

Title: The Story of My Life

Author: Helen Keller

Publisher/Copyright Date: Published 1903, Copyrighted 2003

Total Number of Pages: 385 (**but only 117 are the autobiography itself**)

Divide the total number of pages by three and complete the charts below for each part of your book. Select quotations that will allow you to discuss style and significance. You must include at least four quotations for each section; a total of 12 for the entire book.

Part One: Page 1 through 39

Quote	Page number	Explanation of Context	Personal response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author's style • Observations • Revelations • Questions • Reactions
Sample: "We had an inexplicable confidence in German culture and humanism...We kept telling ourselves that this was, after all, a civilized people, that we must not give credence to exaggerated rumors about an	27	This quotation is part of the background information needed to understand the story that Elie Weisel is going to tell. Weisel answers the question that many have asked about the holocaust right at the beginning of his memoir to allow his readers to deal with questions about why the victims didn't flee when they heard the rumors of the death camps. By explaining early on, that most of those who stayed in harm's way did so out of faith in human nature, he is able to move on to the parts of the story he most wants to relate. It is important for the reader to understand the mindset of the people so they do not blame them for becoming victims and can open their mind to trust the feelings and emotions portrayed in the story from this point onward.	This quote is important to establishing a style and tone that is straightforward and not overly emotional. By using this style, he is able to describe the horrors of his experience in a believable account rather than focusing on the emotional connections. The stark honesty of this statement lends credence to his account of the entire story. It is difficult for anyone to read about the holocaust without trying to apply current knowledge of what happened to the past. This style plainly portrays the innocence of the victims who did not have the gift of hindsight. Because of this up front approach, I am ready to believe his account and do not expect exaggerations. This quote also tells me how the horror of the Holocaust happened...people couldn't believe it was possible.

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army's behavior."	(continued from above)	(continued from above)	(continued from above)
<i>"It is with a kind of fear that I begin to write the history of my life. I have, as it were, a superstitious hesitation in lifting the veil that clings about my childhood like a golden mist."</i>	12	Beginning this collection of her life's tales, Keller admits feeling hesitant and fearful of telling the world the story of her life. As she knows her childhood and life up to this point has been completely different as compared to most people, it can be noted that she may have had some emotional barriers and sensitivities in place when it came to delving back into her past, which she makes reference to when comparing it to a "golden mist."	Keller appears to have a reflective type of tone in the way she starts her story. It is very noticeable that thought went into the decision on doing this, through her use of the phrases " <i>a kind of fear</i> " and " <i>superstitious hesitation</i> ." Her emotions can be seen very clearly through this, almost as if she has uncertainty about writing a story about her life. Keller also utilizes the simile " <i>clings about my childhood like a golden mist</i> " to add a bit of nostalgia/flashback, connecting with the idea that sometimes the past can be hard to fully grab a hold of.

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<p><i>"Soon I felt the need of some communication with others and began to make crude signs. A shake of the head meant 'No' and a nod, 'Yes,' a pull meant 'Come' and a push, 'Go.' Was it bread that I wanted? Then I would imitate the acts of cutting the slices and buttering them. If I wanted my mother to make ice-cream for dinner I made the sign for working the freezer and shivered, indicating cold."</i></p>	16-17	<p>After Keller had her illness and began to suffer from blindness and deafness, she found that she was not able to effectively communicate with anyone. From that point forward, in order to be able to do so, she developed a system that others knew, allowing her some form of communication. A head shake meant "yes," a nod meant "yes," a pull meant "come," and so on. Overall, this shows her creativeness and adaptability in finding ways to live with what she had and further express herself.</p>	<p>Keller here ultimately includes great sensory detail that ensures the reader is able to fully understand her specific experience here. Her use of vivid phrases such as "<i>shake of the head</i>," "<i>nod</i>," "<i>pull</i>," and so on help to describe through imagery and sensory detail what specific actions she did to communicate with others and what they looked like. In short, she is trying to help the reader see what she was doing. Beyond that, she also includes specific verbs such as "began," "imitate," and "felt" that help to express the fact that she is determined to overcome whatever it is standing in her way, and her resourcefulness to do so.</p>

