

# Helen Keller Comprehension

Read the text below and answer the questions on the following page.

Helen Keller was born in 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama, to Arthur and Kate Keller. Arthur owned a cotton plantation and later worked for a newspaper, while Kate raised the family on their farm.

When Helen was 18 months old, she became very sick with fever. She survived but lost her sight and hearing. It was difficult for Helen to communicate with others. In her frustration, she would often throw tantrums, kicking and screaming.

Helen loved the farm animals and playing with her younger siblings, Mildred and Phillip. But her parents were desperate to ease her sense of isolation. They were introduced to Alexander Graham Bell, who was working with deaf children at the time. The Perkins Institute for the Blind sent a recent graduate, Anne Sullivan, to work with Helen at home. Anne went blind as a child, although surgery restored some of her sight. This loving and determined teacher became Helen's helper and friend for almost 50 years.

Anne began teaching Helen words using a type of finger spelling. She would give Helen an object and press the letters into her other hand. Helen repeated the gestures back to Anne, but did not understand their meaning. Then one day, Anne used running water and spelled 'water'. Suddenly Helen understood. She touched the ground, requesting its 'letter name', too, and by the end of the day had learnt 30 words.

By the age of 10, Helen could read Braille and use a typewriter. She was desperate to talk, so Anne sought the help of another specialist. Sarah Fuller taught Helen to touch other people's throats and mouths as they spoke, to feel the movements and sound vibrations. She began learning letters, sounds, words and sentences. Helen couldn't hear herself, but was delighted to have a voice of her own.

At a number of special schools, Helen even learned to read French,

German, Greek and Latin! She became famous and met many influential people, including Henry Rogers, an oil executive, who offered to fund her education. At 16, Helen went to Radcliffe College, Massachusetts, and with Anne's help as an interpreter, became the first deaf-blind person to gain a degree in 1904.

During her time at college, Helen wrote an autobiography 'The Story of My Life', which was translated into 50 languages. More books followed, including 'The World I Live In' (1908). When Anne died in 1936, Polly Thomson, their long-serving secretary, took over as Helen's constant companion.

After college, Helen spent many years raising awareness for people with disabilities. In 1920, she co-founded the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and was also an advocate of women's rights. She raised money for disability charities, gave comfort to disabled soldiers in hospitals during the war, and travelled the world giving lectures on the rights of blind and deaf people.

Helen suffered a series of strokes in 1961 and spent her last years at home in Connecticut. She died in her sleep, aged 87 – at the end of a unique and truly remarkable life.

**When and where was Helen Keller born?**

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**How old was Helen when she became blind and deaf?**

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**What were the names of Helen's younger siblings?**

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What was special about Helen's teacher, Anne?

What was the first word Helen properly understood, using finger spelling?

In what year did Helen become the first deaf-blind person to gain a degree?

What was the name of Helen's first book, an autobiography?

In what year did Anne Sullivan die?

Name two examples of Helen's work to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

How old was Helen when she died?



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Braille:

Here's the Alphabet!



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



I



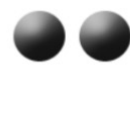
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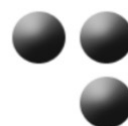
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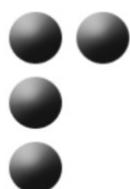
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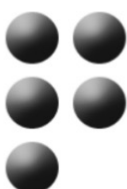
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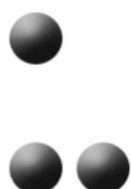
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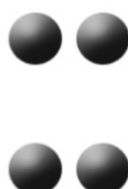
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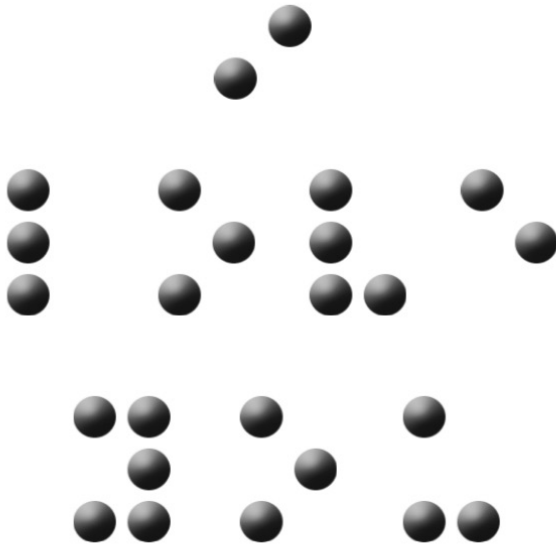
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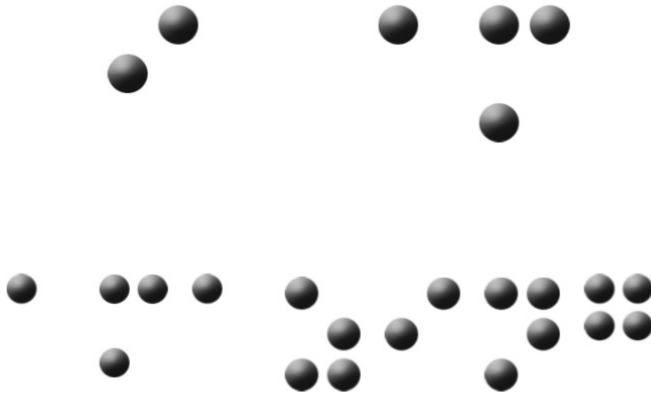
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Braille: Use the Braille alphabet to decode the messages below.

1.



2.



3.

