

Class -X

The Story of My Life

First published in 1903, is Helen Keller's autobiography detailing her early life, especially her experiences with Anne Sullivan.

Originally published: 1903

Author: **Helen Keller**

Adaptations: The Miracle Worker (2000)

Original language: English

Genres: Fiction, Biography, Autobiography, Children's literature

Theme of the Novel

The Story of My Life by Helen Keller is an autobiographical account of the first twenty two years of Helen's life. It is not a novel as a novel is a work of fiction, even if sometimes based on a true story. The events that Helen Keller relates all took place before her illness when, much like any infant, "I came, I saw, I conquered" (Ch 1), and after it when she struggles to communicate to the point that she has temper tantrums "daily, sometimes hourly" (ch 3). Eventually Annie Sullivan arrives who will "set my spirit free." (ch 1)

Helen Keller tells this story whilst at Radcliffe College and because she feels inspired to help others who may feel that their problems are insurmountable and cannot be overcome. Helen remembers when she first learned the meaning of words, starting with "W-A-T-E-R" and after that "there were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away." (Ch 4)

The very fact that Helen Keller attends college is testament to her **perseverance and determination**, the main themes of *The Story of My Life*. Getting admitted to college creates its own set of problems as Helen does not want to attend as a blind-deaf person but as a capable student; hence, her admittance to Radcliffe which could hardly cater for her disability was fraught with difficulties but Helen "overcame them all." (Ch 19)

Expanding her **knowledge** and enriching her **education** are key to Helen Keller and, even as a young child, she explores the garden where she feels at least a certain degree of independence. She takes every new experience and learns something from it to the point that she "learns from life itself." (Ch 7) Her experiences with nature and the elements introduce her to fears and loneliness - such as she is stuck in a tree during a thunder storm - but they also enhance her overall understanding of life, ensuring that she will never give up.

Perhaps the single greatest lesson readers take away from *The Story of My Life* is the value of perseverance. Without the ability to see or hear, Keller learned to function and interact within society in a meaningful way. Her drive to make a place for herself in the world started when she was very young. Even as a child, she found ways to help her mother around the house, rather than stay in a world that was dark, silent, and lonely. In fact, the terrible fits for which she is so well-known were the product of her extreme frustration at not being able to make herself understood and not having anyone else reach out and communicate with her. Once she overcame

her obstacles and learned to communicate, she was driven to accomplish her high goals. She garnered many achievements, but she also gave credit for her accomplishments to her supporters.

The plot

Helen Keller's 'The story of my Life' was published in 1903 when she was 22 years old. It describes the events of her life and was written during her time in Radcliffe College. The story of Keller's fight despite her insurmountable handicaps fascinate people. Her story provides an idea about the agony and misery of deaf and blind people. She faces extraordinary difficulties, limitations and handicaps with courage and grace. The plot or the storyline covers only her childhood and young womanhood. The story of Helen Keller's life is incomplete as she had lived many years after that. Her story serves as a model for what the physically disabled can accomplish. The storyline starts with the mysterious illness that left her dumb and deaf when she was just one and half years old. The advent of Ms. Sullivan changed the course of his life. The first five chapters describe How Ms. Sullivan taught her. The next important step in her education was learning to read. She learnt to speak in 1890. The winter of 1890 was also a dark time of her life as she was charged with plagiarism.

Important Characters in the Novel

Helen Keller

Helen Keller is the author of the novel. An American author, political activist and lecturer, she was a woman has inspired countless people in the world and became a role model to many. When she was an infant she fell seriously ill. She was left behind blind and deaf. She was a fast learner and she had a strong determination to fight against all odds. She was a little naughty girl in her childhood days. She realized that she was different from all others around her, but persevered with grit and determination to match them. She learnt the mystery of language from her teacher and had a loving relationship with her family, teachers and friends. Sometimes she went through fits of temper due to failures and disappointment but leaving her restlessness came back strongly. She was motivated and intelligent student. She even learnt to speak through the help of Ms. Sarah Fuller and her teacher Anne Sullivan. She learnt to read braille and found the new world open to her. She was a voracious reader and read so many books many a times even though she had to read those in braille. She enjoyed her life like a normal child and found pleasure in swimming, rowing, sailing and visiting many places. She braved her way and passed the examination and earned a bachelor degree from the Harvard. She became a vocal advocate for the physically challenged. Breaking the barriers, she educated the public about the needs of the blind, mute and deaf.

