

Little Girls,
BIG Dreams



THINK
DIGITAL ACADEMY



Helen Keller



Once, at a farm in northern Alabama, USA, a little baby called Helen was born. From the very beginning, her curious mind was eager to learn. She was just one when she said 'water', a word she would never forget.



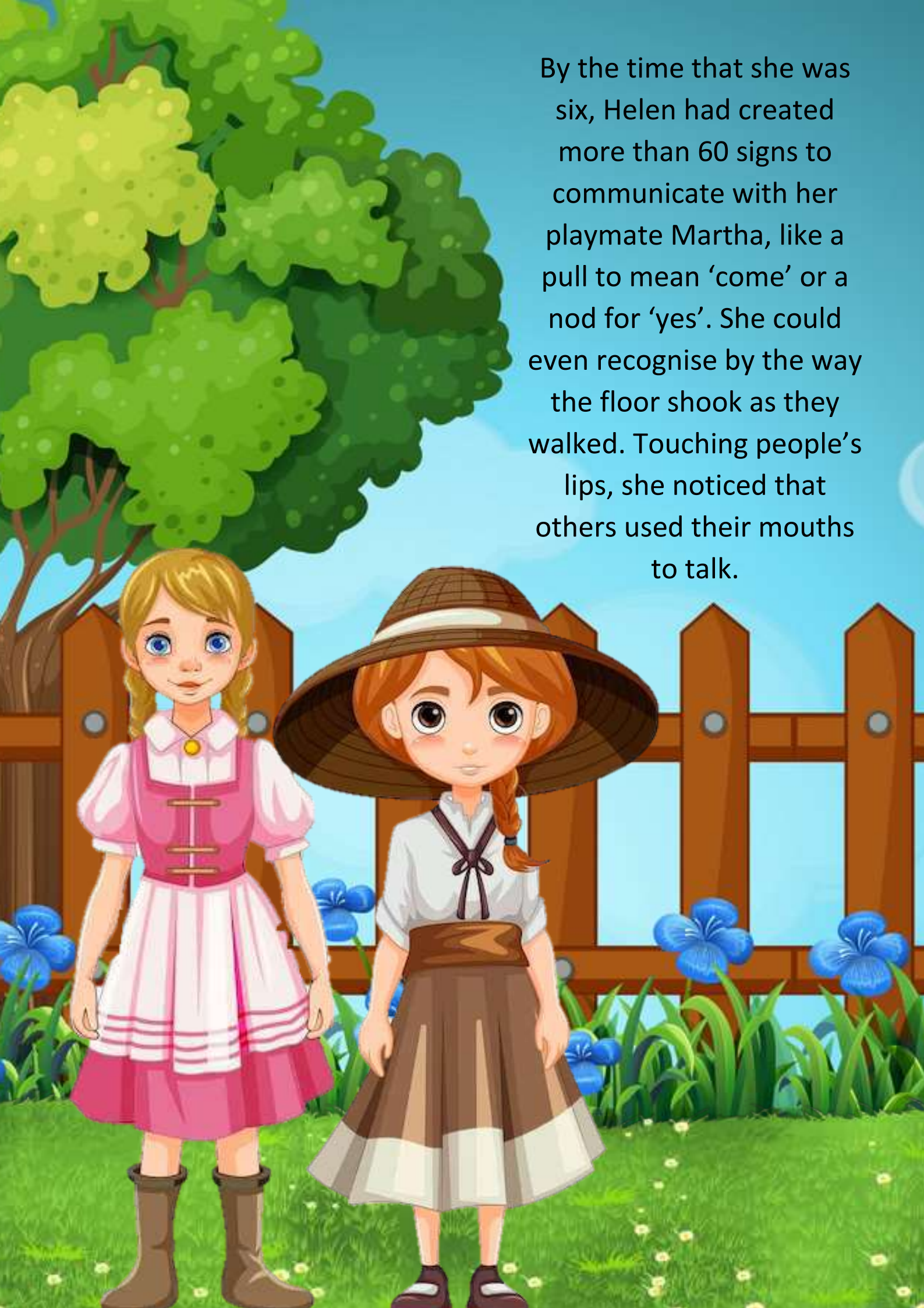
Helen was only 19 months old when she got a terrible fever that left her deaf and blind. From that day on, she had to get used to living in a dark and silent world.



