

HELEN KELLER (1880-1968)

She was a super human being. She was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama. When she was 19 months old she possibly contracted scarlet fever and became blind, deaf, and mute. The parents of Helen were recommended a governess by the name Anne Sullivan Macy starting at age 7 by the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston. One day Anne took Helen to a water pump and put Helen's hand under water and wrote the word "water" on her hand. For many hours she learnt the names of everything around her. Helen wrote later "My heart leapt to the rapture of living".

She learnt how to use a Braille typewriter. She had tremendous thirst for knowledge. She is to bleed from her fingers using the Braille and dots. She was accepted at Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Helen graduated in 1904 with a B.A. degree. She was the first deaf and blind American to graduate from a college. She met every US president. Her friends included George Bernard Shaw and Mary Pickford. Helen never got married. She wrote her memoir called "The Story of My Life". She wrote 11 other books. She wrote on women's rights and the need to help the poor.



We should learn from her powerful writings:

"Never bend your head. Always hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye".

"While they were saying among themselves it cannot be done, it was done."

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it".

"Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invisible host against difficulties."

"No pessimist ever discovered the secret of the stars or sailed to an uncharted land or opened a new doorway for the human spirit ."

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved."

In 1964 Helen received the presidential medal of freedom. She died in 1968 at the age of 87. In 2009 a bronze statue of Helen at age seven was placed at the water pump with Sullivan.

She taught all of us how to face the fear of the unknown, to stay in the moment, take baby steps toward our goals, not to panic and above all never, ever give up.