

HELEN'S BIG WORLD: THE LIFE OF HELEN KELLER

BY DOREEN RAPPAPORT

ILLUSTRATED BY MATT TAVARES

DISNEY-HYPERION BOOKS, 2012

Synopsis

Helen Keller's view of her surroundings was considered normal until she was nineteen months old. An un-named illness left her without the ability to see, hear, or speak a word. Her world fell in on itself and became constricted by these losses, but an inspired teacher was able to reach Helen through a novel way of using language. Helen Keller's positive philosophy of life reflected the power that this language afforded her. Once language and communication opened Helen's world, she spent her life advocating for equal rights. Helen Keller's passion, resilience, and wisdom continue to inspire those with and without disabilities.

About the Author

Doreen Rappaport writes books for children that reflect her combination of evocative prose and quotes from the subjects of each figure. Her biographical topics include *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, *Abe's Honest Words: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, *Eleanor, Quiet No More: The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt*, and *Jack's Path of Courage: The Life of John F. Kennedy*. She lives and writes in upstate New York.

Related Links

Doreen Rappaport's official website, www.doreenrappaport.com

For the detailed Teacher's Guide created by Disney/Hyperion for Doreen Rappaport's Big Words books, visit

<http://www.teachingbooks.net/media/pdf/SingleBGs/BigWordsGuide.pdf>

About the Illustrator

Matt Tavares has illustrated two other books with Doreen Rappaport concerning John F. Kennedy and the Statue of Liberty. As with Ms. Rappaport, he has earned numerous

awards for his illustrated works. His illustrations have been exhibited at the Museum of American Illustration at the Society of Illustrators and the Brandywine River Museum. He resides in Maine with his wife and two daughters.

Related Links

Matt Tavares's official website, www.matttavares.com

Hooks

- How would you communicate with another human if you were unable to speak? What about the inability to speak or hear? And if you added the loss of vision to this list, how would it change your perception of the world around you?
- Have you ever tried to read a book printed in Braille?
- Could you learn another language so you could understand American Sign Language? What about learning Braille?
- What does it say about a human who is willing to try another path to communicate?
- Have you ever had a teacher or friend who sacrificed everything for you? What do you think of Annie Sullivan's commitment to Helen?

Connections

Nonfiction

Colon, Raul and Hopkinson, Deborah. *Annie and Helen*. Schwartz & Wade Books, 2012.

Delano, Marfé Ferguson. *Helen's Eyes: A Photobiography of Annie Sullivan*. National Geographic, 2008.

Kennon, Caroline. *Helen Keller, In Her Own Words*. Gareth Stevens, 2015.

McCully, Emily Arnold. *My Heart Glow: Alice Cogswell, Thomas Gallaudet, and the Birth of American Sign Language*. Hyperion, 2008.

McNulty, Faith and Cannon, Annie. *With Love From Koko*. Scholastic, 1990.

St. George, Judith. *Dear Dr. Bell... Your friend, Helen Keller*. G.P. Putnam Sons, 1992.

Sullivan, George. *Helen Keller: Her Life in Pictures*. Scholastic, 2007.

Books in Signed English

Bornstein, Harry. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Gallaudet University Press, 1996.

Bornstein, Harry. *Little Red Riding Hood*. Gallaudet University Press, 1990.

Bornstein, Harry. *Nursery Rhymes from Mother Goose*. Gallaudet University Press, 1992.

AV Resources

Signing time! songs, vol. 1-3 by Rachel Coleman. Two Little Hands Productions, 2002.
Signing time! series 2, volume 1. *Nice to meet you* by Rachel Coleman. Two Little Hands Productions, 2007 (and others in the series).

Books about Sign Language

Clay, Kathryn. *The Kids' Guide to Sign Language*. Capstone, 2013.
Hossell, Karen. *Sign Language*. Heinemann, 2003.
Kramer, Jacki and Ovadia, Tali. *You Can Learn Sign Language!* Troll Communications, 1999.
Lowenstein, Felicia. *All About Sign Language: Talking with your Hands*. Enslow, 2004.
Olsen, Madeline. *Native American Sign Language*. Troll Communications, 1998.
Rankin, Laura. *The Handmade Alphabet*. Dial, 1991.
Warner, Penny. *American Sign Language Vocabulary, Phrases, Games, and Activities*. University Press, 2006.
Wheeler, Cindy. *More Simple Signs*. Viking, 1998.