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<p><i>"One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled "d-o-l-l" and tried to make me understand that "d-o-l-l" applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words "m-u-g" and "w-a-t-e-r." Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is mug and that "w-a-t-e-r" is water, but I persisted in confounding the two."</i></p>	26	<p>In this instance of her life, Keller is recounting a time in which she was learning how to understand the English language with her teacher Miss Sullivan; who was doing this through signing. She explains how she struggled a bit trying to comprehend some of the words and put them together with their spellings, highlighting some of her early struggles and her persevering through to conquer these struggles.</p>	<p>We see a straightforward, but yet very descriptive recount of a time in which Keller was learning how to speak and understand the English language. She compiles this all together in a simple, but effective manner. Also, she describes the words she struggled with and shows that she did by spelling them out letter by letter as she explained the situation, giving the reader a first-hand look at what was happening in this specific instance. Her stating "d-o-l-l" and "m-u-g" gives a real account of this. Seeing this shows us how when she realized the connection between them, showing her determination and ability to grasp all of this despite what she was going through. In terms of the structure, she follows a linear approach, in which she explains things as they happened; from her playing with her doll to learning the words.</p>

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<p><i>"Sometimes I rose at dawn and stole into the garden while the heavy dew lay on the grass and flowers. Few know what joy it is to feel the roses pressing softly into the hand, or the beautiful motion of the lilies as they sway in the morning breeze."</i></p>	36	<p>This account shows that even though Keller could not see or hear, she still was able to appreciate the beauty this world has to offer. She was able to still feel the sensations of nature; specifically being able to feel the dew and the softness of roses. Keller still had a connection with the world, and it is truly remarkable that this was the case despite the many hardships she faced in her life.</p>	<p>Keller goes about this part with a sensory style, promoting the wonder of nature. She utilizes words such as "<i>joy</i>," "<i>beautiful motion</i>," and "<i>softly</i>," which all help in evoking a sense of wonder within the reader, and as well revealing the deep appreciation she has for nature and our world. Even though she can't see nor hear, she is still able to find joy in simple things such as feeling the textures of the roses or feeling the morning breeze. She explains this all in a sort of "narrative" manner in which she goes step by step in the process of her morning routine; from waking up to going outside in nature. Through this all and invoking vivid imagery, she is effectively able to communicate her deep appreciation/love for the beauty of Earth.</p>

Part Two: Page 40 through 78

Quote	Page number	Explanation of Context	Personal response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author's style • Observations • Revelations • Questions • Reactions
<p><i>“Three frolicsome little streams ran through it from springs in the rocks above, leaping here and tumbling there in laughing cascades wherever the rocks tried to bar their way. The opening was filled with ferns which completely covered the beds of limestone and in places hid the streams. The rest of the mountain was thickly wooded. Here were great oaks and splendid evergreens with trunks like mossy pillars, from the branches of which hung garlands of ivy and mistletoe, and persimmon trees, the odour of which pervaded every nook and corner of the wood—an illusive, fragrant something that</i></p>	46	<p>Keller here is simply explaining the area surrounding the summer cottage she spent time at with her family during the autumn months. She greatly enjoyed her time spent here, and describes what it was like to the reader.</p>	<p>Keller describes the setting surrounding her autumn cottage in a descriptive and evocative manner, transporting the reader to this place with her. She is able to create a sensory experience through her use of the words “<i>laughing cascades</i>,” “<i>mossy pillars</i>,” “<i>frolicsome</i>,” and “<i>garlands of ivy and mistletoe</i>,” which ultimately provide a visualization of the wondrous beauty of this place. Beyond that, as she does numerous times throughout her book, she reveals her deep appreciation and love for nature; describing this place through such love and admiration. This is done in a way that flows from start to finish, sending the reader into an immersive experience and wishing they were at this place enjoying it just as she did.</p>

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<i>made the heart glad."</i>		(continued from above)	(continued from above)
<i>"As I lay in my bed that night, I wept as I hope few children have wept. I felt so cold, I imagined I should die before morning, and the thought comforted me. I think if this sorrow had come to me when I was older, it would have broken my spirit beyond repairing. But the angel of forgetfulness has gathered up and carried away much of the misery and all the bitterness of those sad days."</i>	58	This is a reflection of a difficult moment Keller faced during her childhood, in which she was being questioned for stealing the thoughts of another to win admiration. As she is trying to sleep at night, she feels overwhelmed and upset at what had happened.	Keller implements her sad experience in an emotional and introspective manner, reflecting on her sad experiences and the emotions that came a long with them. Using anecdotes and vivid word choice, she conveys these powerful emotions she had that match with the experiences; weeping in bed and feeling cold are some specific examples. This all-shows Keller's vulnerability, showing that she is just like all of us and feels the same emotions we do, even though she is a bit different. As well, on top of that, we see how she invites the power of forgetfulness and how she is grateful for it, helping her to get through some of these difficult times.
<i>"Those early compositions were mental gymnastics. I was learning, as all young and inexperienced persons learn, by assimilation and</i>	61	This is an in-depth look at Keller's early attempts at learning to write and compose English. It was hard for her to do this at first, describing it as " <i>mental gymnastics</i> ." Being young and inexperienced, added with her hardships, she found it hard to understand all of this. At her young age, she learned to imitate what	Through an introspective and reflective style, Keller recounts her initial hurdles when it came to learning how to read, write, and comprehend English. She constructs this all in a clear and concise way, beginning with the challenge she faced and how she was able to face and overcome it. It follows in a fluid flow, and her use of descriptive language, with the

