

Session 2, Reading Selection #1

The characters in the excerpt you are about to read are Kate Keller, the mother; Captain Arthur Keller, the father; Helen Keller, the child; and a doctor. The *Miracle Worker* is a play for television about Helen Keller, whose vision and hearing were lost following a childhood illness. This scene from Helen Keller's life takes place in 1882. Read the excerpt below. Use information from the excerpt to answer the questions that follow.

THE MIRACLE WORKER

A PLAY FOR TELEVISION

by William Gibson

ACT ONE

[It is night, and we are in a child's crib, looking up: what we see are the crib railings and three faces in lamplight, looking down. They have been through a long vigil, it shows in their tired eyes and disarranged clothing. One is a gentlewoman in her twenties with a kindly and forbearing face, KATE KELLER; the second is a dry elderly DOCTOR, stethoscope at neck, thermometer in fingers; the third is a dignified gentleman in his forties with chin whiskers, CAPTAIN ARTHUR KELLER. Their dress is that of 1880, and their voices are southern. The KELLERS' faces are drawn and worried, until the DOCTOR speaks.]

DOCTOR

She'll live.

[KATE closes her eyes.]

You're lucky, Captain Keller. Tell you now, I thought she wouldn't.

KELLER *[heavily]*

Doctor. Don't spare us. Will she be all right?

DOCTOR

Has the constitution of a goat. Outlive us all. Especially if I don't get some sleep.

[He removes his stethoscope, his face leaves the railing; we continue to hear him, but see KELLER's hand across the crib take and squeeze KATE's.]

You run an editorial in that paper of yours, Captain Keller, wonders of modern medicine, we may not know what we're curing but we cure it. Well, call it acute congestion of the stomach and brain.

[KELLER moves after the DOCTOR, we hear them off-camera; we see only KATE's tearfully happy face hovering over us, her hand adjusting the blanket.]

English Language Arts, Grade 7

KELLER

I'll see you to your buggy. I won't undertake to thank you, Doctor—

DOCTOR [*simultaneously*]

Main thing is the fever's gone. I've never seen a baby, more vitality, that's the truth. By morning she'll be knocking down your fences again.

KELLER

Anything that you recommend us to do, we'll do—

DOCTOR

Might put up stronger fencing. Just let her get well, she knows how to do it better than we do. Don't poke at Providence, rule I've always made it a practice to—

[But throughout, their voices have been dying out of focus, and the image of KATE's face has begun to swim. Music steals in; we hear the music without distortion, but light and sound otherwise are failing. KATE's serene face smiles down with love, blurring in a halo of light, then is a spot, then is gone. Darkness.]

[Cut to CAPTAIN KELLER standing in his yard, inside the gate, lamp in hand, the lighted house behind him; we hear, but do not see the DOCTOR.]

DOCTOR

You're a pair of lucky parents, Captain Keller.

KELLER [*with weight*]

Thank you.

[The DOCTOR clicks a giddy-yap, we hear the clop of hoofs and roll of wheels. KELLER's eyes follow the unseen buggy out of sight, then lift to the stars, thanking them too. Suddenly from the house behind him comes a knifing scream; music out.]

[Cut to KATE's face again, not from the baby's eyes, but across the crib, and her look is terrible; she chokes down a second scream. KELLER hurries in to her, the lamp aloft.]

KELLER

Katie!

KATE

Look.

[She makes a pass with her hand in the crib, at the unseen child's face.]

English Language Arts, Grade 7

KELLER

What, Katie? She's well, she needs only time to—

KATE

She can't see.

[She takes the lamp from him, moves it before the child's face.]

She can't see!

KELLER *[hoarsely]*

Helen.

KATE

Or hear. When I screamed she didn't blink. Not an eyelash—

KELLER

Helen. Helen!

KATE

She can't hear you.

KELLER

Helen!

[His face has something like fury in it, crying the child's name; KATE almost fainting takes up the baby's hand, pressing it to her mouth to stop her own cry. We go close to her lips, kissing the baby's hand. Dissolve on lips and hand.]

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English Language Arts, Grade 7

Session 2, Multiple-Choice Questions

- 20 In the opening text, the playwright sets the mood by discussing the
- A. baby's temperature.
 - B. faces of the characters.
 - C. doctor's voice.
 - D. ages of the characters.

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 20: Literature/Learning Standard 15

- 21 Captain Keller's first words in the play express what feeling?
- A. anxiety
 - B. relief
 - C. thankfulness
 - D. hostility

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 21: Literature/Learning Standard 12

- 22 The doctor clearly believes that baby Helen is unusually
- A. content.
 - B. smart.
 - C. strong.
 - D. lucky.

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 22: Literature/Learning Standard 8

- 23 Mrs. Keller screams because she is
- A. angry.
 - B. confused.
 - C. horrified.
 - D. injured.

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 23: Literature/Learning Standard 12

English Language Arts, Grade 7

- 24 Throughout this excerpt, the doctor's words show him to be what kind of person?
- A. conceited
 - B. confident
 - C. nervous
 - D. soft-spoken

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 24: Literature/Learning Standard 12

- 25 Which of the following sentences from this excerpt is used as a stage direction?
- A. She'll live.
 - B. Kate closes her eyes.
 - C. You're lucky, Captain Keller.
 - D. Tell you now, I thought she wouldn't.

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 25: Literature/Learning Standard 10

- 26 What is the main idea of this excerpt?
- A. Love is the best solution for all problems.
 - B. Miracles can happen.
 - C. Happiness can change to grief in an instant.
 - D. Medical opinion can usually be trusted.

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 26: Literature/Learning Standard 11

English Language Arts, Grade 7

Session 2, Open-Response Question

- 27 Compare the reactions of the mother and the father when they realize Helen is deaf and blind. Use information from this excerpt to support your answer.

*Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 27: **Literature/Learning Standard 12***