Fiction

Browne, Anthony. *Little Beauty*. Candlewick Press, 2008.
Elkins, Kimberly. *What is Visible: A Novel*. Grand Central Publishing, 2014.
Miller, Sarah. *Miss Spitfire: Reaching Helen Keller*. Antheneum, 2007.
Millman, Isaac. *Moses Goes to the Circus*. Francis Foster Books, Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2003.
Napoli, Donna Jo and Bates, Amy. *Hands and Hearts: Resources for the Deaf Community*, www.signingtimekids.org
With 15 Words in American Sign Language. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2014.
Ray, Delia. *Singing Hands*. Clarion Books, 2006.

Other Books by Doreen Rappaport

Abe's Honest Words: The Life of Abraham Lincoln. Disney/Hyperion, 2008.
Eleanor, Quiet No More. Disney/Hyperion, 2009.
Frederick's Journey: The Life of Frederick Douglass. *Jump at the Sun*, 2015.
Jack's Path of Courage: The Life of John F. Kennedy. Disney/Hyperion, 2010.
John's Secret Dreams: The John Lennon Story. Disney/Hyperion, 2004.
Lady Liberty: A Biography. Candlewick, 2014.
Martin's Big Words. Disney/Hyperion, 2007.
To Dare Mighty Things: The Life of Theodore Roosevelt. Disney/Hyperion, 2013.

Web Resources

Resources for the Deaf Community, www.signingtimekids.org
Disability History Museum, www.disabilitymuseum.org Disability History Museum
Gallaudet University, www.gallaudet.edu (offering a liberal education for deaf and hard of hearing students)

National Association of the Deaf, www.nad.org
Native American Encyclopedia,
<http://nativeamericanencyclopedia.com/native-american-sign-language/>

Activities

IN THE LIBRARY

Braille Alphabet

Select one of the quotations in the book. Translate the words using the Braille alphabet. Use a large notecard to press holes into for the Braille letters. A pencil or pen point is a good tool for making the raised bumps. Remember to punch from the back side so the bumps occur on the front of the card.

Facts and American Sign Language

Create a recycled card box. Copy the American Sign Language alphabet and cut apart each letter/gesture. Place all of the sign language pieces in the recycled card box. Take out one of the alphabet pieces. Write a fact about Helen Keller's life utilizing that symbol/word.

Biography Comparison

Read a large format book biography of Helen Keller. Create a Venn diagram demonstrating which items are from the biography and which ones originate from *Helen's Big World*. Do they intersect at any point? Have the Venn diagram reflect the overlapping items.

Palm Writing

Have students work in partners. While one partner closes his or her eyes and opens one hand palm up, have the other partner write a word in their opened palm. See how many words partnerships can guess correctly. Compare correct words between partnerships and discuss the ease or difficulty of the exercise.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Historical Events During Helen Keller's Life

Create a timeline to cover the major United States and World history events that occurred during Helen Keller's life. Calculate Helen's age at each point on the timeline. Have students share at least facts with their classmates.

Haiku Poetry

Each of the quotations in the book almost resound as poetry. Take one quotation and devise a haiku poem.

Other Inspiring Individuals

Helen Keller inspired millions around the world. Have student teams of three select someone from the U.S. or another nation whom they are inspired by. After conducting research, ask students to create their own picture book in the style of Doreen Rappaport--story, illustrations, quotations. Students may share each aspect of the finished project (for example, all write a few pages of the story) or divide the responsibilities according to their preference (for example, one student writes the whole story while another illustrates the story, while the third supplies appropriate quotes).

Opinion Writing

Should all books be available in Braille? Have students write an opinion piece on this topic; make sure students provide concrete facts supporting their position.

