**SUMMARY**

**NOVEL: THE STORY OF MY LIFE**

**By-Helen Keller**

**Helen Keller, the little deaf and blind girl triumphed over adversity to become world**

**famous. Helen was born on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama, to Captain Arthur Henry Keller, a confederate army veteran and a newspaper editor, and her mother was Kate Adams Keller. By all accounts, she was a normal child. But at 19 months, Helen suffered an illness – scarlet fever or meningitis that left her deaf and blind. Although Helen learned basic household tasks and could communicate some of her desires through a series of signs, she did not learn language the way other children do. Indeed, her family wondered how a deaf and blind child could be educated.**

**At the age of six, her mother managed to get a teacher, Anne Sullivan, to teach Helen.**

**After studying at the Wright Hu mason School for the Deaf and the Cambridge School**

**for Young ladies, Helen entered Radcliff College in 1900 and finished her graduation**

**in 1904. The Story of My Life shows, Helen Keller’s life is neither a miracle nor a joke.**

**It is a tremendous achievement. Helen built upon the brilliant work of her teacher,**

**Anne Sullivan, became an inter-nationally recognized and respected figure. In 1908**

**Helen published “The World I Live In”, an account of how she experienced the world**

**through touch, taste and scent. In magazine articles she advocated for increased**

**opportunities for the blind and for improving methods of reducing childhood**

**blindness.**

**In 1909, Helen joined the Socialist Party of Massachusetts and supported many**

**progressive era causes, including birth control, labour unions and the right of women**

**to vote. In 1924, her popularity somewhat recovered, Helen began working as a**

**lecturer fund-raiser for the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB). Helen was**

**devastated when her companion Anne Sullivan died in 1936. After the Second World**

**War she toured more than thirty countries, continuing her advocacy for the blind. In**

**1955, she published the biography of Anne Sullivan “Teacher”, and in 1957 “The**

**Open door”, a collection of essays. In 1964 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of**

**Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, by President Lyndon Johnson. On 1st**

**June, 1968, she died at her home in Arcane Ridge, Connecticut. In the second part of**

**the book, we can read the letters written by Helen to her beloved ones during 1887-**

**1901. It was quite interesting and informative with wonder and curiosity. Through**

**these letters, she opened her mind, saw, felt and touched the worlds of wonders.**

**They are exercises which have trained her to write. The book “Story of My Life” is a**

**story of courage and determination and a work of inspirational literature.**

**MAJOR CHARACTERS**

**ARTHUR H. KELLER**

**Father of Helen Keller, was captain in the Confederate Army, editor of The North**

**Alabamian newspaper and Marshal of Alabama**

**Brave, competent and respected citizen.**

**Loving, indulgent and hospitable and quite close to his family.**

**Hunting was his passion.**

**Nature lover-loved his big garden.**

**Famous story teller shared many anecdotes with his daughter.**

**Very much concerned for Helen, tried his utmost to assure her that she was not**

**handicapped or desolate.**

**Brought light into the life of Helen through Miss.Sullivan, a competent teacher**

**for Helen.**

**Died of a heart attack when Helen was just sixteen.**

**KATE ADAMS KELLER**

**Arthur’s second wife, beautiful, tall, fair complexioned and blue eyes.**

**Intelligent and had excellent memory.**

**Showed courage to fight with adverse circumstances. Her husband’s death and**

**paucity of funds created insurmountable hardships.**

**Did everything possible for Helen to stand on her own legs.**

**Supportive and had positive attitude.**

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

**Child of the cook, little coloured girl and Helen’s constant companion.**

**An expert in understanding Helen’s sign and gave Helen a lot of support.**

**Helen always bossed her and Martha willingly obeyed**

**She was mischievous too. Once she seized a pair of scissors and cut off one of**

**Helen’s curl.She was about to cut them all but Helen’s mother saved her from**

**the cruel scissors of Martha**

**ANNE SULLIVAN**

**Ann Sullivan arrived in Helen’s life when she was just six**

**She was her teacher.**

**She proved strong crutches for Helen**

**Helen kissed success only because of Sullivan’s support and encouragement.**

**She proved to be a true teacher. Being blind herself she knew how ruthless**

**and torturing life she had to pass. She was able to understand Helen’s mental**

**state.**

**She boosted Helen’s love for nature.**

**She taught her manual alphabets and helped her to communicate**

**Sullivan was Helen’s teacher, mentor, constant companion and role model.**

**Helped Helen learn more from life itself.**

**Her nurturing and loving care helped Helen grow into a perfect adult, all**

**selfless and compassionate.**

**MILDRED KELLER**

**Mildred was Helen’s younger sister.**

**Helen was jealous of her because she thought she was an intruder who**

**had divided their mother’s love. Once she overturned the cradle in which**

**Mildred was sleeping.**

**Later Helen and Mildred came very close. Mildred accompanied Helen**

**everywhere.