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<i>imitation, to put ideas into words. Everything I found in books that pleased me I retained in my memory, consciously or unconsciously, and adapted it."</i>	(continued from above)	she experienced and saw in books and other things, and keeping them retained within her memory.	phrases " <i>mental gymnastics</i> " and " <i>assimilation and imitation</i> " help to add further depth and detail to her experience.
<i>"It was necessary for me to write algebra and geometry in class and solve problems in physics, and this I could not do until we bought a braille writer, by means of which I could put down the steps and processes of my work. I could not follow with my eyes the geometrical figures drawn on the blackboard, and my only means of getting a clear idea of them was to make them on a cushion with</i>	77	Keller here is giving a firsthand look at the challenges she faced in school with being both deaf and blind. We are able to see how she finds it difficult learning math in the way that we normally learn it. She goes on to detail the ways she had to adapt in order to learn algebra, geometry, and physics; for example having to use a cushion to understand geometrical figures. Beyond that, we see the frustrations she felt having to go through these obstacles and how they were at times used against her.	Through a well-constructed and coherent manner, Keller conveys to the reader the struggles she experienced firsthand in her education due to being both deaf and blind. Phrases such as " <i>the lettering of the figures</i> ," " <i>the hypothesis and conclusion</i> ," and " <i>the construction and the process of the proof</i> " explain the technicality of what she had to learn. The line " <i>make the crooked straight and the rough places smooth</i> " display the impact that her teacher Miss Sullivan had on her learning.

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<i>straight and curved wires, which had bent and pointed ends. I had to carry in my mind, as Mr. Keith says in his report, the lettering of the figures, the hypothesis and conclusion, the construction and the process of the proof. In a word, every study had its obstacles. Sometimes I lost all courage and betrayed my feelings in a way I am ashamed to remember, especially as the signs of my trouble were afterward used against Miss Sullivan, the only person of all the kind friends I had there, who could make the crooked straight and the rough places smooth."</i>	(continued from above)	(continued from above)	(continued from above)

Part Three: Page 79 through 117

Quote	Page number	Explanation of Context	Personal response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author's style • Observations • Revelations • Questions • Reactions
<p><i>"But the examinations are the chief bugbears of my college life. Although I have faced them many times and cast them down and made them bite the dust, yet they rise again and menace me with pale looks, until like Bob Acres I feel my courage oozing out at my finger ends. The days before these ordeals take place are spent in cramming your mind with mystic formula and indigestible dates—unpalatable diets, until you wish that books and science and you were buried in the depths of the sea."</i></p>	86	<p>Just like many of us, Keller found trouble with taking exams in school. She explains the difficulties she faced with them, and the fear that continues to haunt her. By making mention of the days right before these exams, we see how she crammed her mind with countless information, and how this ultimately frustrated her and made her feel very pressured; in short, she explains the toll of emotions that all of us tend to feel when it comes to taking a big test.</p>	<p>In a self-deprecating and enlightening tone, Keller makes light of the emotional toll tests have on students as a whole. She integrates allusions and metaphors that help to relate her experiences with the audience. She also includes how she was able to overcome these challenges, just like all of the other problems that she faced in her life. When it comes to structure, Keller employs a design of explaining what the difficulty is, how she overcame it, and the emotions that came along with it. For example, she mentions how these exams are "bugbears" and talks about how she got through them. From there, she then dives into more vulnerability, to then eventually describing the stress of the days right before the exams; how she had to cram her mind with "mystic formula and indigestible dates." This metaphorical use highlights the stressfulness of preparing for these types of exams. Ending it off, she expresses her frustration, using the hyperbole of wishing to bury the books and related material deep into the sea, or far out of her sights; as she does not want to deal with this all anymore. These specific implementations ultimately contribute to her expressiveness of challenge, determination, and frustration; combined with a memorable account that we can all relate to in our lives.</p>