Another Website with Activities for the Book

For other detailed ideas, that are aligned with the Common Core standards, to use with Doreen Rappaport's Big Words Books (Helen Keller, Abraham Lincoln, John Lennon, Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Eleanor Roosevelt), see the Teacher's Guide created by Disney/Hyperion Books,

<http://www.teachingbooks.net/media/pdf/SingleBGs/BigWordsGuide.pdf>

A NATION'S HOPE : THE STORY OF BOXING

LEGEND JOE LOUIS

BY MATT DE LA PEÑA

ILLUSTRATED BY KADIR NELSON

DIAL BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS, 2011

Synopsis

African-American Joe Louis's story is remarkable, and his two boxing matches with German Max Schmeling were some of the most widely anticipated sporting events of their time. *A Nation's Hope* chronicles the boxing rematch between Louis and Schmeling at Yankee Stadium in 1938, on the eve of WWII. Americans saw the fight as America vs. Nazi Germany—good vs. evil. Using flashbacks, the book chronicles Joe's childhood struggles as well as his devastating loss to Schmeling in their first meeting in the ring. De la Peña's sparse text captures the intense, joyful emotions surrounding Louis's victory and allows the oil on wood illustrations by Nelson to shine with eloquence. Even though the United States was racially divided in 1938, all Americans joined together to celebrate an American boxing victory over a German from Nazi Germany.

Hooks

- Have you ever encountered a situation where you had to give all of your efforts to overcome an obstacle?
- Have you ever failed and then eventually succeeded? What did your failure teach you?
- Did you know that boxing is an Olympic sport?
- Are racial divisions in America today better or worse than in 1938?

About the Author

Matt de la Peña's work includes the highly acclaimed young adult novels *Ball Don't Lie* and *Mexican Whiteboy*. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of the Pacific, receiving a full basketball scholarship to attend. He has his MFA in creative writing

from San Diego State University, and he currently teaches writing at New York University. In addition to writing the picture book *A Nation's Hope*, Matt de la Pena recently wrote the picture book *Last Stop on Market Street*.

Related Links

Matt de la Peña's official website, www.mattdelapena.com

About the Illustrator

Kadir Nelson's work has garnered many awards, including the Coretta Scott King and Robert F. Sibert awards. His illustrated books include *Henry's Freedom Box*, *Heart and Soul*, and *We Are the Ship*. Kadir Nelson has created paintings for a variety of corporate clients, including Sports Illustrated, Major League Baseball, Coca-Cola, and Dreamworks SKG. He is a graduate of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, and Mr. Nelson resides in San Diego with his family.

Related Links

Kadir Nelson's official website, www.kadirnelson.com

Connections

Boxing

Feinstein, Stephen. *Muhammad Ali*. Enslow Elementary, 2008.

Frederick, Shane. *Boxing*. Creative Education, 2012.

Gordon, Randy. *Muhammad Ali*. Grosset Dunlap, 2001.

Healy, Nick. *Jack Johnson*. Raintree, 2003.

Lewin, Ted. *At Gleason's Gym*. Roaring Brook Press, 2007.

Myers, Walter Dean. *The Greatest: Muhammad Ali*. Scholastic, 2001.

Page, Jason. *Martial Arts, Boxing, and Other Combat Sports*. Crabtree Publishing, 2008.

Smith, Charles R., Jr. *Twelve Rounds to Glory: The Story of Muhammad Ali*, Candlewick Press, 2011.

Widener, Terry. *Joe Louis: America's Fighter*. Gulliver Books/Harcourt, 2005.

Other Picture Books by Matt de la Pena

Last Stop on Market Street. Story by Matt de la Pena, illustrations by Christian Robinson. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2015.

Other Books illustrated and/or written by Kadir Nelson

Coretta Scott. Poetry by Ntozake Shange, illustrations by Kadir Nelson. Amistad/Katherine Tegen Books, 2009.

Heart and Soul: The Story of African-Americans. Story and illustrations by Kadir Nelson. Balzer + Bray, 2011.

Henry's Freedom Box. Story by Ellen Levine, illustrations by Kadir Nelson. Scholastic, 2007.

Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya. Story by Donna Jo Napoli, illustrations by Kadir Nelson. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2010.

Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom. Story by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrations by Kadir Nelson. Hyperion Books for Children, 2006.

Nelson Mandela. Story and illustrations by Kadir Nelson. Katherine Tegen Books, 2013.

Testing the Ice: A True Story About Jackie Robinson. Story by Sharon Robinson, illustrations by Kadir Nelson. Scholastic, 2009.

We are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball. Story and illustrations by Kadir Nelson. Hyperion Books for Children, 2008.