**

**To give Helen company, she even went to the same school as Helen.**

**MICHAEL ANOGNAS**

**Director of the Perkinson Institution for the Blinds, an orthodox**

**immigrant from Greece.**

**It was Anognas who sent Miss.Sullivan to Keller’s home.**

**He and Helen were good friends, encouraged Helen and appreciated**

**her compositions. He got ‘The Frost King’ written by Helen published**

**in Institute’s journal.**

**Helen was accused of plagiarism for her story ‘The Frost King’.**

**This incident ended the relationship between the two.**

**BISHOP BROOKS**

**Man of genius, a true preacher and noble soul Helen considered it was**

**the sweetest privilege of her life to know and converse with him.**

**Bishop Brooks broadened her horizon, never tried to limit her thought**

**about religion.**

**He said –there is one religion –the religion of love. He himself loved all**

**and taught Helen this great lesson of love.**

**He taught her two great ideas-the fatherhood of God and the**

**Brotherhood of Man.**

**Lessons taught by him broadened Helen’s outlook and thinking. The**

**whole humanity became her family.**

**DR. ALEXENDER GRAHAM BELL**

**It was Dr.Bell who advised Helen’s parents to contact the Perkins**

**Institute for the Blind.**

**Dr, Bell remained a friend of Helen and he accompanied her and Miss.**

**Sullivan on a trip to the World’s Fair.**

**Dr. Bell’s tenderness, sympathetic attitude won the heart of Helen.**

**He was deeply committed to the education of hearing impaired.**

**He founded the Volta Bureau for the Deaf.**

**He was a teacher of deaf and this passion made him develop on the**

**nature of sound that enabled him to invent the telephone.**

**MR.ARTHUR GILMAN**

**Principal of Cambridge School for Young Ladies.**

**Efficient teacher. His teaching was interesting and effective .His lessons made**

**learning quite easier.**

**Kind and warm hearted.**

**As principal he permitted Mildred to study at Cambridge as he knew it was**

**good for Helen.**

**He urged Helen not to take stress in her studies.**

**Helen had great respect for Mr. Gilman**

**Long Answer Type Questions based on theme/Plot/Events (150-200 words each)**

**Q1. Write a pen-portrait of Helen Keller.**

**Ans. Helen Keller was a great woman who was born on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, a**

**little town of northern Alabama. When she was still a child, she fell ill and lost her**

**sight as well as hearing. The world outside became dark and silent. Initially, she**

**used to have fits of temper when she realized she was different from others but**

**gradually adjusted herself in a positive way to the life which fate had chosen for**

**her. Her teacher, Miss Anne Sullivan helped her a lot in this. Her relationship with**

**Miss Sullivan was long-lasting and she never moved out without her. She taught**

**Helen to communicate with others through words and later sentences.**

**Helen had a great respect for physical bravery. She had a sportsman spirit and**

**never felt defeated. She loved nature and wanted to be with the trees, animals,**

**birds, flower, bushes, etc. Despite her physical disabilities, she learnt how to climb**

**trees, swimming, etc. She enjoyed the snowfall at Boston.**

**Helen was a girl who liked the company of others. She never felt shy. She used to**

**greet the guests when they visited her parents. She went to celebrate Christmas**

**with Tuscumbia school children and exchanged gifts with them.**

**She loved fragrances. Whenever she was free, she used to go out into the orchards**

**and gardens to enjoy the fragrances of persimmons, lilies, jasmines, ripe peaches,**

**etc. Her description of her various experiences were very vivid and clear.**

**In short, we can say that Helen was an optimistic lady who never let her disabilities**

**come in the path of her progressing life. Life to her was a teacher and she learnt**

**many things from it.**

**Q. 2. What were the qualities that attracted everyone towards Helen before she fell victim to her mysterious illness? Give your views.**

**Ans. Helen was a very bright and happy child. She attracted everyone’s attention towards her with her mischiefs.In her childhood, she was an eager and self-asserting child. She imitated everyone and learned walking as well as talking at an early age. She was the first baby in her**

**family so she received the love and affection of her family members to the maximum. Helen herself wrote I came, I saw, I conquered’ as the first baby in the family does. She started walking when she was a year old. Her mother had just taken her out of the bath-tub and was holding her in her lap when she started walking towards the leaves that danced in the sunlight. Even her naming ceremony was a big event. She was not to be lightly named being the first baby in the family. She initiated every one and learnt talking at an early age. Everyone got attracted towards her due to these qualities.**

**Q. 3. Why did Helen call her pony ‘Black Beauty’?**

**Ans. Helen had her pony at Fern Quarry. She called him Black Beauty as she had read the book in which there was a black horse. Helen’s horse resembled his name-sake. He had a black glossy coat and a white star on his forehead. Helen spent many of her happiest hours on Black Beauty’s back. Sometimes, her teacher Miss Sullivan would let go of the horses’ rein and the pony used to stop at his sweet will to eat grass or nibble the leaves of the trees. Helen loved her pony very much.**

