

**Consider if the person/people deserve their fame or not and give the reasons why stating if they should be famous for some other achievement and/or why?**

Helen Keller was born in the USA in 1880. Before she was two-years old, she suffered an illness which left her both deaf and blind. Her parents were comfortably off. Helen was not dumb. Like most people diagnosed as dumb, she just could not hear so she didn't speak.

At that time, there was considerable interest in education and Helen's Father took her to meet several influential academics with a view to getting her educated. These included Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone which depended on audio communication. This effort by her Father resulted in contact with the Perkins Institute for the Blind, and resulted in a teaching and personal relationship with Anne Sullivan, a governess, that would last fifty years and other committed relationships that would outlive it.

There is no doubt that Helen's disabilities were severe and anyone overcoming such afflictions deserves immense respect for their own fortitude and perseverance. One episode documented has Helen smashing a mug in frustration when she was trying to learn to sign "mug". However, she did have resources including her parents' limited wealth and support, the attention of other wealthy patrons and essentially, the commitment of her long term teachers.

When Helen began studying with Anne Sullivan It was also a period barely 18 years after the end of the American Civil War. The abolitionists had triumphed and civil wrights including women's suffrage and socialist politics were high on the public agenda. Her rise to fame was extremely rapid in an age when communications relied on the telegraph, telephone and newspapers. At the age of twenty-two she had published her autobiography, *The Story of My Life* and at the age of 24, Helen Keller was the first deaf-blind person to gain a BA from Radcliffe, a leading university.

One possible explanation for her success can be argued to be the support or even "management" she received. At different stages became a Christian, was a socialist and advocate for eugenics, a branch of science now widely avoided particularly since the Second World War. She suggested refusing life-saving medical procedures to infants with mental impairments as not worthwhile. Helen was opposed to the entry of the USA into the First World War. All of these may be considered a product of the American societal growth of the times. As early as eleven years, when she had been studying with Anne Sullivan for about five years Helen wrote a short story called *The Frost King* which resulted in accusations of plagiarism. Helen reportedly formed a romantic attachment with Peter Fagin who had been hired to act as Helen's secretary while Anne Sullivan was ill. The couple were planning to elope, but family and friends intervened.

Taking the known information together, there can be little doubt that Helen Keller was a strong and diligent woman who overcame serious misfortune and disability. How much of that success is attributable to Helen herself and how much to her supporters seems of little consequence. Without Helen herself, there would have been no Phenomena. She deserved her fame.

**This text needs referencing.**