



NCERT Solutions for 10th Class English Literature: Chapter 1-The Story of My Life by Helen Keller Summary



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NCERT 10th English Literature Chapter 1, class 10 English Literature
Chapter 1 solutions

The Story of My Life – Helen Keller

About the Author

Helen Adam Keller was born on June 27, 1880. She was an American author, political activist and lecturer. Her father's name was Arthur H. Keller. He was a captain, a former officer of the Confederate Army. Her mother was Kate Adams Keller. The Keller family originated from Switzerland. Helen contracted an illness when she was nineteen months old. It was an acute congestion of the stomach and brain which could have been scarlet fever or meningitis. She did not suffer long from this illness but it left her deaf and blind. Helen started communicating through signs with her family. In 1886, she was taken to Dr. J. Julian Chisolm who was an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist for advice who further sent them to Alexander Graham Bell who was working with the deaf children at that time. Bell advised them to contact the Perkins Institute for the Blind. On reaching there, the school's director put Helen under the charge of their former student Anne Sullivan who herself was visually impaired.

Anne Sullivan began to teach Helen to communicate by spelling words into her hands which Helen quickly learnt. In 1894, they both moved to New York to attend Wright-Humason School for the Deaf and Horace Mann School for the Deaf. In 1900, Helen gained admission in Radcliffe College. At the age of 24, in 1904, she graduated from the same college and became the first deaf-blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Anne Sullivan stayed as a companion for 20 long years with Helen but after marriage her health started failing and Polly Thompson was hired to keep house.

Polly was a young woman from Scotland who had no experience with deaf or blind people but she became a constant companion to Keller. Anne died

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in 1936 and Helen moved to Connecticut with Polly. Both travelled worldwide and raised funding for the blind. Polly suffered a stroke and died in 1960. After her death Winnie Corbally remained Keller's companion for the rest of her life.

Keller became a world famous speaker and author. She is still remembered as an advocate for people with disabilities and numerous other causes. In 1915, she founded the HKI-Helen Keller Institutional organization which is devoted to research in vision, health and nutrition. Helen travelled to more than 39 countries and became a favourite of the Japanese. In 1912, she joined the IWW-Industrial Workers of the World.

Helen wrote several pieces of writing. The earliest was the Frost King (1891). She published her auto biography, The Story of My Life (1903), The World I Live In (1980), Out of the Dark (1913) and My Religion (1927). She wrote 12 published books. On September 14, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom one of the highest civilian honours of the United States. She devoted much of her later life to raising funds for the American Foundation for the Blind. Helen left this world on June 1, 1968 at her home in Connecticut.

Her life has always been a source of inspiration to many. She became the subject of many movies and TV serials. She was listed in the Gallup's Most Widely Admired People in 1999 and her statue was unveiled in 2009 at the United States Capital Building. Her life-story is unusual as well as inspiring.

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Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 1 – Class 10 English

Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, a little town of northern Alabama. The family on her father's side descended from Casper Keller, a native of Switzerland, who settled in Maryland. Her grandfather,

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Caspar Keller's son, also acquired large tracts of land in Alabama and finally settled there. Her grandmother Keller was the daughter of Alexander Moore and second cousin to Robert E Lee. Her father's name was Arthur H. Keller who was a captain in the Confederate Army and her mother was Kate Adams who was many years younger to her husband as she was his second wife.

Helen Keller lived in a small house which consisted of a large square room and a small one in which the servant slept. There was a custom in the south to build a small house near the homestead as an annex to be used on occasion and such a house was built by her father after the Civil War. After his marriage to Kate, Helen's mother, he shifted to

that house. The house was covered with vines, climbing roses and honeysuckles. There was a screen of yellow roses and Southern Smilax which hid the, little porch. It was the favourite haunt of humming birds and bees. The family lived in the Keller Homestead, also known as 'Ivy Green' because the house, the surrounding trees and fences were covered with ivy. Helen considered the house as the paradise of her childhood.

Helen's life began on a simple note. The very naming of the child, i.e., Helen was an emphatic one. Her father suggested the name of Mildred Campbell whom he regarded highly but her mother put an end to all discussions by saying that she would be called after her mother, Helen Everett. Helen was taken to the church for christening but on the way, her father lost the name. He just remembered that it had to be after Helen's grandmother so he gave her the name Helen Adams.

