

Helen keller's touch a characterization essay sample



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Characterization is defined as the change in personality description that occurs in a character throughout the story. The change can be either physical or emotional. In the play “ The Miracle Worker”, William Gibson details and characterizes Helen Keller, a little girl who became blind, mute and deaf during her childhood due to a high fever. As a result, Helen's disability hindered her from understanding the world around her, developing a personality, and acting normally.

On one occasion, Helen's half-brother Jimmy declares, “ Half sister, and half mentally defective, she cannot even keep herself clean. It's not pleasant to see her about all the time.” (Miracle Worker 4). Helen is untidy, with her hair tumbled and dirty appearance. She wants to see, to talk. She touched her mom's eyes and wants “ eyes” on her doll. Gibson says, “ Helen's fingers have fluttered to her mother's lips, vainly trying to comprehend her movements.” (Gibson 5). At the end of The Miracle Worker, Helen is able to read and talk with touching. Helen is crafty, sly, wild, tough and smart; she has always been. The doctor says, “ I've never seen a baby, more vitality, that's the truth.” (Gibson 2).

First, Helen is a child who became blind, mute and deaf during her childhood because of her high fever. She was born in Tuscumbia, a little town in Northern Alabama. Her family allowed her to become an unmanageable animal. Walter Kerr, a critic declares, “ Gibson has shown us the blind, deaf and mute Helen Keller at the age of five or six, and shown her to us for what she then was: an animal.” (Kerr, 174). Her parents did not know how to teach, and how to tell her the meaning of anything. Helen cannot see and does not know how to act. She runs around and makes unusual sounds,

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much like an untamed animal would. Gibson wrote, " She hold Helen struggling until we hear from the child the first sound so far, an inarticulate, weird noise from her throat, such as an animal in a trap might make." (Gibson 5).

Helen is a very unusual person because she cannot keep herself clean, and she cannot understand anything about other people and the. She annoys the people around her because she cannot understand anything, making her violent. Kerr says, " Helen, a small human being whose humanness no one suspects, runs her fingers in automatic frenzy across the walls." (Kerr 174). Finally, Helen's parents decide to hire a teacher to learn about how she should act. Her teacher, Annie, blind herself, is nineteen and was recommended during the year of her graduation for the Keller Assignment. Annie could understand Helen because she underwent a similar situation.

In addition, Helen is a spoiled child who doesn't know how to act like any person would because her parents never tried to teach her. They treated her like an egg, afraid that she was too fragile to break easily. Helen never learned how to sit by the table to eat, or to get cleaned. She walks around and gets food from her family's plates and eats like an animal. Except for Annie, no one else tried to teach her how to eat. One can call Helen smart, but since no one taught her about anything, her actions are most questionable. Kate says, " She began talking when she was six months old, she could say ' wah wah' which meant water." (Gibson 4). Helen didn't want anyone to teach her because she was lost. She was frustrated because she couldn't talk. When she was angry, she threw anything she holds. She

wanted to know everything happening around her, and she wanted to see it <https://assignbuster.com/helen-kellers-touch-a-characterization-essay-sample/>

all. As a result, she continued to search for people's faces while they talked, and tried to understand.

Third, Annie started to spell in Helen's hand, a contact the girl was searching for. Helen wanted to know the name of everything around her; she wanted to communicate with everyone around her. Helen wrote in *The Story of My Life*, "After a while the need of some means of communication became so urgent that these outbursts occurred daily, sometimes hourly." (Keller 40). Most people had no hope that Helen could learn anything. Her mom and Annie were the only ones who didn't, that Helen could still learn. Helen later wrote, "Light! Give me light! Was the worthless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me on that very hour." (Keller 42). Helen wanted to learn; she wanted to get free from the darkness around her little world, and she said that she felt different when Annie moved into their house. Helen wrote, "She brought me my hat, and I knew she was going to bring me to the warm sunshine." (Keller 32). Helen knew that Annie was going to teach her the world around her, and she would bring the sunshine of her life.

