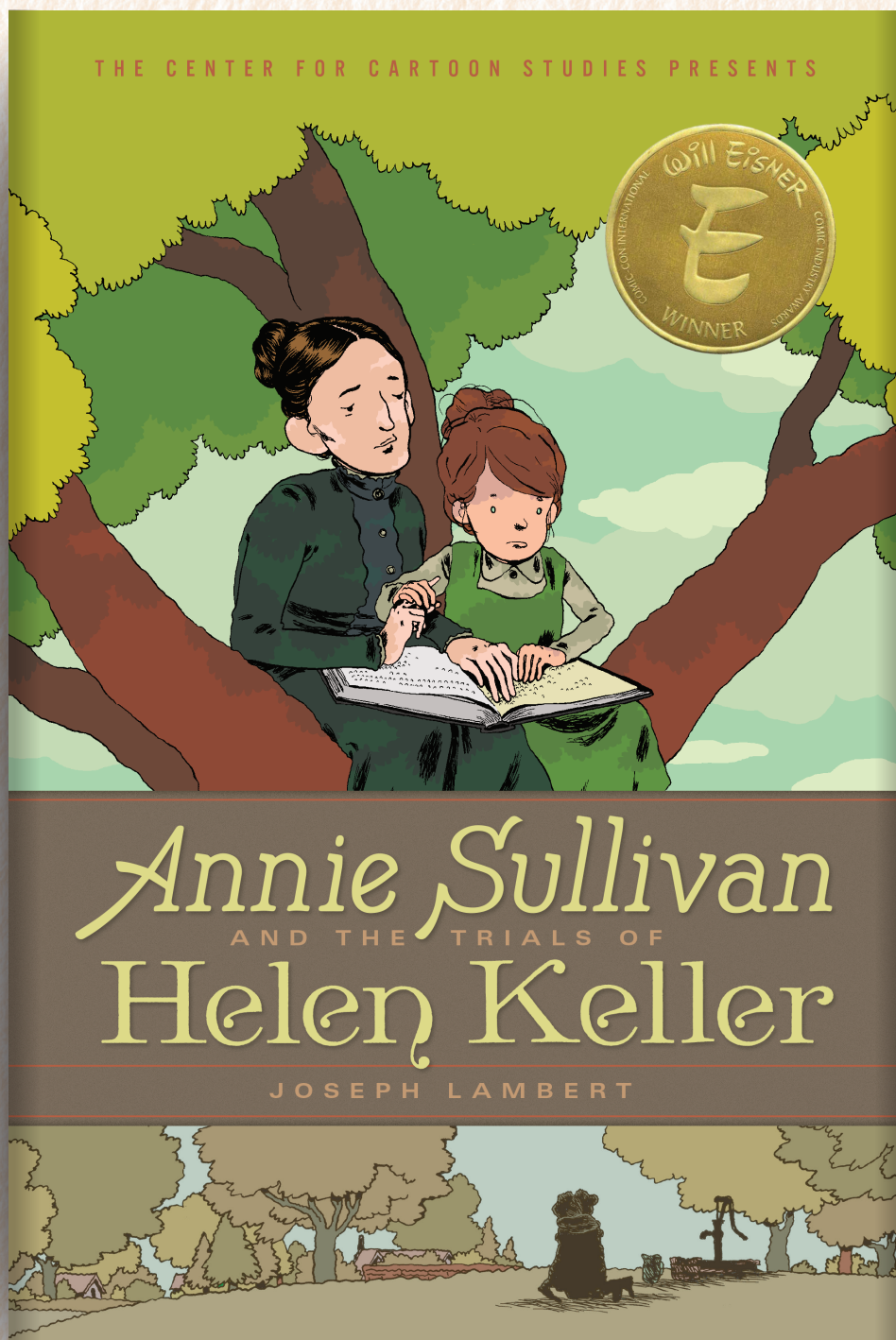


LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

Educator's Guide | Ages 12 and Up



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does the author represent Helen's point of view visually? Is it an effective technique? Why or why not?
- The author compares and contrasts Annie's childhood with Helen's by intercutting them. Why do you think he chose to do it that way instead of linearly? Does it affect how you view Annie or Helen? How?
- Annie's work with Helen was obviously very physical, requiring Annie to restrain her forcefully at times. They also lived together so Annie could have Helen's full attention. Do you think this was appropriate or not? If it were your child, would you agree to the same things?
- Helen went from being fully illiterate to being able to communicate with the world in a very short amount of time. Given that she couldn't see or hear Annie, how do you think Helen was able to grasp the concept of language? What do you think her thoughts were like before she learned how to communicate?
- Do you think Helen really made up the story "The Frost King"? Why or why not? Have you ever been accused of plagiarism? How did you handle the situation?
- Annie's relationship with the Perkins Institute is tumultuous. She is often critical of their methods and they are critical of hers. Which do you agree with? Do you think that Mr. Anagnos is more critical of Annie because she's a woman?
- From age 10–14, Annie lived in the Tewksbury Almshouse, which was a cross between a homeless shelter, a hospital, and an asylum. How do you think living in this environment affected Annie? There are still places like that today. What effect do you think they are having on the children that live in them?
- Annie is dedicated to teaching Helen, but she clearly is unhappy with many things around her at the same time. So much so that Helen's mother has to speak to her about it. Do you think Annie's life experiences up until then helped her cope with her frustrations or made it harder for her? How do you handle extreme frustration?
- Annie had the difficult challenge of helping Helen grasp concepts for things she couldn't see. How would you explain color to a child that was blind from birth? Alternately, how would you explain music or a sound such as laughter to someone who could not hear?
- Annie teaches Helen not only sign language, but how to pronounce words and even how to write in block print. Why do you think she did that? (Note: It is no longer a practice to do this.)
- Although Helen met Annie when she was only six, they remained lifelong companions. Some people accused Annie of riding on Helen's coattails and even limiting her; others felt she was the reason Helen did as well in life as she did. Based off what you've read, what do you think? If it were you, would you choose to stay a lifelong companion with a teacher or student? Why or why not?
- One of the things that is clear in the book is that Annie had a very difficult time with the sexism and classism of nineteenth-century America. During her childhood, and even while working for the Franks, she was reprimanded for her attitude and behavior. Do you think she would have the same problems today? Why or why not? Would she have different problems? If so, would they stem from the same place?