In her childhood, Helen was an eager and self-asserting child. She imitated everyone and learnt walking as well as talking at an early age. But her happiness did not last long. One day in the month of February, she fell ill. The doctors termed it as an acute congestion of the stomach and brain. They even thought that she would not live. It was a mysterious fever which

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left her suddenly and mysteriously. But it took her eye-sight along with it. With each passing day, her eyes turned dry and hot and became dimmer and she felt silence all around. It was a nightmare for her when she realised that she had lost her eyes and ears. The whole world to her was dark and silent.

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Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 2 – Class 10 English

In the initial months after her illness, Helen either sat in her mother's lap or cling to her dress when she went about doing her household chores. She touched every object and observed every motion thus enabling her to understand the outer world. She started communicating using sign language. A shake of her head meant 'No' and a nod 'Yes', a pull meant 'Come' and push 'Go'. Her mother was of great help to her and she turned her long dark nights into bright and good ones with her wisdom. She was always sent for when they had guests and she waved her hand to them when they took their leave.

But after sometime, Helen started realising that she was different from others. She noticed that sign language was not used by other people but they used their lips to talk. She used to touch their lips and then hers. She could feel the difference and sometimes she used to get so angry that she kicked and screamed till she got exhausted.

Helen was a naughty girl. She used to kick her nurse Ella and dominated her cook's daughter Martha Washington. Her sources of interest were the sheds where the corn was stored, the stable where horses were kept and the yards where the cows were milked. Once she was saved from fire by her old nurse, Viny. In this way her mischiefs kept on increasing. By this time, she had found out the use of a key and locked her mother in the pantry for three hours. Her mother kept on pounding on the door, while she

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sat outside on the steps and laughed. This was the naughtiest prank ever done by Helen and Miss Sullivan was appointed as a teacher. But Helen locked even her and hid the key under the wardrobe in the hall. Miss Sullivan was taken out through the window.

Helen's father was most loving and devoted to his home. Apart from this he was a great hunter. He loved being hospitable and seldom came home without bringing a guest. He raised watermelons and strawberries in his special big garden. Her father was a story-teller also and used to spell clumsily into Helen's hands some of his cleverest anecdotes. But unfortunately after a short illness, he died in 1896.

Helen's mother was equally near Helen's heart. So much so that she regarded her little sister as an intruder out of jealousy. Once she overturned the cradle in which her little sister was sleeping just because it belonged to Nancy, Helen's doll. She was saved from falling by her mother. Later on, both of them became good friends.

NCERT 10th English Literature Chapter 1, class 10 English Literature Chapter 1 solutions

Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 3 – Class 10 English

With the passage of time, Helen started feeling uncomfortable and inadequate with her sign language. She often underwent outbursts of passion and generally broke down in tears and physical exhaustion. Her parents were deeply grieved to see her in such condition and had lost all hope of getting her taught as they lived in out of the way place as Tuscumbia. But Dickens' 'American Notes' brought a ray of hope. Her mother read about the story of Laura Bridgman who was deaf and blind yet had been educated. But Dr. Howe, who had discovered the ways to teach such children had been dead many years.

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It was only when Helen reached the age of six that they heard of an eminent oculist in Baltimore who had treated many such cases. They immediately decided to meet him. They caught a train and reached Baltimore. Dr. Chrisholem received them kindly but further told them to consult Dr. Alexander Graham Bell of Washington to get more information about schools and teachers of deaf or blind children. They met Dr. Bell who understood her signs and left a deep impression on Helen's mind. He advised Helen's father to write to Mr. Anagnos, director of the Perkins Institution in Boston to ask him about a teacher who could teach Helen. They received the reply telling them about Miss Sullivan who arrived the following March.

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Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 4 – Class 10 English

The day Miss Sullivan arrived was the most important day in Helen's life. It was March 3, 1887 and Helen was around seven years old. On that day, she could feel that something important was going to happen as there was a lot of to and fro in the house. Then Miss Anne Manefield Sullivan arrived who gave her a doll. The children at the Perkins Institution had sent it for her. When she had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled the word 'd-o-1-T' which Helen tried to imitate. Later, she learned to spell pin, cup, sit, stand, walk, mug, water, etc. Miss Sullivan taught her the word 'water' in a different way. She took her to a well. There she spelled the word 'water' in one hand and on the other she could feel the cool stream of water flowing over her hand. It was a strange feeling but it left her with a new hope, light and joy. She felt herself to be the happiest child that day and for the first time she waited for a new day to come.