Activities

IN THE LIBRARY

Boxing glove shape book

Draw the outline of a boxing glove on two pieces of construction paper. Make it at least five inches in height. Place lined paper, at least three sheets, between the two pieces of construction paper. Cut out all of the papers at the same time. Punch a hole in one corner of the glove outline. Use a brad to anchor the papers into a book.

Design a ticket to showcase an event at school

Use the ticket outline on the inside back jacket of the book as a template. Be sure to include the time, place, participants, and entry fee if needed.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Newspaper Article

Research the two boxing matches between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling. Make sure to research what was happening in the U.S. and the world at the time of the matches. Then, create a newspaper article about the rematch between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling. Tell the who, what, where, and how. Be brief and concise, just like a newspaper reporter, but make sure you include the relevant historical facts.

Spreadsheet of Joe Louis's career

Format a spreadsheet showing all of Joe Louis's boxing matches, his opponents, and how the match was decided. Find the ratio of wins to losses in his career of boxing.

Nazi Propaganda

After Joe Louis lost to Max Schmeling in their first meeting, the Nazi propaganda machine went into full swing. Research what was written about the fight from the Nazi perspective, and then compare this to what was written in U.S. newspapers. Again, following the second fight between the two men, compare how the boxing match was reported by the Nazi propaganda machine and by the U.S. newspapers.

The 1936 Berlin Olympics

Research the 1936 Olympics held in Berlin, Germany. How were the athletes treated? Which nation won the most gold medals? Who was Jesse Owens and what did he accomplish? How did the German media portray Jesse Owens? How are the 1936 Olympics viewed today and how were they viewed in 1936?

Racial Relations in the U.S.

As a class, compare race relations in the U.S. today vs. 1938. How is there greater racial equality today? How did the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's change life in America? What changes still need to happen? How are African Americans athletes treated today? What events today give you hope or cause you despair for the state of race relations in the U.S. today?

THE TREE LADY: THE TRUE STORY OF HOW ONE TREE-LOVING WOMAN CHANGED A CITY FOREVER

BY H. JOSEPH HOPKINS

ILLUSTRATED BY JILL McELMURRY

SIMON & SCHUSTER BOOKS, 2013

Synopsis

This book summarizes the remarkable life story of Katherine (Kate) Olivia Sessions. Kate Sessions was responsible for bringing greenery to the desert-like region of San Diego. Kate grew up among the amazing redwood trees of Northern California and always had a passion for nature and science. She was the first woman to graduate from the University of California with a science degree, and after moving to San Diego in 1883, she taught school for several years.

Eventually, Kate decided to leave teaching to follow her passion for horticulture, establishing a plant nursery within City Park. In exchange for being allowed to lease city land for her nursery, Kate promised to plant 100 trees a year in City Park and deliver others throughout the city. Kate wanted to make sure the trees she planted survived in the arid region of San Diego, so she researched trees that grew in similar regions around the world and asked for the seedlings to be shipped to her.

Soon, people from all over San Diego were purchasing trees from her nursery for their own yards and San Diego was being transformed, one tree at a time. When the World's Fair was held in Balboa Park, Kate's friends and acquaintances volunteered to plant trees, creating the lush and verdant Balboa Park of today. *The Tree Lady* is a story about a Victorian-era woman who followed her dreams and never gave up.

Hooks

- Have you, or someone you know, ever done something that someone tells you is impossible?

- What is your favorite city park to visit? Have you heard of Balboa Park or the World's Fair? Have you been to Balboa Park? If so, what do you remember?
- What type of climate do you think San Diego has? How much rain do you think San Diego receives in a year? How does this compare to San Francisco in northern California?
- Do you feel at peace in nature? Do you like gardening and getting your hands dirty? What is the study of botany?
- Do you know any plants that grow well in hot, dry, arid climates?
- Are girls better suited to some jobs than boys? Are boys better at some jobs? How would you feel if someone prevented you from doing a job because of your gender?
- Have you ever planted a tree? Why and with whom?

About the Author

H. Joseph Hopkins lives on a houseboat in Portland, Oregon but grew up in Missouri's Ozark Mountains and in the Puget Sound region of Washington. He was inspired by the contrast of San Diego's lush green landscapes and its dry, desert areas. Hopkins also believed the story of Katherine Sessions would be a strong role model for students since she had to overcome many obstacles to achieve her goals.

