

DISABILITY IN THE MEDIA

Lesson Plan: Braille

Objective: Students will be able to explain how the Braille alphabet works.
Students will develop a better understanding of the processes used in learning to read by people with visual impairments.

Materials: Braille alphabet and the Helen Keller message
Helen Keller background information
Message translation
Visual Impairment Activity Worksheet
Website pages

Vocabulary: advocate Braille
tutor visual impairment

New York State Learning Standards:

SS Standard 1: History of the United States and New York State
ELA Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding
ELA Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression
ELA Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Procedure:

1. The teacher should view the Disability in the Media section of the Media wing of the website for background information.
2. Selections from the website can be viewed by the students online or copies of those pages can be printed for student use.
3. Discuss the limitations of a person without sight.
4. Review the Helen Keller and Ann Sullivan story.
5. Ask students, in pairs, to use the Braille alphabet sheet to translate the Helen Keller message and answer the questions on their handout.
6. Have students write their names in Braille.
7. Discuss the meaning of the message and attitudes in general, and the student responses to the questions. Ask students to share their feelings about this topic.

Closure/Ticket out the door: List 5 ways your life would be different if you were blind.

Name: _____



VISUAL IMPAIRMENT ACTIVITY

Use the Braille Alphabet sheet to help you translate the famous quote by Helen Keller. Once you have the translation completed, use your pen point to poke small holes through the dots to feel the alphabet as a person who is blind or has a visual impairment might. With your group, discuss the following questions:

1. What is the real message Helen Keller meant by this quote?
2. What are some possible perceptions of people without visual impairments toward people with visual impairments?
3. How might people with a visual impairment go about doing things differently from people who don't have a visual impairment?
4. What were some of your struggles when trying to interpret Braille?
5. What strategies would you use to learn to read Braille?

DISABILITY IN THE MEDIA

Lesson Plan: Braille

Answer Key:

Helen Keller Quote Translation

“The chief handicap of the blind is not blindness, but the attitude of seeing people towards them.”

For historical accuracy and to illustrate changing views of society, words and language used in different eras are part of the website and lessons. No offense is intended toward people with disabilities, their families or advocates.



Helen Keller Biography

Helen Keller (1880-1968)

Imagine that you couldn't see these words or hear them spoken. But you could still talk, write, read, and make friends. In fact, you went to college, wrote nearly a dozen books, traveled all over the world, met 12 U.S. presidents, and lived to be 87. Well, there was such a person, and she was born over a hundred years ago!



Helen Keller at age 7

Meet Helen Keller, a woman from the small farm town of Tuscumbia, Alabama who taught the world to respect people who are blind and deaf. Her mission came from her own life; when she was 1 1/2, she was extremely ill, and she lost both her vision and hearing. It was like entering a different world, with completely new rules, and she got very frustrated. By the time she was 7, her parents knew they needed help, so they hired a tutor named Anne Sullivan.

Anne was strict, but she had a lot of energy. In just a few days, she taught Helen how to spell words with her hands (called the manual alphabet, which is part of the sign language that deaf people use.) The trouble was, Helen didn't understand what the words meant—until one morning at the water pump (like an outdoor water fountain) she got a whole new attitude.



Anne Sullivan

Anne had Helen hold one hand under the water. Then she spelled "W-A-T-E-R" into Helen's other hand. It was electric! The feeling turned into a word. Immediately, Helen bent down and tapped the ground; Anne spelled "earth." Helen's brain flew; that day, she learned 30 words.



From then on, Helen's mind raced ahead. She learned to speak when she was ten by feeling her teacher's mouth when she talked. Often people found it hard to understand her, but she never gave up trying.

Meanwhile, she learned to read French, German, Greek, and Latin in braille! When she was 20, she entered Radcliffe College, the women's branch of Harvard University. Her first book, called **The Story of My Life**, was translated into 50 languages. (She used two typewriters: one regular, one braille.) She wrote ten more books and a lot more articles! How did she find the time?

Helen also did research, gave speeches, and helped raise money for many organizations, such as the American Foundation for the Blind and the American Foundation for the Overseas Blind, which is now called Helen Keller Worldwide. From 1946 and 1957, she went around the world, speaking about the experiences and rights of people who are blind. She wound up visiting 39 countries on five different continents! Helen also inspired many works of art, including two Oscar-winning movies, and received dozens of awards, such as the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor that an American civilian can receive. She died in her sleep in 1968.

Helen became an exceptional leader, once she saw the potential in her own mind.

Learn even more about Helen Keller at www.afb.org/helenkeller.asp!

Braille Alphabet

The six dots of
the braille cell are
arranged and numbered:

```

1 ● ● 4
2 ● ● 5
3 ● ● 6
  
```

The capital sign, dot 6,
placed before a letter
makes a capital letter.

```

1     4
2     5
3 ● ● 6
  
```

The number sign, dots 3, 4, 5, 6,
placed before the characters
a through j, makes the numbers
1 through 0. For example: a preceded
by the number sign is 1, b is 2, etc.

```

1 ● ● 4
2 ● ● 5
3 ● ● 6
  
```

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
•	⠠	⠡	⠢	⠣	⠤	⠥	⠦	⠧	⠨
k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
⠩	⠪	⠫	⠬	⠭	⠮	⠯	⠰	⠱	⠲
u	v	w	x	y	z	Capital Sign	Number Sign	Period	Comma
⠳	⠴	⠵	⠶	⠷	⠸	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠

NATIONAL BRAILLE PRESS INC.
88 ST. STEPHEN STREET
BOSTON, MA 02115
www.nbp.org

Famous Quote by Helen Keller Coded in Braille

Braille representation of the first line of the quote.

Braille representation of the second line of the quote.

Braille representation of the third line of the quote.

Braille representation of the fourth line of the quote.

Braille representation of the fifth line of the quote, ending with a period.

Sources:

- *The Foundation for Blind Children* (www.the-fbc.org) generously provided the Braille translation of Helen Keller's quotation.
 - *Gallaudet University Library, Deaf Related Resources*, <http://library.gallaudet.edu/dr/>
- Equal Treatment, Equal Access ©2005 Anti-Defamation League