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Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 5 – Class 10 English

The arrival of Miss Sullivan filled Helen's life with confidence and joy. She kept on teaching her something or the other. Her next chapter was nature. She took her to the fields, to the banks of Tennessee River to learn about nature. Helen started enjoying the world she lived in. Miss Sullivan made her feel beauty in the woods, blades of grass, birds, flowers, in fact almost everything. But one stormy day gave Helen a feeling that nature can be cruel also. She was sitting on the branch of a tree and Miss Sullivan proposed to have lunch there only. Helen agreed to the proposal and Miss Sullivan went home to bring the lunch. Helen was left alone there. Suddenly, Helen felt the heat of sun lessening and a terrible shaking of trees. She grew frightened and longed for her teacher's arrival. The feeling of terror kept on increasing and she made up her mind to jump down. Suddenly her teacher seized her hand and helped her down. The experience shook Helen terribly. It took her a long time to gather enough courage to climb another tree. But finally she climbed the mimosa tree which had large branches and rough barks. The feeling of having done something wonderful and unusual filled Helen's mind. She felt like a fairy on a rosy cloud and spent many happy hours in the tree.

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Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 6 – Class 10 English

After learning a few words, Helen was eager to learn how to use them. She knew her vocabulary was insufficient but as she learned more and more words, her field of enquiry widened. She was always eager to know something more. One such word was 'love', she wanted to know the meaning of this word. Miss Sullivan tried to teach her the meaning by kissing her, by gently holding her but somehow she didn't understand it. But one day suddenly when the sun shone after brief showers, she felt the meaning of love. Miss Sullivan told her that love is to be felt and not

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touched. Immediately she realised what love is. In the same way, she was taught another abstract word 'think' by Miss Sullivan by touching her forehead and spelling it.

By now Helen could make out that a deaf child can't learn any lesson within a month or a year as an ordinary child can by imitating or repeating as these exchange of ideas are denied to the deaf. But Miss Sullivan came to her help here also and told her to repeat as far as possible. It is difficult for the deaf and the blind to do it as they can neither see the expressions of the speaker nor can they hear the tone of the voice.

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Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 7 – Class 10 English

The next step in Helen's education was learning to read. For this purpose, her teacher gave her slips of cardboard which had raised letters printed on them and each printed word stood for something like an object, act or a quality. There was a frame also in which she could arrange the words in little sentences. Helen started arranging words like 'doll-is-on-bed', 'girl-is-in-wardrobe', etc. After that she took the book 'Reader for Beginners' and looked for the words she knew. Thus she began to read also. She had no regular lesson. Her teacher taught her by illustrating a story or a poem and she kept on learning grammar, hard sums, definition, etc. She learnt all these lessons in the lap of nature sometimes amongst the flowers and sometimes in the orchard. Helen learnt geography, arithmetic, zoology and botany-all in a leisurely manner. Arithmetic seemed a disinteresting subject to Helen. In science, she was taught the growth of a plant in its actual form. She enjoyed her lessons as she learnt them from life itself. But it was all because of her teacher who was teaching her in such a way that everything around her breathed of love, joy and was full of meaning. Helen was delighted in the company of her teacher as she had a great influence on her life.

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Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 8 – Class 10 English

Helen kept on climbing the steps of learning under the expert guidance of Miss Sullivan until Christmas approached. It was her first Christmas with Miss Sullivan. Both of them prepared surprises for all others. Helen's greatest amusement and happiness lay in the mystery that surrounded the gifts which she was to receive. Her curiosity was further aroused by her friends. She kept on playing the guessing game with Miss Sullivan.

On the eve of Christmas, the Tuscumbia School Children invited Helen to a beautiful Christmas tree which provided extreme happiness to Helen. She was told that there was a gift for everyone. She was very excited but she kept on waiting for the real gift that she would get on the day of Christmas. Next morning, with her first 'Merry Christmas', she was presented a canary-a bird which made her extremely happy. She took great care of the bird. But one day while she was away a cat rushed upon it and the bird was gone.