Anne Sullivan

Anne Mansfield Sullivan was the most important character of Helen's life and had the greatest influence on the life, character and achievements of Helen. She gave a new direction, meaning and purpose to Helen's life. Miss Sullivan possessed all the traits and characteristics that makes a perfect teacher. She was an epitome of tireless patience and unending devotion. It was her constant support, encouragement and guidance that made Helen Keller first deaf and blind to earn a bachelor degree. She was a dedicated teacher who brought light in the life of a troubled child. When Anne went to teach Keller, she was only twenty years old and a recent graduate of the Perkins Institution of the Blind. She herself had impaired vision and could understand the need of such a child. It was the beginning of a 49 year long relationship. She was a patient and disciplined teacher and used innovative and effective strategies to teach Helen. She opted for

structured and spontaneous lessons. It was Sullivan's genius as a teacher, her sympathy and loving tact which made the learning so beautiful and interesting for Helen. She remained a constant companion to Helen till she died in 1936.

Arthur H Keller

Helen's father has been a captain in the Confederate army. Helen's earliest distinct recollections of her father was finding him alone with newspapers and Helen later learnt that he edited one of them. He was a hospitable man who enjoyed bringing guests home to see his garden. He was a loving and indulgent man, devoted to his home and family. He was also a good hunter and a celebrated shot. He loved his dogs and gun too much. Arthur was proud of his garden. He use to roam in his garden with Helen and never get bored of her pleasures. Helen writes, "I remember his caressing touch as he led me from tree to tree, from vine to vine, and in his eager delight in whatever pleased me." Though he did not know sign language well, still he narrated anecdotes to her and even repeated them. In the summer of 1896 came the news of his death. Helen terms his departure as her 'first great sorrow' – her first personal experience with death.

Kate Keller

Mrs. Kate Adams Keller was a sophisticated, intelligent and well-read lady. Helen's mother was an early source of comfort for the troubled child. She was also a responsible and caring mother and understood the needs of her children. When Helen was suffering from scarlet fever Kate nursed her lovingly. After Helen lost her eyesight and hearing, Kate was the one who made her understand Helen learned the manual alphabet so that she could communicate effectively with her daughter. Mrs. Keller also tolerated the mischiefs and occasional fits of temper. Helen was so close to her mother, that after her little sister Mildred was born, she regarded her as an intruder for a long time. She always accompanied Helen to her school and other places. Mrs. Keller provided upbringing to Helen like a normal child. She wanted Helen to be educated and she sent her husband to Baltimore which marked the turning point in Helen's life. Mrs. Keller also learnt manual alphabet in order to be able to communicate effectively with Helen. Besides she never interfered with Ms. Sullivan's way of teaching as she was wise enough to understand that the latter knew her job very well.

Mr. Anagnos

Mr. Anagnos was the director of the Perkins Institution for the blind in Boston. He was very amiable and helpful person. He sent Anne Sullivan to the Kellers' home. He and Keller became friends, and he had her sit on his knee when she visited the Institution. He was extremely fond of Helen and loved her tenderly. Even Helen respected his filial affection so much that when she wrote her first story, 'The Frost King' she dedicated it to Mr. Anagnos. She sent it to him for his birthday. Mr. Anagnos became so happy to see it and published it in one of the Perkins Institution reports. Though he loved Helen but could not trust her when she was blamed for plagiarism. He initially believe her but later suspected that Ms. Sullivan and Helen had deliberately copied the ideas of someone and imposed on him to win the admiration. Mr. Anagnos came to believe that she intentionally plagiarized it, the friendship was forever ruined. He felt cheated and hurt and did not care for Helen's pleadings of love and innocence.