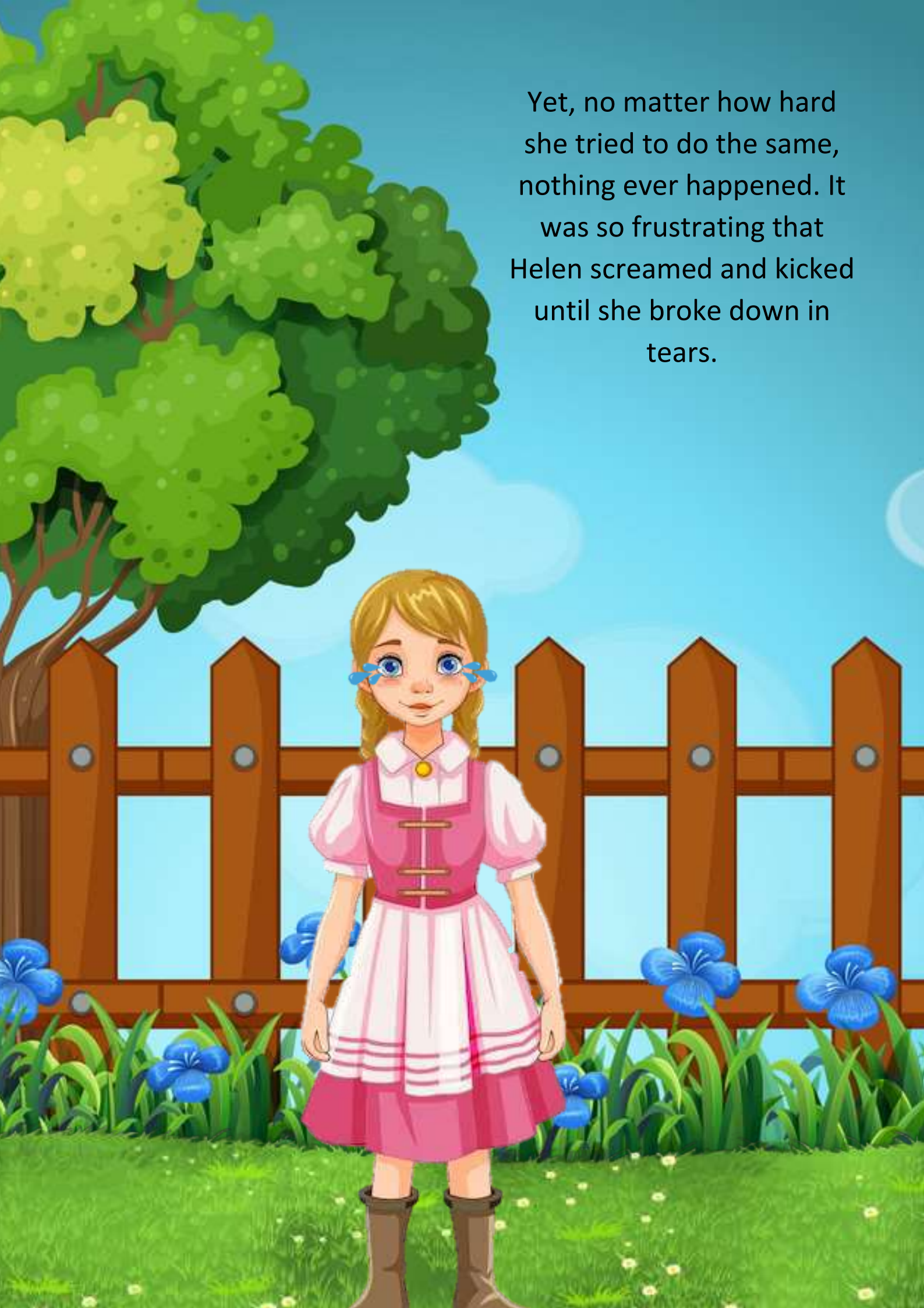
Still, she could smell the sweet scent of flowers and feel her parents' hugs.