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<p><i>"Although she did not think I should understand, she began to spell into my hand the story of Joseph and his brothers. Somehow it failed to interest me. The unusual language and repetition made the story seem unreal and far away in the land of Canaan, and I fell asleep and wandered off to the land of Nod, before the brothers came with the coat of many colours unto the tent of Jacob and told their wicked lie!"</i></p>	93	<p>Keller recalls a memory from her childhood where Miss Sullivan tries to teach her a story from the bible, specifically the story of Joseph; all by spelling it out on her hand. However, because of her not being familiar with the story and the unfamiliar language, she found the story difficult to understand. When she slept that night, she entered "the land of Nod". Ultimately, this shows her early struggles with understanding English and trying to comprehend stories/concepts/ideas communicated to her through sign.</p>	<p>Keller highlights her early experiences in learning language and storytelling, all while learning tactile signing. She references a specific experience with this in which she was taught the story of Joseph, but found it difficult to grasp and was not able to fully understand it. She uses a chronological structure, starting from the lesson to ending with falling asleep after finding the subject uninteresting and hard to grab a hold of. Her use of the words "<i>unusual language</i>," "<i>unreal</i>," and "<i>far away</i>" showcase her struggles with learning stories and other concepts such as these. It is truly interesting to imagine what it would be like to be in her shoes here, not being able to fully grasp what is going on within a story, and goes to show how remarkable it is that Keller was able to go through all of this.</p>
<p><i>"What a joy it is to feel the soft, springy earth under my feet once more, to follow grassy roads that</i></p>	102	<p>This here dives into the appreciation towards nature felt by Keller. She expresses the delightfulness of being able to experience the feeling of the soft earth under her feet and the sensations brought by these related things. Through this, Keller is able to have a sense of</p>	<p>Through a descriptive and emotive manner, Keller further expresses her deep appreciation for nature, and the natural world as a whole. She implements phrases that evoke vivid imagery, such as "<i>the sensation of the soft, springy earth</i>" and "<i>green fields tumbling and rolling in riotous gladness</i>." This ultimately allows the audience to connect with her</p>

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<i>lead to ferny brooks where I can bathe my fingers in a cataract of rippling notes, or to clamber over a stone wall into green fields that tumble and roll and climb in riotous gladness!"</i>	(continued from above)	freedom from the hardships she faces in life. Further, that she still has some way to directly connect with the world that still brings her happiness.	experiences emotionally, and truly feel how she feels. Beyond that, she uses words like "joy" and "gladness" to emphasize the joy she has with this connection. This is all put together through parallel phrases that are set apart by commas and put together by conjunctions. By doing this, Keller is able to create a rhythm and flow to her story, which adds to the overall experience here. Ultimately as a whole, she is able to create an engaging and impactful account of her love for the natural world and how it allows her to escape from the difficulties of her life.
<i>"Thus it is that my friends have made the story of my life. In a thousand ways they have turned my limitations into beautiful privileges, and enabled me to walk serene and happy in the shadow cast by my deprivation."</i>	117	As her story up to this point comes to an end, Keller reflects on all the people she has come across in her life, and the impact they have had on shaping her life. That even despite the hardships and limitations she has had to go through and experience, they have made them into even better opportunities for her, which allowed her to still live a great and truly enjoyable life. She expresses how they helped her to see her hardships in a positive way, and make use of them to overcome any challenge that came her way.	Keller reflects on her life and how all her friends have helped to make her life truly remarkable and enjoyable, despite her limitations. She employs a simple and straightforward approach to this, with nothing complicated in between. A sense of balance is created in the phrase " <i>limitations into beautiful privileges</i> " when explaining how they helped her see things in a more positive light. A juxtaposition is also created when she dives into the transformation of bad into good, specifically a contrast between the limitations she had and the privileges she was able to have. Ultimately, she expresses her gratitude to all of those who stood with her, and helped her to live a great life.

Part Four: Analysis and Reflection

Write a 6-10 sentence paragraph in which you reflect on the author's style. Specifically discuss your overall observations about word choice, sentence structure, and use of figurative language. How does the author's style contribute to his or her rhetorical purpose? Do you think the author's style is effective? Why or why not?

Helen Keller lived a truly remarkable life, being able to overcome many challenges despite the fact that she had to live most of it being both deaf and blind. Through sensory imagery, similes, analogy, hyperboles, juxtapositions, parallel sentence structure, and so much more she is able to give her audience an inside look into how she was able to overcome any challenge that came her way. Most of her style is composed in a descriptive and evocative manner, as well as some being straightforward; which help to keep the flow going. We see through the use of all this how she was able to always find hope and joy in the hard times, and was not afraid to voice her opinion or become vulnerable in difficult situations. She further implements all of these complex ideas and situations into accessible and relatable accounts that we all can understand and relate to in our own experiences. I personally feel that Keller's style is very effective, as it really does help us to firsthand understand all that she encountered in her life, and it teaches us one of the greatest lessons of life: to never give up, no matter how hard things get or no matter what life throws out at you. There is always light at the end of the tunnel.