Alexander Graham Bell

Dr. Alexander Graham Bell first met Keller when she was six years old and her parents brought her to him for advice on how to teach her. Dr. Bell suggested that they should contact the Perkins

Institution for the Blind, which they did. Dr. Bell remained a friend to Keller and Anne Sullivan and accompanied them on a trip to the World's Fair. Helen Keller held him in high esteem. He was a wonderful person with great achievements. There was a good bond of friendship between Keller and Mr. Bell. He remained very cooperative and a great friend to Ms. Sullivan too. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell first met Helen when she was 6 yrs old and her parents brought her to him for advice on how to teach her. Dr. Bell remained a friend to Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan. "The Story of My Life" is dedicated to him. Dr. Bell made Helen understand how it was possible to send a message through wires that mock space and outrun time. Besides being scientist and inventor, he had a humorous and poetic side too. His dominating passion was his love for children. He was never quite as happy as when he had a little deaf child in his arms.

Martha Washington

Martha, the child of their cook, was a little, colored girl who was Helen's constant companion. She could understand Helen's signs and she seldom had any difficulty in making her do as she wished. They would spend a great deal of time together in kitchen kneading dough balls. They also used to help making Ice-cream, grinding coffee etc. She proved a tremendous support in her efforts to communicate. Whenever Helen went to play, Martha was always on her side. Helen often dominated her but the latter always obeyed her friend and never risked an encounter. Martha had a great love of mischief, once she seized the scissors and cut off one of the Helen's curls and would have cut them all off but was saved by the timely interference of Helen's mother. They used to go egg-hunting for the guinea-fowl eggs in the long grass. In fact she was a mischievous girl who submitted to Helen's mischiefs most of the time.

Mildred

Mildred was Helen's younger sister. She was a sweet child who always accompanied Helen. For a long time Helen regarded her little sister as an intruder. It was because of Mildred that Helen had ceased to be her mother's only darling and the thought filled her with jealousy. Mildred would sit on her mother's lap constantly and seemed to take up all her time and care. One day Helen overturned the cradle where little Mildred was sleeping peacefully. But with time, Helen and Mildred grew into each other's hearts so that they were content to go hand in hand although Mildred could not understand her finger language nor Helen her childish prattle. She played the role of a good companion and a sister. She was a mature and kind human being. She always helped Helen whenever she needed it.

Class -XII

The Invisible Man

H G Wells

Literary Elements

Setting-

England in the 1890's. Iping and the surrounding area. Much of the action initially occurs around or in a couple of pubs and an inn, thus taking advantage of the natural opportunity for people to spread rumors, speculate on mysterious issues, and expand on each other's stories. The arrival of a stranger on a cold wintry night from the Bramblehurst railway station automatically provides a glimpse of the mysterious events that are to follow his stay at the Coach and Horses. The man, because of his strange appearance, becomes the talk of the town as soon as he reaches there. Even the attempts of the people to be friendly and sympathetic towards him are at once discouraged by the stranger that leads to a common animosity for him. Slowly and gradually, one or the other person comes to get a glimpse of his invisibility and soon he becomes the talk of the town. In the end he is caught and killed by the same men whom he tries to overpower.

The Plot-

The plot is simple and straightforward. Griffin, having rendered himself invisible with an earlier experiment, enters a town and sets up a lab in an inn where he works night and day to come up with a formula that will reverse his invisibility. When he slips up and accidentally reveals himself, he engages in immature and violent actions until he is forced to run and find a new hiding place. As more people become aware of his existence, his situation becomes more perilous. Finally, he stumbles into the home of a former college professor whom he assumes will be interested in his experiments and willing to help him. The doctor, Mr. Kemp, however, reads newspaper accounts of Griffin's insane actions against people in the town and betrays his trust.

Griffin is hunted down, caught and killed, whereupon he becomes visible again. The little, inconspicuous victim of some of Griffin's behavior is left with the stolen money and the documents that explain Griffin's experiments. The story closes with the suggestion that Marvel himself might try the experiments if only he could figure them out.

