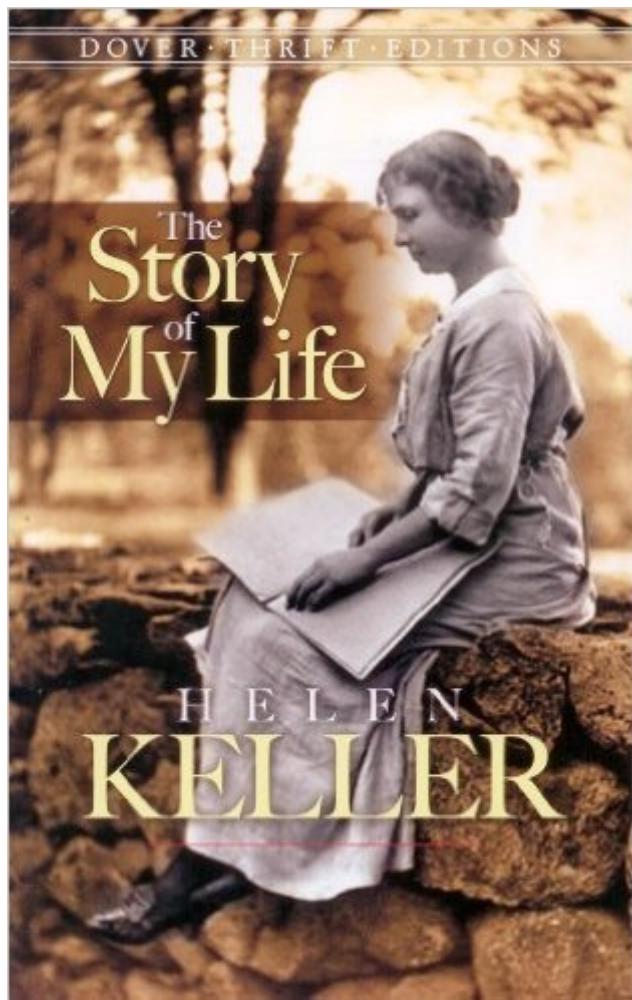


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Helen Keller: The Story Of My Life (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

When she was 19 months old, Helen Keller (1880â€”1968) suffered a severe illness that left her blind and deaf. Not long after, she also became mute. Her tenacious struggle to overcome these handicaps-with the help of her inspired teacher, Anne Sullivan-is one of the great stories of human courage and dedication. In this classic autobiography, first published in 1903, Miss Keller recounts the first 22 years of her life, including the magical moment at the water pump when, recognizing the connection between the word "water" and the cold liquid flowing over her hand, she realized that objects had names. Subsequent experiences were equally noteworthy: her joy at eventually learning to speak, her friendships with Oliver Wendell Holmes, Edward Everett Hale and other notables, her education at Radcliffe (from which she graduated cum laude), and-underlying all-her extraordinary relationship with Miss Sullivan, who showed a remarkable genius for communicating with her eager and quick-to-learn pupil. These and many other aspects of Helen Keller's life are presented here in clear, straightforward prose full of wonderful descriptions and imagery that would do credit to a sighted writer. Completely devoid of self-pity, yet full of love and compassion for others, this deeply moving memoir offers an unforgettable portrait of one of the outstanding women of the twentieth century.

Book Information

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Grade Level: 6 and up

Customer Reviews

Helen Keller (1880-1968) is a revered figure in American popular culture. Struck deaf and blind by illness at the age of 19 months, she still managed to get an education and become a writer and activist. Her story was further popularized by William Gibson's play "The Miracle Worker," which was also adapted for both film and television. Keller's autobiography, "The Story of My Life," first appeared in installments in "Ladies' Home Journal" in 1902. This book is truly one of the great American autobiographies: an inspiring story of a courageous individual who overcame tremendous odds. Keller writes about many things: her childhood in Alabama; her relationship with her beloved teacher, Anne Sullivan; her attendance at the Wright-Humason School for the Deaf in New York City; and meeting such eminent figures as Mark Twain. She especially stresses her love of literature, which she describes as "my Utopia." Along the way are some fascinating details and profoundly moving passages. Her tribute to the Homer, the blind poet of ancient Greece, is particularly powerful. I also loved her interpretation of the biblical Book of Ruth: a story of "love which can rise above conflicting creeds and deep-seated racial prejudices." I think that many will regard Keller's autobiography as a mere historical or sociological document. But I think the book deserves a place as a great work of literature, and moreover as a work of literature in the great American tradition. Keller's poetic, often sensuous words about the natural world are comparable to the work of Emily Dickinson. And her stirring account of her revelatory awareness of language reminds me of Frederick Douglass' account of his first awareness of the power of literacy.

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