By the time that she was six, Helen had created more than 60 signs to communicate with her playmate Martha, like a pull to mean 'come' or a nod for 'yes'. She could even recognise by the way the floor shook as they walked. Touching people's lips, she noticed that others used their mouths to talk.



Yet, no matter how hard she tried to do the same, nothing ever happened. It was so frustrating that Helen screamed and kicked until she broke down in tears.



Looking desperately for help, her parents contacted the Perkins Institution for the Blind, which sent one of its brightest students. Her name was Anne Sullivan, and she did not just become Helen's teacher, but her lifelong friend.



The day after they met,
Anne gave Helen a gift
from the children at her
school. She slowly spelled
the letters of the name of
the gift into her hand:

'd-o-l-l'. Helen repeated it
with her fingers, without
knowing she was spelling
a word, or even what a
word was.



It was weeks later when Anne spelled 'w-a-t-e-r', that something amazing happened: a memory of that word came back to Helen. She realised that words were related to things, and that everything had a common name! That discovery changed Helen's life. She was learning to talk with others.



BRAILLE

Soon she was reading books in braille, a system that uses tiny bumps on paper to spell words, and the following year, she attended a school for blind people.





Later, Helen met a well-known teacher of deaf people, called Sarah Fuller. Resting her fingers on Sarah's lips, nose and neck, Helen learned how every sound felt, and, before long, she was able to

