

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Miracle Worker

by William Gibson

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The Miracle Worker

ACT I
Pages 1 – 7

1. Before Act I, Gibson provides a detailed description of the stage including the Keller house, and a neutral area that will be changed to represent the Keller yard, and other locations necessary for the play. Based on this description, think about how the first floor of your home is laid out. Make a small drawing of the rooms on this floor. Then write a paragraph that briefly describes the furnishings in the room as if you were going to use it for the performance of a play.
2. Kate talks quietly to her baby. She is cooing to the baby Helen about the wonders of modern medicine. When the events of this play took place in Alabama in the 1880's, actually very little was known about many diseases for which there are cures today. Choose one of the following medical topics to research and write a ten sentence report about it which you could report to your class if your teacher asked you to:
 - Is Measles a Disease of the Past?
 - What's So Bad About fast Food?
 - What is Autism?
 - What is Juvenile Diabetes?
3. Kate is obviously heartsick to learn that her baby, Helen, is deaf and blind. She is trying to keep her unhappiness to herself, but obviously finds this difficult. Pretend you are Kate and decide to keep a secret journal in which to write about your deepest feelings and fears. Write how you, as Kate, must have felt when you learned about Helen's blindness and deafness. Your entries should follow the format below:

Date: May 10, 1882
Today I learned that...

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4. Mr. Keller is described as being older than his wife. He has raised two children, but Helen is Kate's first child. The doctor who is taking care of Helen, like all doctors, must write up his notes about the case. Imagine you are the doctor and have finally learned that Helen is deaf and blind. Write up the section of your notes which tell what the different reactions of Mr. and Mrs. Keller are when they finally realize the extent of Helen's disabilities. Begin your notes:
Helen Keller: The shock of Helen's deafness and blindness on her parents is...

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5. In a play, character traits are often revealed through the behavior of the characters. Re-read the scene where Martha, Percy, and Helen are playing together. List six different actions that Helen does in this scene which show what her character is like. Your answer should be in complete sentences. Follow the format below:

Helen.....
This shows that she.....

6. James looks out the window to watch Kate wrench Helen away from Martha. He responds to the situation sarcastically. He says, "She only dug Martha's eyes out. Almost dug. It's always almost, no point in worrying till it happens, is there?" James does not seem to be a happy young man. He seems to try to remain aloof from the problems of the household. Remembering that he is Helen's half-brother only, and much older than she is, complete the conversation below he has had with his best friend about Helen, Kate, his stepmother, and his father.

James: Honestly, the household I live in is a ZOO! Between...

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7. At first, Helen refuses to give the scissors to Kate. She also knocks papers off Mr. Keller's desk. Then she yanks buttons off Aunt Ev's dress. Write a letter from Kate to an advice columnist describing Helen and these three situations. Ask her for advice on how to handle Helen. Then write the columnist's reply.

8. This play takes place in the late 1800's. Typical of the times, Kate and the others in the household must look to Mr. Keller for all decisions regarding Helen. Consider the role of the father in the home today compared to the late 1800s. Rewrite the discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Keller regarding Helen found on pages 12 and 13 as if it takes place in modern times.

**Bottom of page 16 – Middle of
page 22**

9. Mr. Anagnos warns Annie that Helen is "much given to tantrums." Annie replies, "Means something is inside. Well, so am I, if I believe all I hear. Maybe you should warn *them*." It would not be surprising for Mr. Anagnos to have worries about sending Annie to the Kellers. Write the letter that Mr. Anagnos would write to his sister in Greece telling her of his concerns that Annie might not be successful in her job with the Kellers. Begin your letter as follows:

Dear Sophia,

Greetings from the United States and your loving brother. I just had to...

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10. The children who come to say good-bye to Annie are all blind. They give her a pair of smoked glasses for a gift. Imagine that you are the blind child who is chosen to make the goodbye speech to Annie as you give her the gift that all the children at Perkins have bought for her, the smoked glasses. Begin the speech you would give as follows:

Annie, I am so nervous. And I don't want to cry! But...

11. One technique an author uses to maintain the reader's interest is by creating anticipation in the minds of the audience. For example, we know that Mr. Keller is a demanding man who is accustomed to obedient women and that Annie is strong willed and independent. The audience is, therefore, anticipating the forthcoming interaction between these two characters.

Leaf back through the scenes of dialogue between Captain Keller and Annie. Copy down five different sets of dialogue which show how they clash. Across from each dialogue, write a sentence that explains the conflict.

12. Write a conversation between two students discussing the blind children in Annie's school and Helen. Include some ways they are different from Helen, even though they share one of the same disabilities.

The dialogue might begin as follows:

First Student: Helen is alone, but at the school there are many other blind children. Helen must feel more isolated than the others.

Second Student: I agree. The children at the school also...

Bottom of page 22 – top of page 27

13. In a flashback, Annie remembers being a young girl of 9. It is a terrible memory that intrudes on Annie's thoughts. We all have memories of things that have happened to us, and sometimes a memory (or flashback) comes to us quite on its own. Think about a time you have had a memory, either a happy memory or a sad one, just come tumbling into your consciousness. Write a short paragraph about that memory. If other people are involved in a bad memory, you do not have to use their real names.

14. On page 23, the playwright, William Gibson, provides the actors and the director with specific stage directions. Pretend this play is being performed in your school, but the student directing the play decides to ignore the stage directions included on page 23 of the play. Write a persuasive letter to the student director, explaining why he or she **MUST** follow Gibson's plan for the play.

15. Captain Keller, Mrs. Keller, and Viney all give Helen treats to eat. It appears that the reason they do this is that they feel sorry for Helen because of her disabilities. Because they feel so helpless to make her well, they feel that giving her everything she wants makes up for her difficulties. As Annie tells the Kellers, this, of course, makes Helen become one extremely spoiled child. Write an eight-sentence letter to the Editor of *Parents Magazine* telling either: 1) why "spoiling" is harmful for a child, or 2) why a little "spoiling" never hurt a child. Begin your letter:

To The Editor:

It is my opinion that...