**Q. 4. Helen Keller says, “Happy days did not last long.” Why does she say this?**

**What had happened to her?**

**Ans. Helen was an eager and assertive child during her childhood. The beginning of her**

**life was simple and much like every other little life. She received all the privileges as the first baby in the family does. She was having a wonderful time as a baby but ‘happy days did not last long’. In the month of February, she fell ill. The doctors called it ‘acute congestion of the stomach and brain’. They thought she would not**

**live. However, one day the fever left her as suddenly and mysteriously as it had come. Everyone rejoiced on her being well. After getting well, she could feel her eyes turning dry and hot. Gradually, the light became dimmer by the day. It was like a nightmare as she turned blind and deaf for life. Not even the doctors realised that she would never see or hear again. It was terrible but with the passage of time she got used to the silence and darkness that surrounded her and forgot that life had, at some stage, been different and wonderful.**

**Q. 5. What type of relationship did Miss Anne Sullivan and Helen share? ,**

**Ans. After the illness which left Helen deaf and blind, her parents went to meet Dr.Chisholen, an eye, ear, nose, throat specialist in Baltimore. He put them in touch with Alexander Graham Bell who worked with deaf children. Bell advised them to contact Perkins Institute for the Blind. This institution sent Miss Anne Sullivan as Helen’s instructor. The eventful day, on which Miss Sullivan was to arrive, Helen felt that something unusual was going to happen. She had no idea that the future had a surprise for her. Miss Sullivan arrived and filled Helen’s life with brightness. Both of them shared a wonderful relationship. Miss Sullivan was like a mother to her. She taught her the spellings of words by writing them on her hand like doll. Later she taught her abstract words like love, water, think etc. Once she improved her vocabulary, Miss Sullivan taught Helen how to use the words in sentences, thus gradually increasing her knowledge. She accompanied Helen everywhere and Helen also looked towards her whenever she wanted to know about something, their relationship lasted for 49 years and eventually Miss Sullivan became a companion to Helen from a mere governess.**

**Q. 6. ‘The best and most beautiful things in the world can’t be seen or even**

**touched. They must be felt with the heart.’ Justify the famous quote of Helen**

**Keller.**

**Ans. This quote is really relevant and truly signifies the life of Helen Keller herself. This**

**quote holds true for everything that we experience in life. It is the feeling towards**

**what we experience in life that is more important than what we actually see or touch.**

**Helen Keller had lost her sight and hearing at a very tender age to an illness. She did**

**not give up on life. With all the adversities surrounding her, she still fought back with**

**the courage and the love of the people who surrounded her and supported her**

**throughout. It is these feelings of love, courage, hope, satisfaction, happiness,**

**desire, pain, ambition, etc., which makes a person what they are. In fact Helen learns**

**the beauty of love not by seeing or touching but by feeling it. Her life itself stands**

**testimony to this statement ‘The best and most beautiful, things in the world can’t**

**be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.’**

**Q. 7. How did Helen learn subjects like Geography, History and Science?**

**Ans. Helen had a different way of learning subjects like Geography, History, etc. She**

**went with Miss Sullivan to an old tumble-down lumber wharf on the Tennessee**

**River which was used during the Civil War to land soldiers.**

**She built dams of pebbles, made islands and lakes, dug river-beds all for fun, never**

**realizing that she was learning a lesson. She listened to Miss Sullivan’s descriptions**

**of burning mountains, buried cities, moving rivers of ice, etc. She made raised maps**

**on clay so that she could feel the mountain ridges and valley and follow the course**

**of river with her fingers.**

**She learnt Arithmetic by stringing beads in groups and by arranging kindgarten**

**straws, she learned to add and subtract. She did not have much patience to arrange**

**more than five or six groups at a time.**

**She studied Zoology and Botany also in a leisurely manner. She listened carefully to**

**the description of terrible beasts which tramped the forests and died in the swamps**

**of an unknown age.**

**The growth of a plant itself taught her a lesson in science. She bought a lily and set it**

**in a sunny window. Very soon she noticed the signs of opening in the pointed buds.**

**This process was reluctant in the beginning but later on used to go on rapidly- in**

**order and systematically. There was always one bud larger and more beautiful than**

**the rest which pushed her outer covering with more pomp. In a way she learned**

**from life itself.**

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

**Q. 1. “Helen had a great strength and courage which helped her come out of her dark**

**and silent world.” Justify.**

**Q. 2. Write character sketch of Anne Sullivan. Q.3.Write a character sketch of Bishop Brooks. Q.4.Describe Helen’s relationship with her sister Mildred.**

**Q.5. Helen was very close to nature. She could understand nature through touch and smell. Discuss the role of nature in Helen’s life.**

**Q.6. Write a pen- portrait of Arthur .H. Keller.**