Theme-

In *The Invisible Man*, Wells again works out the theme that nothing is gained without something being lost. In the novel, protagonist Griffin's negligence led to dire consequences and resulted in his doom. His thoughtless actions proved to be calamitous. Medical student Griffin discovers how to make himself invisible, only to lose his mind when he does so. This novel is also a cautionary tale, warning that intellectual achievement is still vulnerable to the animal self in

human beings. In addition, *The Invisible Man* is a social comedy, inviting laughter as the rural population of Sussex responds to the "strange man" all "wrapped up from head to foot." Instead of inspiring fear, as he hopes, with his pranks while invisible, Griffin angers the villagers.

Major Characters-

Griffin-

Griffin (The Invisible Man)- Griffin is an albino college student who had changed his area of study from medicine to physics and had become interested in refractive indexes of tissue. During his studies he stumbled across formulas that would render tissue invisible. Eventually he tries the formula on himself, thinking of all the things he could do if he were invisible. At first he is the stranger who arrives at Iping then he is the voice that startles everybody. However his real name is Griffin.

Though he is the protagonist of the story, all his deeds are more like that of an antagonist. He is an eccentric scientist. He was very gifted but used his mind in a sinister way. He devised an experiment to become invisible and then started looting and murdering whoever came in his way.

He is very irritable and impatient. He loses his temper over petty things and starts hurting others. He has lost all sense of conscience and doesn't feel sorry even after his burglary led to his father's death.

Although he is lonely and seems to have been misunderstood from time to time, he fails to gain sympathy due to his murderous rage and evil ways.

Mr. Marvel-

Mr. Marvel is the first character whom Griffin tries to use as an accomplice. Mr. Marvel is short, fat tramp with a shabby hat, charity boots, battered clothes and homeless lifestyle. He did everything in a leisurely manner. He considered himself to be stupid and good-for-nothing, as no one else was available to help him when he had been exposed. Marvel is basically a coward and is unable to stand up to Griffin. He becomes Griffin's partner in crime but cheats him ultimately.

Marvel is an opportunist person. When he first gets a chance, he tries to sneak away from Griffin, but fails. The second time he manages to run away with all of Griffin's money and his three books. Marvel, however is clever, because he gets himself arrested to escape Griffin, who is after him. Moreover, he kept the three books for himself in the hope of solving their mystery, although this was an act of foolishness.

Dr. Kemp-

Dr. Kemp was a former associate of Griffin's in his college days. Dr. Kemp was also a scientist who lived in Burdock. He was a tall and slender young man with flaxen hair and an almost white moustache. He is ambitious, which is clear from the fact that he wanted recognition for his achievements. But then, he is also a speculative philosopher. The night that Griffin comes to his house, Dr Kemp was working on a remote speculation of social conditions of the future. He is a very calm and sensible man. He doesn't get scared by the invisible intruder. He kept his cool

when the murder threat arrived. He lays his own life on the line to get Griffin arrested, which shows that he was also very brave. However, his sense of judgment sometimes gets away. He sent the maid alone to deliver the note and ran away, leaving the two policemen behind.

Minor Characters

Mr. Hall-

George Hall or Mr. Hall is the husband of Mrs. Hall and drove the Iping conveyance. He is a drunkard and his wife manages the inn on her own. He believes in others quite easily and when Mr. Teddy Henfrey told him about Griffin, he at once formed the perception that something unusual was up. He has an investigative side also. He wanted to know the details about his guest and tried to inspect his room when he found it empty. However, he is only secondary to his wife and is very meek in front of her. He gets taken to task by her many times. George is also kind like his wife. When the dog attacked Griffin, he rushed to his room to see if he needed any kind of help.

