

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

# *The Miracle Worker*

by William Gibson

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## OBJECTIVES

*By the end of the Unit, students will be able to:*

1. read closely to recall significant details of characterization.
2. describe how characters develop, not only through their actions and dialogue, but also by their reactions and interactions with other characters, their mannerisms, and their appearance.
3. identify and discuss the following themes within this play and cite comments and incidents from the play to support them:
  - A. Society should have expectations for all its members; no person should be pitied and deemed hopeless.
  - B. A person achieves dignity and earns respect when he or she shows determination and refuses to be controlled by others.
  - C. Language is the means through which people think, understand, and communicate.
  - D. By helping others, we help ourselves.
  - E. Overcoming problems can give people the ability to be sympathetic and helpful.
4. examine conflicts between and within characters in the play:
  - A. Annie's inner conflict (using her memories) and need for "resurrection."
  - B. the conflict between James and his father.
  - C. the conflict between Captain Keller and Annie.
  - D. Kate's inner conflict about her child.
5. define the following literary terms and illustrate the terms with examples from the book:
  - allusion
  - characterization
  - conflict
  - dialect
  - dynamic characters
  - flashback
  - plot
  - setting
  - simile
6. write a half-page character description of the following:
  - Kate
  - Captain Keller
  - Helen
  - Annie Sullivan
  - James

## *The Miracle Worker*

### **Questions for Essay and Discussion**

1. How do the stage directions help the reader understand the play?
2. How do the character's reactions toward Helen change during the course of the play?
3. List the different ways the other characters in the play respond to Helen.
4. Describe the effect Annie has on other characters besides Helen.
5. How do the short flashbacks help advance the action of the play?
6. Write a short essay describing the conflict between James and his father.
7. Describe how attitudes toward the disabled have changed over the past century?

# *The Miracle Worker*

## Study Guide

## Student Copy

### Act I

#### **Vocabulary**

**refuge** – shelter or protection from danger

**disarray** – disorder or confusion

**appraisal** – the determination of value

**erupt** – to explode or break out violently

**contemplate** – to consider thoughtfully

**subtle** – not obvious; difficult to detect

**encounter** – to meet

**voluminous** – having great volume, size, or fullness

**imperious** – overbearing, bossy

**caricature** – a picture in which a subject's features are exaggerated

**serene** – unruffled, calm, tranquil

**chivalrous** – having the qualities of honor, generosity, and courage

**composed** – made up of parts; calm

**imperceptible** – not able to be seen or felt

**oblivious** – unaware of something

**evade** – to escape or avoid

**deferential** – courteous respect to the wishes of another

**tyrant** – a person who uses power in a cruel, unjust way

**ominous** – threatening or sinister

**revert** – to return to a former condition

**subside** – to sink to a lower level; settle

**laborious** – requiring much hard work

1. How does Helen's family discover that she is blind and deaf?

2. To what point in time does the play move next?

## Act II

### Vocabulary

**diagonal** – slanted

**accommodate** – to supply with; to provide for

**convention** – customs, accepted practices

**episodic** – related events in the course of a continuous narrative

**encumbered** – hindered, handicapped

**vigil** – alert watchfulness

**disarrange** – to upset the arrangement of

**indulgent** – yielding to the desires of, pampering or spoiling

**acute** – sensitive, keen

**vitality** – energy; capacity to live and develop

**fury** – violent rage

**crescendo** – a gradual increase in volume

**vivacious** – full of spirit, lively

**protruding** – pushing outward

**bizarre** – strange, strikingly odd

**benign** – kindly; harmless

**indolent** – lazy

**emphatic** – expressed or performed with emphasis

**facetiously** – humorously

**impudence** – disrespect

**groping** – reaching about uncertainly, feeling one's way (as in the dark)

**placating** – pacifying or appeasing

**affliction** – a condition that causes suffering; illness or handicap

1. What does Annie consider Helen's greatest problem?
2. What does Annie feel she must teach Helen? How is she trying to teach Helen?
3. Why does Kate give Helen a candy right after Helen jabs Annie with a needle?
4. How does Annie feel about Kate giving Helen a sweet? What is Kate's explanation? What does this action reveal about Kate's attitude toward Helen?

## Act III

### Vocabulary

**morosely** – very sad  
**commotion** – violent or agitated motion  
**perturbed** – disturbed greatly; made uneasy  
**inexorable** – not capable of being persuaded  
**inarticulate** – unable to speak, spoken without clarity  
**collide** – to come together with violent, direct impact  
**repose** – to rest  
**replica** – a copy or close reproduction  
**obstinate** – difficult to manage or control; stubborn  
**combative** – a tendency to fight; wanting to fight  
**inflame** – to cause strong feelings; to arise  
**resurrection** – a revival or rebirth  
**meekly** – patiently, humbly, submissively, modestly  
**precocious** – unusually early development of intelligence  
**throng** – crowd  
**intimation** – implication, hint  
**impersonal** – not for any one person; showing no emotion  
**virtually** – existing in effect although not in actual fact or form  
**dismay** – to fill with dread, anxiety, or fear  
**ironic** – showing a contradiction; meaning the opposite  
**devastate** – to ruin  
**radical** – extreme  
**elude** – to get away from

1. Why are the Kellers now delighted with Annie?
2. Why is Annie not content? What does Annie want?
3. Why do the Kellers not give Annie more time?
4. Explain Annie's comment, "...words, why, you can see five thousand years back in a light of words, everything we feel, think, know – and share, in words, so not a soul is in darkness, or done with, even in the grave."