NCERT 10th English Literature Chapter 1, class 10 English Literature Chapter 1 solutions

Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 9 – Class 10 English

In May, 1888, Helen visited Boston with Miss Sullivan. The journey to Boston was very different from her journey to Baltimore which she had made two years before. She sat quietly beside Miss Sullivan who told her about everything that she saw out of the car-window. She told her about the beautiful Tennessee River, the great cotton-fields, the hills, woods, laughing negroes-in fact each and everything. Helen took her rag doll Nancy also to Boston. On the way, she forced Nancy, the doll, to eat remains of mud pies which covered her with dust. She was carried away to give a bath at the Perkins Institution which left her in a heap of cotton. It was bad for Nancy.

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When they reached the Perkins Institution for the Blind, Helen became quiet friendly with the little blind children. She liked the idea of being with the blind and felt one with them. She found that they were all so happy and contented despite being deprived of a precious gift. She herself lost the sense of pain in their company. She had her first lesson in history when they visited Bunker Hill and her first voyage when they went to Plymouth by water. She paid a visit to Miss William Endicott's house with whom she had made friends. She enjoyed her visit to Miss Endicott's Beverly farms. Mr. Endicott was also a kind-hearted man and became one of Helen's good friends whom she always remembered.

Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 10 – Class 10 English

The Perkins Institution used to close for the summer. It was almost time for the summer vacation and it was decided that Helen and her teacher would spend their vacation at Brewster, on Cape Cod with Mrs. Sophia Hopkins—a matron at the same institution. Helen was delighted when she heard about her vacation. Actually, she had planned to make her wish come true and her wish was to touch the mighty sea and feel it roar. On reaching there, she was helped into the bathing suit. Without having any thought of fear, she jumped into the cool water and felt the great billows rock and sink. The movement of the water filled her with joy. But suddenly her joy turned into terror when her foot struck against a rock and she felt a rush of water over her hand. She struggled a lot to come out of it but all went in vain. Suddenly, the sea threw her back on the shore and left her. It was a terrible experience for her but still she recovered from it and sat on a big rock to feel the waves dash against it. It was a wonderful experience.

One day, while enjoying the waves, her attention was attracted by Miss Sullivan towards a horseshoe crab.

‘Helen was amazed when she felt the crab ‘carrying his house on his back’. She took it home to make her pet. When she reached home, she put the crab in a trough near the well, confident enough that it was secure. The

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next morning she went to meet her little pet only to realize that it had disappeared. There was no answer to where and how he had escaped. She was disappointed but later felt it was better for the dumb creature as perhaps he had returned to the sea where he belonged.

Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 11 – Class 10 English

Time passed by and it was autumn when Helen returned to her Southern home. Her heart was full of happy memories of the days spent in the North. Her life there was as full of motion as little insects which crowd a whole existence into one brief day. She spent the autumn months with her family at Fern Quarry – their summer cottage on a mountain about fourteen miles from Tuscumbia. There were small rooms in the cottage and round the house was a wide piazza where they worked, ate and played most of the time. The evenings in the Fern Quarry were pleasant as there were many visitors who used to play cards or spent their time in talk by the campfire. Generally, the men talked about their wonderful feats with fowl, fish, ducks, turkeys, etc. They all were hunters and they shouted “Tomorrow to the Chase!” before they went to sleep.

There was a lot of noise of the heavy steps of hunters in the morning as they were getting ready to go out for hunting. Meanwhile the others made preparation for a barbeque. When the excitement of the preparation was at its height, the hunters came back hot and weary with not a single kill. They seemed disappointed but soon forgot about it to a tamer feast of veal and roast pig.

Helen had a pony also at Fern Quarry whom she called Black Beauty and she often went riding on it. She enjoyed the time spent on riding.

At the foot of the mountain there was a railroad which attracted children towards it because of the trains whizzing by. One day Mildred, Miss Sullivan and Helen lost their path in the woods there and wandered for hours to find it. Suddenly, Mildred saw a trestle which would have been a

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short cut to their home. Helen felt for the rails with her toe, without being afraid and got on very well until she heard Mildred cry “I see the train”. They immediately climbed down and the train rumbled by. It was a narrow escape but she couldn’t forget the experience.

Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 12 – Class 10 English

Helen spent almost every winter in the North after her first visit to Boston. Once she went on a visit to a New England village and there she had her first experience of snowfall. The earth seemed benumbed by its icy touch. The grass and bushes were turned into icicles. They all sat around the great fire and told merry tales to each other. The snowfall stopped after three days. Everything looked like figures in a marble freeze. As the days passed on, the trees lost their ice covering and the bushes became bare once the sun shone brightly.

The favourite amusement during the winter was tobogganing. They would get on their toboggan, somebody would shove them and they would swoop down the lake to the opposite bank. It was great fun.

Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 13 – Class 10 English

In this chapter Helen tells us how she learned to speak and what efforts she made for it. It was in the spring of 1890 that Helen learned to speak though she had been practising it for months. The impulse to produce audible sounds had always been strong within her. She would put one hand on her throat and with the other hand she tried to feel the movements of her lips. When she was in her mother’s lap, she would move her hand on her face to feel how her lips moved. It gave her immense joy. Before she lost her sight and hearing, she was fast learning to speak. She also remembered the first word that she uttered was water. She pronounced it ‘wa-wa’. Then her illness snatched her sight and hearing. Then with the help of Miss Sullivan she practiced to communicate by feeling letters with her fingers. But she was not satisfied with it and was very eager to speak

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with her mouth. At last her efforts bore fruit and she learned to speak in 1890.

In 1890, Mrs. Lamson, who had taught Laura Bridgman and had just returned from a visit to Norway and Sweden, came to meet her. She told Helen how a blind and deaf girl of Norway named Ragnhild Kaata was taught to speak. The story of Mrs. Lamson infused Helen with a new hope and she resolved that she would also learn to speak. Her teacher, Miss Sullivan took her for advice and assistance to Miss Sarah Fuller. The kind lady took upon herself the responsibility to teach her. Thus, she began her education under the guidance of Miss. Sarah Fuller in March 1890.

Since the teacher and the taught both were devoted to attain the single aim, they achieved success. After a long practice, Helen pronounced the first sentence, it was warm. How happy she was can only be imagined by the deaf and blind child who had uttered a word for the first time.

But, it must not be supposed that she could really speak as we speak. She had learned only the elements of speech. Only Miss Sullivan and Miss Sarah Fuller could understand what she uttered. But most people would not have understood her for hours. She was left only with one way and that was of practice. She practised speaking for hours and Miss Sullivan always assisted her in her practice. Sometimes she was weary and disappointed, but soon hope overcame dejection. Besides the thought that a great and pleasant change was about to come in her life dispelled the dark clouds of despair in the same way as dew drops disappear on the emergence of the sun. Finally, her efforts and the affection and devotion of her teachers forced fate to bow to her and Helen learned to speak. Now she was impatient to show her achievements to her parents, sister and friends. And, then came the day when Helen reached Tuscumbia Railway station where her parents, sister and friends were present to receive her. The spring season, bloom, joviality, youthful prank and beauty all returned to their lives. The doors to a new life had been opened to all.

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Summary of Story of my Life Chapter 14 – Class 10 English

In the winter of 1892, there occurred such an incident that blotted out the bright sky of Helen's childhood and for a long time she remained in a state of suspicion, anxiety and dejection. Books lost their charm for her. The main cause of the trouble was a story 'The Frost King' which she wrote to send as a gift to Mr. Anagnos on his birthday. Mr. Anagnos was the Director of Perkins Institute for the Blind.

Helen wrote this story in the autumn after she had learned to speak. Having returned from Fern Quarry, one day Miss Sullivan told her about the beauty of new foliage. Miss Sullivan's version of new verdure reminded Helen of some story that had been read to her some times earlier. It occurred to her that the outline of the story had taken shape in her mind and she at once sat down to write it lest the idea should slip from her mind. Words and images flowed from her pen as if they had been on her finger's end. Her only aim to write the story was to please Mr. Anagnos and to prove to her friends that she could accomplish what many think to do but only few attain success in putting words in a systematic order. Little did she know that the publication of the story would shatter the glass house of her fantasy and splinters of disgrace would continue to prick her conscience for a long time to come. Having completed the story, Helen read it to her friends and the members of her family. They were astonished to know that Helen could write so well. Actually, the story was written so nicely that none believed that it was the product of the brain of someone who was a spring chicken in the field of writing. When someone asked her if it was her own composition, she answered firmly that it was the child of her own imagination. On the suggestion of her friends and teacher, the title of the story was changed from 'Autumn Leaves' to 'The Frost King'.