Mrs. Hall –

Janny Hall, or better known as Mrs. Hall, is the owner of the 'Coaches and Horses' inn in Iping. The first time we encounter her, she appears to be an opportunist. She gives the stranger a room in her inn without showing much concern to confirm his identity. She is also a bit money-minded. She accommodates with Griffin's rudeness and awkward behavior only because she was being paid. However, she has a courteous side also which we see when she tries to know about Griffin's physical impairment and shows sympathy towards his state.

She is superstitious and believes that her furniture was haunted. She is a dominating wife and doesn't shy away from giving her husband a lecture. Moreover, she can put her foot down if required. When she had enough of the stranger's rudeness, she decided to set him straight and stopped serving him. She replied in such an angry tone that Griffin had to back away.

Teddy Henfrey-

Teddy Henfrey is a clock repairman who Mrs. Hall uses in an attempt to find out more about Griffin. When he arrives, he is taken to Griffin's room and he is at once startled by his appearance. He is quite inquisitive by nature and tries to find more about the stranger. He purposely tries to talk but gets snubbed by Griffin. This irritated him a lot. He is also a gossipmonger. When he couldn't find anything more about the stranger, he started spreading rumours about him. He has a suspecting nature. He was the one who said that the stranger was perhaps wanted by the police and that is why he kept himself covered.

Fearenside-

Fearenside is the cart man who delivers luggage from the station whenever he is needed. He notices darkness through a torn trouser leg where there should be pink flesh and starts the stories of Griffin being either a black man or a piebald.

Dr. Cuss-

Dr. Cuss was a general medical practitioner of the village who attempts to get an interview with Griffin. He was curious by nature and was keen to establish for himself the rumours that he had

heard about the Invisible Man in the village. He therefore arrived at the inn under the rouse of collecting money for the Nurses' Fund. He tried to draw Griffin into a conversation but was rudely turned away.

He was a persistent soul and despite the snub he enlisted the services of Vicar (Bunting) and the two decided to explore the belongings of the stranger in his absence. It was when he was left without his trousers by Griffin and exposed in front of the village that Cuss gave up indulging in his curiosity.

Mr. Bunting-

Bunting is the vicar of Iping and a much respected personality there as he took great responsibility in tending to his flock in the village. He liked to be closely integrated with the affairs of the village and joined his congregation in celebrations. He was a considerate member of the community and took people's sayings at face value. Thus, he did not question the strange facts about Griffin that Cuss had narrated to him and gladly agreed to accompany him in searching Griffin's belongings in his absence.

He tries his level best to make himself useful in deciphering the coded content of Griffin's diaries along with Cuss. He was not a man of letters and sheepishly tried to hide his ignorance of Greek by pretending forgetfulness. He had a streak of courage but was not a strategist and thus Griffin was able to go scot-free when he had entered the vicarage and robbed the money from the study.

Mr. Bobby Jaffers-

Mr. Bobby Jaffers is the constable of the Iping village who comes with a warrant to arrest the Invisible Man. He appears to be a resolute man and takes his work rather seriously. He comments that head or no head, he got to arrest the man and that is what he will do. He is also a very brave man. When the invisible head confronted him, he rapped his point that he was there to arrest him and didn't shiver.

He is strong but was no match for his invisible enemy and gets beaten up. Though he couldn't see the stranger, he thought that it was some kind of trick. He is quick to react and at once realized that the invisible man was trying to escape. Obviously, he is not able to hold the unseen and the Invisible Man gets away from his custody. Apparently, he was hurt for he had failed to complete his duties and later we find him sunk in gloom.

Mr. Sandy Wadgers-

Mr. Sandy Wadgers was a blacksmith in the village of Iping. He was the first one to be called by the couple when they were attacked by the furniture in the stranger's room. He was a knowing man and very resourceful. He was superstitious and after hearing about the attack, concluded that it was black magic.

He appears to be a man who is calm and thinks before taking decisions. He wanted to get his facts right before busting in the room of the stranger. He is also very firm and resolute. He told Mr. Hall to demand an explanation from the stranger. Later we also learn of his bravery when we see him fighting with the Invisible Man. However, the shock of getting beaten by the Invisible Man is too much to bear for him and he kept himself locked up in his house.