

Strictly based on the latest CBSE Syllabus dated 4th April 2017 for Academic year 2017-18



THE STORY OF MY LIFE

CBSE Class 10

HELEN KELLER

Unabridged Edition
EXTENDED READING TEXT

HELEN KELLER

Extended Reading Text

The Story of My Life



(Unabridged Edition)
Prescribed by the CBSE

Class **10**



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PREFACE

Going by the old adage by renowned thinker Francis Bacon, “Reading maketh a full man....,” and to inculcate good reading habits among the children, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) introduced novels for classes IX to XII from the 2012-13 academic session.

In a recent circular issued by the Board, emphasis has been laid on reading novels as this could help children in acquiring important skills of imagination, expression and appreciation of literature. It further states that though all the skills of gaining proficiency in a language are equally important, nevertheless, reading tremendously helps in improving comprehension, accuracy, fluency and diction.

For class X, the recommended books are **The Story of My Life** by *Helen Keller* and **The Diary of a Young Girl** by *Anne Frank*

This book on **The Story of My Life** has been designed with utmost care considering the student’s need to comprehend the text better. It contains the Original Text from the Novel as well as a Question Bank at the end of every chapter. About the Author, About the Novel and Chapter review for every Chapter is given to facilitate better understanding of the novel. At the end of every chapter, important questions and answers are incorporated in order to assist the student in systematic revision of the chapter.

A few Highlights of this book are:

- » Original & Unabridged Text along with Chapter Summary.
- » Chapterwise Questions based on understanding.
- » Questions based on Character, Plot, Theme, Incidents and Episodes are given in the end.
- » The language used in the book is simple and accurate in order to enhance comprehension of the novel
- » The book will enable the amalgamation of reading & writing skills of the students

We sincerely hope this book will assist every student in better comprehension of the prescribed novel thereby facilitating examination oriented learning.

We are always open to suggestions for improvement from teachers and students alike!

Wishing you luck for the forthcoming Academic Year.

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The Story of My Life

-Helen Keller

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HELEN Keller is regarded as the greatest woman of her age. She was one of those women who carve their own destiny by their hard-work and struggle. Though nature deprived her of her eyesight and hearing, yet she acquired the highest university degree and established herself as a distinguished writer. She proved to the world that nothing is impossible even for a blind, deaf and dumb child.

Helen Keller was born at Tuscumbia (USA) on June 27, 1880, to Captain Arthur H. Keller and Kate Adams Keller. She was a normal child till the age of one and a half year. She had an inborn ability to imitate and learn. She was learning fast to speak. But unfortunately she fell prey to a strange disease which deprived her of her eyesight and hearing. The disease was diagnosed as acute congestion of stomach and brain. The disease was cured but doctors could not bring back her eyesight and hearing. As she grew older the desire to communicate with other people grew stronger in her and she started communicating her ideas with the help of signs. Martha Washington, a six-year old girl of her cook was her sole companion as she understood Habes language signs. She had over sixty home signs to communicate with her family. Besides, she was gifted with acute sensuousness. She could recognise which flowers blossomed in her garden and which fruit was getting ripe. She passed most of her time in her garden and was delighted in the midst of the various objects of nature.

In 1886, when Helen was only six years old, the important question before her parents was how to educate Helen. Fortunately, her mother was aware of Charles Dickens, American Notes of the successful education of another deaf and blind girl-Laura Bridgman. This made the task of educating her daughter easy and she made efforts to find out in what manner her daughter could be educated. There was no school for blind and deaf children in Tuscumbia. Her father took her to Dr. J. Julian Chisolm in Baltimore who advised him to make contact with Dr. Alexander Graham Bell who was working with deaf children at that time. Bell advised Helen's parents to contact the Perkins Institute for the Blind. It was the school situated in South Boston where Laura Bridgman was educated. Michael Anaganos was the director of the institute. He was very kind to Helen. He persuaded Miss Anne Sullivan, herself visually impaired and then only 20 years old to become Helen's instructor. Miss Sullivan agreed to it and arrived at Keller's house in March 1887. Thus, there began a relationship between the two that lasted for 49 years.