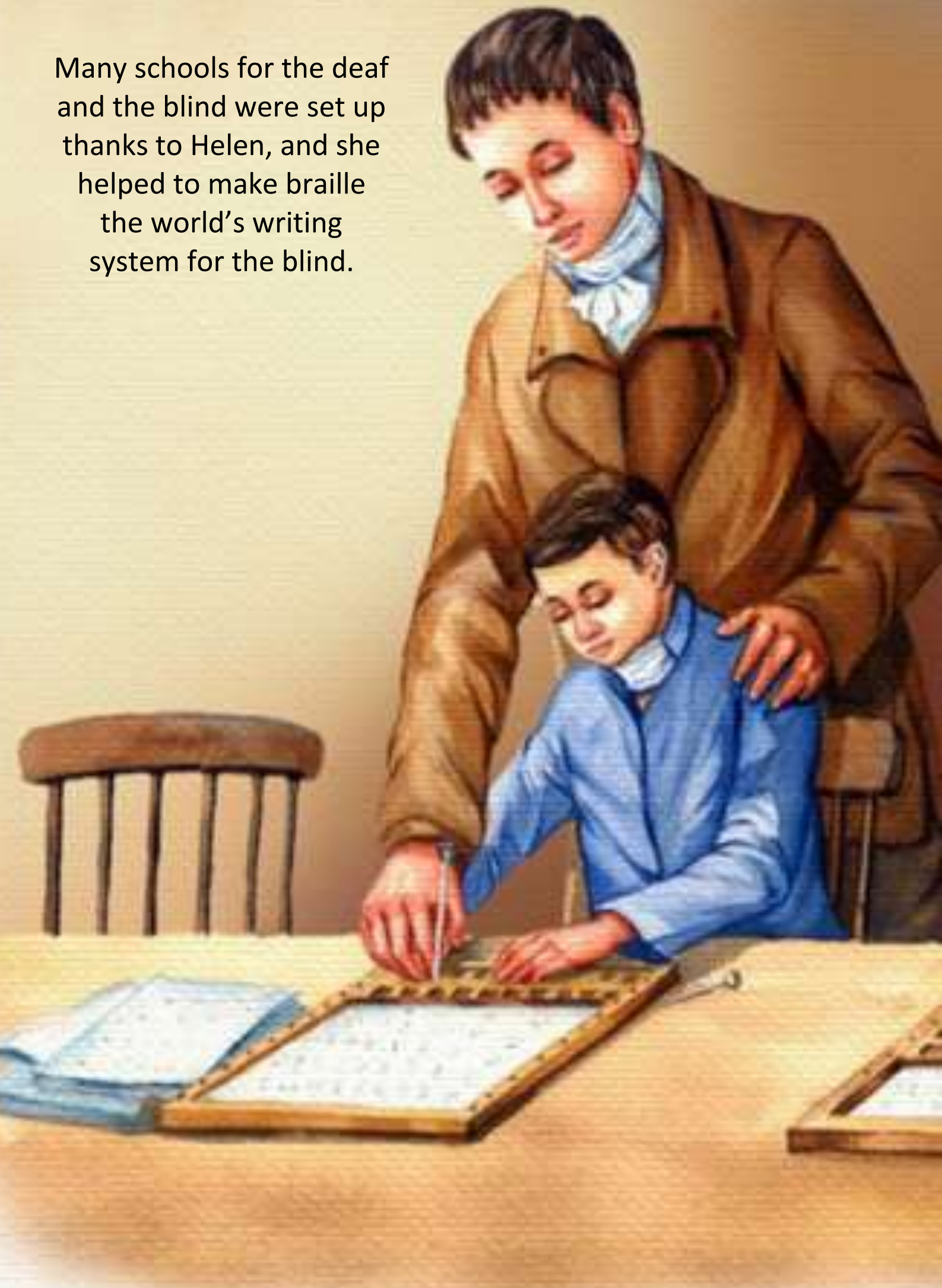
She became the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree, and the first to write a book about her life. After graduating from college, she and Anne travelled the country, sharing Helen's story and giving disabled people a voice.



She wrote another 13 books and hundreds of great speeches that every president of the United States wanted to hear. Yet she preferred to enjoy the company of good friends, like the writer Mark Twain and the inventor Alexander Graham Bell.



Many schools for the deaf and the blind were set up thanks to Helen, and she helped to make braille the world's writing system for the blind.



Still, she also found time to defend women's votes and the rights to African-American people.



And, while meeting every obstacle in her way, little Helen learned that everything she had been looking for was already within her, because the best things in life are those that we can feel with our hearts.



Born 1880

Died 1968



Helen Adams Keller was raised in in Tuscumbia, Alabama, the daughter of a wealthy family. Although she could both hear and see from birth, she contracted an illness that left her deaf and blind at 19 months old.



During her early years, Helen had limited ways of communicating with the world but developed hand-signs with her playmate, Martha, the family cook's daughter.



At the age of six, she met Anne Sullivan, a teacher who became her lifelong friend. Helen learned how to finger-spell, beginning with the word 'doll'. At first, she struggled and found it frustrating, but after lots of practice, Helen mastered the alphabet.



She learned how to lip-read by placing her fingers on the lips and throat of the speaker to feel the vibrations that were made during speech.



Helen earned admission to Radcliffe College and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1904, the first deafblind person to do so. With Anne's help, Helen wrote her first book, *The Story of My Life*, which has been translated into 50 languages and is still available to read today.



Alongside her writing, Helen tackled social and political issues and participated in many campaigns and enterprises to raise money and support for disabled people.



After Anne's death, Helen worked with other companions on her mission. She travelled across the world, visiting 35 countries on five continents and meeting many word leaders.



Helen Keller remains one of history's greatest campaigners:
a person who devoted her life to making the world a better
place for everyone.





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