About the Illustrator

Jill McElmurry lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico on her farm. She was born in Los Angeles, California but grew up in Taos, New Mexico. She studied art at SUNY Purchase and School of Visual Arts. McElmurry has a long list of credits to her name and has illustrated several children's books including *Pirate Princess*, *Mad About Plaid*, *Who Stole the Mona Lisa*, *Little Blue Truck*, and *Hound from the Pound* just to name a few. In her spare time, Jill enjoys painting the beautiful landscape of New Mexico.

Connections

Biographies About Women

- Brown, Don. *Uncommon Traveler: Mary Kingsley in Africa*. Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- Cummins, Julie. *Women Daredevils: Thrills, Chills, and Thrills*. Dutton Children's Books, 2008.
- Cummins, Julie. *Women Explorers: Perils, Pistols, and Petticoats*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2012.
- Markel, Michelle. *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909*. Balzer + Bray, 2013.
- McCarthy, Meghan. *Daredevil: The Daring Life of Betty Skelton*. Simon & Simon, 2013.
- Pinborough, Jan. *Miss Moore Thought Otherwise: How Anne Carroll Moore Created Libraries for Children*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2013.
- McDonnell, Patrick. *Me--Jane*. Little Brown, 2011.
- Stone, Tanya Lee. *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote*. Henry Holt, 2008.
- Stone, Tanya Lee. *Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?: The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell*. Henry Holt & Co., 2013.
- Tonatiuh, Duncan. *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation*. Harry N. Abrams, 2014.
- Van Allsburg, Chris. *Queen of the Falls*. Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2011.
- Winter, Jeanette. *The Watcher: Jane Goodall's Life with the Chimps*. Schwartz & Wade Books, 2001.

Ecology Theme

- Base, Graeme. *Uno's Garden*. Harry N. Abrams, 2006.
- Cherry, Lynne. *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2000.
- Chin, Jason. *Redwoods*. Roaring Brook Press, 2009.
- Cooney, Barbara. *Miss Rumphius*. Puffin Books, 1985.
- Florian, Douglas. *Poetrees*. Beach Lane Books, 2010.
- Muldrow, Diane. *We Planted a Tree*. Golden Books, 2010.
- Nicholls, Judith. *The Sun in Me: Poems about the Planet*. Barefoot Books. 2003.
- Preus, Margi. *Celebritrees: Historic and Famous Trees of the World*. Henry Holt, 2010.
- Sirett, Dawn. *Love Your World: How to Take Care of the Plants, Animals and the Planet*. DK Publishing, 2009.
- Walsh, Melanie. *10 Things I Can Do to Help My World*. Candlewick Press, 2012.
- Ward, Helen. *The Tin Forest*. Dutton's Children's Books, 2001.
- Willis, Jeanne. *The Bog Baby*. Schwartz & Wade Books, 2008.
- Winter, Jonah. *Here Comes the Garbage Barge*. Schwartz & Wade Books, 2010.

Activities

IN THE LIBRARY

Nature Drawing

The cover of *The Tree Lady* is amazing; ask students who they think and feel when they see the cover. Make sure to talk about the perspective of the illustrator. Then, have them think about a time when they were surrounded by nature and felt wonderful or completely at peace. Finish by having students draw a nature memory; make sure they think about the perspective from which they will draw the picture.

Write a Poem

Have students write the poem about Kate Sessions' life using the facts from the book and making sure the poem is from her point of view. Have students begin each line with "I am..." followed by various characteristics or events in the life of Kate Sessions.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Diorama

Build a diorama of the San Diego area or Balboa Park either the way it looked before Kate Sessions starting planting trees or afterward. Make sure to have students focus on the plants and trees; use the illustrations from the book to help make the trees look as accurate as possible.

Historical Figures

Kate Sessions was interested in science and was one of the first women to get a degree in science at the University of California. There were many other women who went against the norm and pursued subjects usually studied by men. Who were some of these other women and what contributions have they made over the years?

Caring Community

Host an Arbor Day celebration at your school. In addition to having students research and learn about trees around the world and those that thrive in your area, check with your school administrator to see about planting a tree in honor of Kate Sessions.

Tree Research

Choose one of the types of trees Kate brought from around the world to San Diego. Write a mini research report about it. Present it to your class during Arbor Day.