Miss Sullivan had her own peculiar way of teaching Helen. She used to spell the word on her hand. The first word she learnt was 'water'. Her teacher spelled the word on her palm and released cool water over her other hand. In this way Helen learned names of different things. Then Miss Sullivan taught her with the help of Brail system. She began to speak words and framed short sentences.

Helen travelled extensively in the company of Miss Sullivan. Starting in May 1888, Keller attended the Perkins Institute for the Blind. In 1894, Helen Keller and her instructor Miss Sullivan moved to New York to attend the Wright-Humason School and Horace Mann School for the Deaf. In 1896, they returned to Massachusetts and Keller was admitted to the Cambridge School for young ladies before gaining admittance, in 1900, to Radcliffe College. The great American novelist Mark Twain was one of her great admirers. He introduced her to standard oil magnate, Henry Huttleston Rogers, who, with his wife, paid for her education. In 1904, at the age of 24, Keller graduated from Radcliffe, becoming the first deaf-blind woman to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. She learnt Greek, Latin and French, besides English.

Her achievements were not only remarkable in the field of education but also in other spheres. She had varied interests in life. She was fond of reading books by great writers and learning foreign languages. She was a great lover of nature and visited places of natural beauty. She visited Niagara Falls and was delighted to be so close to it. Her picturesque description of the beauty of nature amazed people and they would ask in wonder what the beauty of nature meant to her when she could not hear the roar of the rolling waves of the famous Falls. Inspite of being disabled she knew how to swim and row a boat. She was equally interested in visiting cities. She would often visit the poor living in narrow and unhygienic streets. Sometimes, she would visit the theatre and enjoyed having a play described to her, while it was being staged.

She had a wonderful memory and was gifted with the talents of creating something original. The urge to write something original impelled her to write a story—**The Frost King**, which turned out to be plagiarism of another story **Frost Fairies**, published before her birth. But it was not a deliberate plagiarism. Later, it was discovered that the story '**Frost Fairies**' might have been read to her and she absorbed it so thoroughly that it became a part of her recollections. When she sat to write her own story, ideas flowed to her so naturally that she thought that the story was the product of her own imagination.

Helen Keller rose to eminence with the passage of time and became a world famous speaker and author. She is remembered as an advocate for people with disabilities and numerous other causes.

She was a member of the Socialist Party and actively campaigned and wrote in support of the working classes from 1909 to 1921. She joined the industrial workers of the world in 1912, saying that parliamentary socialism was “sinking in the political bog”. She wrote for the **Iww** between 1916 to 1918.

At the age of 22, Helen Keller brought out her autobiography ‘The Story of My Life’. In it, she has recorded her life long struggle to overcome her disabilities. In 1908, she published ‘The World I Live In’ giving readers

an insight into how she felt about the world. ‘Out of the Dark’, a series of essays on socialism, was published in 1913.

Her spiritual biography, ‘My Religion’ appeared in 1927. It was re-issued under the title ‘Light in My Darkness’. It advocates the teachings of Enamel Sweden Borg, the controversial mystic who gave a spiritual interpretation of the ‘Last Judgment’ and ‘Second Coming of Jesus Christ’. Keller penned a total of 12 published books and several articles.

ABOUT THE BOOK

THE STORY OF MY LIFE is an autobiography of Helen Keller. It appeared in 1903. The book contains description of the life and struggle of its author who was born on June 27, 1880 at Tuscumbia, a small town in Alabama. The book is important in the sense that it was written by a woman who became blind when she was only one and a half years old. It is really a miracle that inspite of being blind and deaf, she acquired education and received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. But still the greater miracle was that she established herself as a prolific writer. She penned twelve books and a series of articles.