After Annie tried hard to spell common words on Helen's hands, the little girl finally and happily realized that objects have names. Helen wrote, "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 the new day to come." (Keller 20). She learned more as days came walking pass. Everything gained a meaning from Helen, and she was intrigued by it.

While other children were learning without effort, Helen worked hard to understand the world around her. She had the desire to learn about everything. Helen wrote, " Children who here acquire language without any particular effort; the words that fall from other's lips they catch on the wing, as it were, delightedly, while the little deaf child must trap them by a slow and often painful process." (Keller 41). Even though the process was very slow, she was still successful. Helen's disability is unique because she is mute, blind and deaf. So her success was truly unusual for a person like Helen, but she had great ambition.

Despite everyone's fear, that Annie could not teach Helen anything, and that Helen cannot learn anything, Helen learned and became famous because of her success as a uniquely disabled person. Helen's brother Jimmy believed that a blind person like Annie cannot teach anything to another person like Helen. James says, " Great improvement, now we have two of them to look after." (Gibson 8). Kate says, " Is it possible, even? To teach a deaf blind child half than what an ordinary child learns has that ever been done?" (Gibson 6). Helen's father was worried about the naive girl who wanted to teach a deaf, mute and blind child. Keller declares, " How can an inexperienced blind Yankee schoolgirl manage her?" (Gibson 8).

By the end of the play, Helen is able to spell the words on Annie's hands, but that was not enough for Helen. She wants to write and read. " Quickly, she learned words and then sentences. Soon she was able to communicate by signing the manual alphabet. But Helen was not satisfied with signing alone. She wanted to learn how to write." (www. google. com/helenasachild). Helen was able to communicate with other children; she was able to understand <https://assignbuster.com/helen-kellers-touch-a-characterization-essay-sample/>

the world around her, and she was very curious about the world. Helen was touching and smelling everything, and asking to understand what everything meant. “Helen has no time to spell now, she whirls groping, to touch anything, encounters the trellis, shakes it, and thrusts out her palm.” (Gibson 23). She wanted to learn more, to have more, to feel everything with the senses she has left. She was curious and her mind was hungry for more.

In summary, Helen's personality during her childhood was hard to handle for many people around her. Helen becomes blind, mute and deaf due to a very high fever. As a result, Helen's disability made it hard for her to understand the world around her, along with the other people associated with her. Helen did not know how to clean herself, and acted very much like an animal. Although her hair was a mess, she really wanted to be with other children, to talk, to hear, to see, and to have fun.

To conclude this essay, Helen Keller was a smart and curious child to begin with. She will work hard to get what she wanted. Being ill as a child, to become a disabled person while growing up, is not a sort of punishment, but it was an advantage on her part. She is not an animal that will simply follow orders. She is a human being with a thinking mind. It was only a natural reaction on her part to not act like other people because she did not have any means to react to the many things in life. She doesn't have what we neglect in our lives, the ability to see, to hear, to speak. That opportunity was stripped from her, but that did not stop her from wanting to learn more. She wanted to understand the world, much like she would love to be understood in return.

This is why she was very grateful that a young teacher like Annie to cross paths with her, and to have her be a very understanding person. It would seem that if Annie wasn't blind, she would still try to understand the situation of Helen. This is because people can have two extremely different reactions to such a predicament. Annie understands Helen because they are in a similar position, but since the teacher chose to understand, regardless of her being able to see, Annie was a blessing. They were lucky to have met each other.

Helen was not a freak of nature. She was just placed at a disadvantage that later turned to an opportunity. She searched for meaning through touching people lips, eyes and other objects. Her touch is her eyes, her ears and her voice.

References

Contemporary Literary Criticism

Miracle Worker by William Gibson

Story of My Life by Helen Keller

Walter Kerr Critics Reviewer

[www. google. com/helenasachild](http://www.google.com/helenasachild)