Helen posted the letter to Mr. Anagnos who was delighted to receive this unexpected gift from a blind and deaf 1

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girl. He published the story in a report of the Perkins Institute. The publication of the story was the pinnacle of her happiness. But after the publication of the story, the fact came into light that almost the same story had appeared before her birth in a book named 'Birdie and His Friends', under the title 'The Frost Fairies'. It was written by Miss Margaret T. Canby. The thoughts and language of the two stories were so akin to each other, that it was evident that Helen had heard the story of Miss Canby and that her own story was a plagiarism. It was a great shock to Helen and she felt much, disgraced. Her friends began to doubt her talent and looked at her with suspicion. Helen tried her best to recall if she had ever heard Miss Canby's story, but she did not remember. Mr. Anagnos, though deeply troubled, believed her innocence. A few days after this sad incident, Helen went to attend Washington's birthday celebration.

The night before the celebration, a teacher asked her questions related to the Frost King. Though she strongly denied to have ever heard Miss Canby's story, she (the teacher) drew the conclusion from her conversation that Miss, Sullivan might have told Miss Canby's story to her and Helen remembered the story which she wrote under the title the Frost King.

Now Mr. Anagnos came to believe that he was deceived. He turned a deaf ear to all her pleadings and claims of innocence. He also arrived at the conclusion that Miss Sullivan and Helen stole Miss Canby's story and presented it to him as Helen's own creation to influence him and win his favour. Helen was presented before the court of investigation consisting of eight members. She was questioned and cross questioned. The aim of the judges was to make her acknowledge that she knew Miss Canby's story and she deliberately got it published as her own composition to impress Mr. Anagnos and win his admiration. Though Helen firmly denied their charges, when she came out of the room she did not notice her teacher's caresses and the confidence of her friends. That night she wept bitterly and wished that she might die before the appearance of dawn. But slowly and

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gradually, time healed her wound given by disgrace and made her oblivious of what had happened.

Miss Sullivan had never read Miss Canby's story. Later after much investigation and discussion, Miss Sullivan and Dr. Graham Bell reached the conclusion that Helen might have read Miss Canby's story during her stay with Miss Hopkins. Whatever may be, Helen had to accept that she must have read Miss Canby's story and that long after she ,

had forgotten it, it came back to her so naturally that she thought it the child of her own mind.

After this sad incident, many people wrote letters of love and sympathy to her. Miss Canby also wrote to her that someday, she would also write a great book. But she did not write anything new for a long time. Later she came to know that she had actually heard Miss Canby's story because she used other ideas and sentences of that story in some of her letters. The reality was that she had absorbed the story so much that with the passage of time, she would use its ideas and language in her own compositions considering them as her own ideas and words. In this context, Helen quotes the view of famous English essayist and novelist R.L. Stevenson. He writes that a young writer instinctively tries to copy whatever seems most admirable to him. It is after a long practice and experience that he becomes able to express his own ideas in his own language. Helen accepted that she had yet not attained that state, but she did not accept defeat. She believed if others had succeeded before her, she too would attain success.

This incident made her aware of the problems of writing, but it resulted in the loss of one good friend Mr. Anagnos. After the publication of Helen's 'The Story of My Life', Mr. Anagnos wrote to her that before the court of investigation he cast his vote with those who were in her favour. For two

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years Mr. Anagnos held the belief that Helen and Miss Sullivan were innocent but later he changed his view.

Helen wrote this account of the 'Frost King' case because it was important in her life and education. She neither defended herself nor did she lay blame on any one else.

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- The Story of My Life Summary By Helen Keller (Unabridged Edition)
- The Story of My Life By Helen Keller (Unabridged Edition)
- The Diary of a Young Girl Summary By Anne Frank
- The Diary of a Young Girl By Anne Frank

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