An Interesting Autobiography

The book is an autobiography which is different from fiction, yet the book is read like a novel. The author is successful in creating interest and curiosity throughout the book. There is no suspense, no turning point, no description of love in the book and yet it is one of the most popular books of the 20th century.

Theme and Structure of the Book

The book consists of twenty-three chapters, but a single theme runs throughout the book, *i.e.*, how Helen struggled to overcome her disabilities. The first few chapters are devoted to the delineation of Helen’s birth, parentage and her strange illness. After it was declared that she was permanently impaired by the strange disease, efforts were made to find out how she could be educated. Doctors were consulted and

educationists were approached and then a teacher named Miss Sullivan was found for Helen.

Helen's Education

Helen had a strong desire to communicate with people living around her. The arrival of Miss Sullivan at Helen's house was a turning point in her life. Miss Sullivan taught her how to speak. The subsequent chapters from chapter II to chapter XIX deal with Helen's education. The author gives a vivid description of difficulties and hardships that came in her way of acquiring education and skill in various other spheres and how she overcame those difficulties. She was admitted to various institutions and succeeded in getting admission in Radcliffe where she studied with other normal girls. Her extraordinary enthusiasm and strong will power paved her way to success and she became the first deaf and blind woman who graduated from Radcliffe.

Depiction of Nature

Another important feature of the book is the author's love for nature and its picturesque depiction. Helen was very sensuous. She has given not only the names of various trees, flowers and fruits but a living portrayal of the beauty of hill stations also like Niagara Falls and roaring sea waves. She had the power to recognise flowers from their smell so she fully enjoyed the beauty and roaring sounds of Falls and Sea waves.

Conclusion

The book, '*The Story of My Life*' is very inspiring. It imparts to us two important lessons. First : Education is very important because it makes man great. It gives us an idea that an educated man can do miracles. Second : If a man has firm determination and strong will power, he can attain the height of success.



Dramatis Personae

MAJOR AND MINOR CHARACTERS

Helen Keller

Hellen Keller was an American author, political activist and lecturer who was born on June 27, 1880 at Tuscumbia, a little town in northern Alabama. She lost her ability to see and hear at the age of nineteen months due to an illness. The world became dark for her but soon her teacher came and enlightened her path. Her teacher, Miss Sullivan taught her to communicate and helped in learning many great things.

Helen was a great lover of nature and studied mostly with nature. She travelled a lot as she had desire to see and experience new things. She liked the company of others also. She made many friends in her journey. She learnt various subjects with the help of her teacher. She became weak when her first writing was regarded as plagiarism but she soon overcame. She never let her physical disabilities obstruct her in the path of success.

Miss Anne Sullivan

Miss Anne Sullivan was Helen's teacher and mentor. She came in her life when she was just seven years old. She was sent by the Perkins Institute for Blind. The day of arrival of Miss Sullivan is the most important for Helen as she opened the gate of information to her. She guided Helen through all phases of her life. Helen experienced many parts of nature with her. Miss Sullivan taught her to communicate by spelling the words on her hand. She was adorable woman and had a great patience. She also taught her subjects like Arithmetic, History, Geography, Zoology etc. in a playful manner. She also helped Helen in learning speaking. Together they had a lot of good times.

Arthur H. Keller

Arthur H. Keller was father of Helen Keller who was a captain in the Confederate Army. He was editor of a newspaper. He was brave, loving and indulgent person. He was also a good hunter and storyteller. He was quite close to his family. He only left his family when he went to hunt. He was hospitable to a fault and seldom came home without bringing a guest. He loved gardening and used to lead Helen from tree to tree and from vine to vine. He used to spell words on his daughter, Helen's hand and made her repeat them. He was in sorrow seeing his daughter helpless. He consulted many doctors to get proper treatment for her. She benefitted greatly when he found a proper teacher for her daughter. He died in the summer of 1896.

