

TAKE NOTES

Answers **MUST** be in complete sentences.

Activate Prior Knowledge

Think of a time when you felt upset because you could not understand something. Describe how you felt when you finally understood it.

Literary Analysis

A **narrative essay** is a true story about real events. What details in the first paragraph indicate that this is a narrative essay?

Reading Check

What was the first word that Miss Sullivan tried to teach Helen? Circle the answer.

Water

Helen Keller

The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institution had sent it and Laura Bridgman had dressed it; but I did not know this until afterward. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-l-l." I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother I held up my hand and made the letters for *doll*. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them *pin*, *hat*, *cup* and a few verbs like *sit*, *stand* and *walk*. But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name.

One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled "d-o-l-l" and tried to make me understand that "d-o-l-l" applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words "m-u-g" and "w-a-t-e-r." Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is *mug* and that "w-a-t-e-r" is *water*, but I persisted in confounding the two. In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in

Vocabulary Development

imitate (IM uh tayt) *v.* copy; mimic

persisted (per SIST id) *v.* refused to give up

which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth,¹ and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that

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Reading Skill

An **author's purpose** may be to instruct, to entertain, to persuade, or to express ideas. Based on the details in the first bracketed paragraph, what do you think is Helen Keller's purpose for writing? Explain.

Stop to Reflect

Why does Helen's discovery of words change her attitude about everything?

Reading Check

What attracted Helen and Anne Sullivan to the well-house? Circle the answer.

Vocabulary Development

sentiment (SEN tuh muhnt) *n.* a gentle feeling

1. **hearth** (hahirth) *n.* the stone or brick floor of a fireplace, sometimes extending into the room.

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Reading Skill

Underline the words in the bracketed paragraph that show Helen Keller's feelings. What is Helen's **purpose** in sharing these feelings?

Reading Check

What do words do for Helen?
Circle the text that tells you.

mother, father, sister, teacher were among them— words that were to make the world blossom for me, “like Aaron’s rod, with flowers.” It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.

Reader's Response: Before she learned to communicate, Helen Keller shows impatience and anger by smashing her doll. Should she be excused for such behavior? Explain.
