



Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills  
8<sup>th</sup> Edition

Australasian Version

Benchmark

Grade 6

Student Materials

## Helen Keller

One day when Helen Keller was nearly two years old, she developed a raging fever. By the time she woke up from it days later, she had become blind and deaf. Helen's parents couldn't speak to her or show her anything. They had no way to teach Helen, and Helen had no way to communicate.

Helen grew frustrated and threw violent tantrums, stamping and screaming. Once, in a furious rage, she tipped over her little sister's crib. Helen's parents were deeply concerned. They hired Anne Sullivan, a young teacher, to try to communicate with their troubled and angry daughter.

Sullivan had a unique approach to trying to teach Helen. She would use her finger to spell out words on the palm of Helen's hand and then place Helen's hand on objects. For instance, she would spell out tree and then place Helen's hand on a tree.

For a long time, Helen did not seem to understand. Then one day, Sullivan put one of Helen's hands under streaming water and traced the letters for water onto Helen's other hand. Sullivan did this rapidly, over and over. Helen stood still, absorbed in the rapid movements of Sullivan's fingertip on one hand and the rushing of the water on her other hand.

Then, like mist burning away in sunlight, she smiled as she came to understand that the word water was the name for the wonderful cool something flowing over her other hand. Helen let out a shriek of joy. But this was only the beginning.

That afternoon, Helen learned more than a dozen new words. Before long, she also learned to read books printed in Braille, a system of raised dots that could be used to read by touch instead of by sight. After many years, Helen became a world-famous author.

## **Sloths and Monkeys**

Sloths and monkeys are two types of mammals that live in South America. There are many similarities and differences between sloths and monkeys. Both sloths and monkeys generally live in middle latitudes that tend to be tropical. Both sloths and monkeys like to live in trees and climb around the canopy. They both tend to eat plant material, but occasionally eat insects. Because they are both mammals, they both have furry bodies.

Many people think that sloths and monkeys are closely related, but they are quite different. Although both sloths and monkeys live in South America, monkeys can also be found on other continents like Africa and Asia. Also, there are even monkeys that live in snow.

Although both sloths and monkeys live in the trees, sloths move very slowly. It is one of their defining characteristics. Monkeys, on the other hand, tend to move quickly from branch to branch. Also, sloths tend to move around by hanging upside down from branches whereas monkeys walk on top of branches. Sloths are able to hang upside down because of their long claws. Monkeys don't have claws like sloths, but they generally do have long tails that provide balance when walking on branches. Sloths don't have tails like monkeys. Finally, sloths are often considered lazy because they are so slow and sleep so much. In fact, "sloth" can be a synonym of lazy; people sometimes accuse lazy people of being sloths. One sloth, the pale-throated sloth, moves so slowly that algae grows on its fur and it turns green!

## Changing Bedtime

Tensions are running high in the Groff home as talks on summer bedtime rules continue. The household is evenly divided into two camps. So far, there is no sign that either side will surrender.

At eight o'clock this evening, the younger Groffs, Ben and Lu, brought their demands to their parents. It appears they had been organising for some time and were prepared for a fight. They asked for a later bedtime. They said they ought to be allowed to stay up until ten o'clock in the summer. In support of their request, they pointed to the facts that they have no school in the morning and that it doesn't get dark until late in the summer. They also said that everyone else gets to stay up late and it's not fair.

Their parents responded by offering an eight-thirty bedtime. This would be a half hour gain for the younger Groffs. The younger Groffs rejected this offer. They declared it so far below their original request as to be insulting. The mother of the Groff family gave a speech about the need of growing bodies for proper sleep. The father made a statement about the parents' need to not have kids running around all night. The younger Groffs characterised the mother's speech as dumb. It was typical of their style, they claimed. They disapproved of the father's words, calling them irrational, depicting events that would never happen.

The issue remains unresolved. The younger Groffs' skill at arguing could keep them out of bed until their desired bedtime. Should this occur, they could then claim they had been allowed to stay up late before, and so they should be allowed to stay up late again. If their parents can be convinced that a later bedtime has not caused a loss in quality behaviour, they might back down. However, another possibility is that their parents are used to stalling tactics and will not be moved by them.