Kate Keller

Kate Keller was the mother of Helen Keller. She was second wife of Arthur H. Keller who was much elder to her. She was tall, fair complexioned and had blonde hair and blue eyes. She was very supportive and cooperative. She was intelligent, well read and had a good memory. She understood crude signs made by Helen in her early illness days. She loved her daughter very much and took great care of her. She was a hardworking woman and did everything for her family. When she read the account of Laura Bridgman, a deaf and blind girl who still got educated by Dr. Howe in Charles Dickens' 'American Notes', she gained a new hope for Helen that she might be educated. She had a positive attitude towards life and always stood up for her daughter.

Michael Anagnos

Michael Anagnos was director of Perkins Institute of Blind in Boston. When Helen's father sent him a letter, he found Anne Sullivan and sent her to teach Helen. After Helen joined the Perkins Institute, he became a friend of her's. Later, his friendship with Helen broke due to a story named 'The Frost King'. Helen wrote this story and sent to Mr. Anagnos on his birthday which he published in one of the reports of the institute. The

story was later found the copy of another story. Mr. Anagnos felt Helen had cheated him. He accused Helen for plagiarism despite knowing her for years. His friendship with Helen was never restored.

Mildred Keller

Mildred Keller was Helen's younger sister. Before her birth Helen used to get all the attention from her parents but after Mildred's birth things changed which made Helen jealous of her. When they grew up, they became friends. However, she could not understand Helen's finger language. Once at the Fern Quarry, they got lost in the woods. Mildred pointed towards the trestle and they walked over it. They climbed a moving train and returned to their cottage. This shows her alert behaviour.

Martha Washington

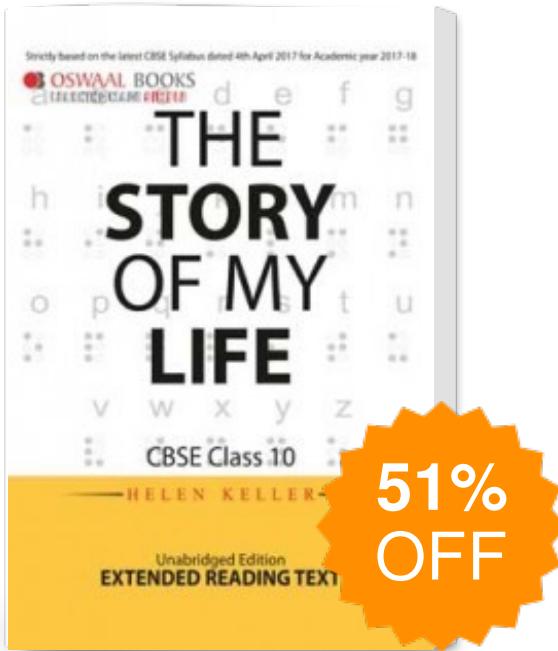
Martha Washington was daughter of the cook of the Keller family. She was a coloured girl who became Helen's companion in her early days. She understood Helen's signs. She was a mischievous girl. Helen always dominated her and made her do what she wanted to do. She submitted her to Helen because she didn't want to fight with Helen. She used to spend a lot of time in the kitchen with Helen kneading dough balls, making ice-cream, grinding coffee, quarrelling over the cake bowl and feeding hens and turkeys. She also used to go to egg-hunting in the long grass with Helen.

Dr. Alexander Graham Bell

Dr. Alexander Graham Bell played a significant role in the life of Helen Keller. So profound was his influence on Helen that she dedicated her autobiography "The Story of My Life" to him. Dr. Bell was consulted by the Kellers in order to seek help for Helen's education. Helen took to him immediately and was moved by his tenderness and sympathy. The meeting with Dr. Bell instilled hope into her and allayed her fears of being isolated.

He had a kind personality which is understood in the way in which he used to engage Helen by explaining amusing things to her in a way nobody could. According to Helen, he was proficient in many fields of

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