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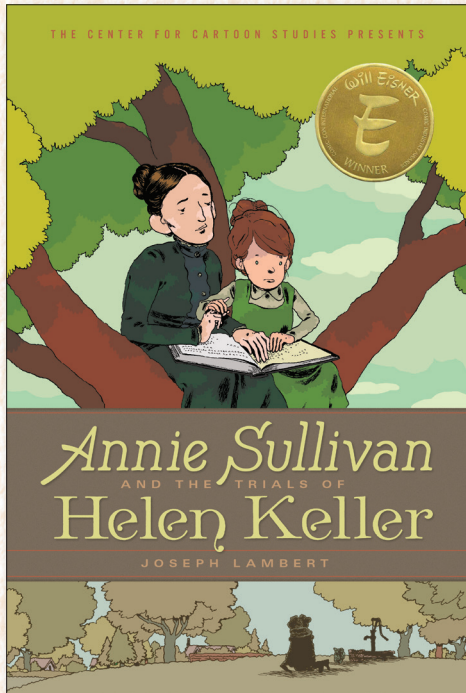
ACTIVITIES

- Have students interview a classmate (or a family member or a community leader, etc.—be creative!) and then create a mini-biography for that person. Encourage students to think beyond the written word. They can craft a collage, make a video, write a performance piece, set ideas to music, or create a graphic novel. (Social Studies, Vocabulary, Language Arts, Art, Music, [Writing, Speaking and Listening])
- Have students choose a historic figure they have heard of but don't know much about. Have them do research on that person and then create a simple graphic novel in the style of this series on their subject. You can also have them work with other forms of media, as suggested above. (Social Studies, Vocabulary, Language Arts, Music, Art, [Writing, Speaking and Listening])
- Have students pick a character from any of the graphic novels. Then have them dress up and act like that character. They can interact with one another or you can have a class interview with each individual character. (Social Studies, Arts, Language Arts, Vocabulary [Writing, Speaking and Listening])



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About the Book



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Helen Keller lost her ability to see and hear before she turned two years old. But in her lifetime, she learned to ride horseback and dance the foxtrot. She graduated from Radcliffe. She became a world-famous speaker and author. She befriended Mark Twain, Charlie Chaplin, and Alexander Graham Bell. And above all, she revolutionized the public's perception and treatment of the blind and the deaf. The catalyst for this remarkable life's journey was Annie Sullivan, a young woman who was herself visually impaired. Hired as a tutor when Helen was six years old, Annie broke down the barriers between Helen and the wider world, becoming a fiercely devoted friend and lifelong companion in the process. In *Annie Sullivan and the Trials of Helen Keller*, author and illustrator Joseph Lambert examines the powerful bond between teacher and pupil, forged through the intense frustrations and revelations of Helen's early education. The result is an inspiring, emotional, and wholly original take on the story of these two great Americans.

Praise for the book

2013 Eisner Award Winner

2013 Amelia Bloomer List

★ "[B]rilliantly conceived and executed. Rarely is [this story] presented in such a breathtaking, original, and empathetic fashion." —*Booklist*

About the Author

JOSEPH LAMBERT is an Eisner and Ignatz Award-winning cartoonist. A graduate of the Center for Cartoon Studies, he has drawn comics and illustrations that have appeared in *Mome*, *The Best American Comics*, *Komiksfest! Review*, and *Dark Horse Presents*, as well as in *Business Week*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *I Will Bite You!*, a collection of short stories published by Secret Acres.

Kelly Johnston created this guide. He taught high school and college English for over ten years in addition to being the founding artistic director for the Arizona Shakespeare Festival. He currently lives and works in New York City as a freelance theater director and screenwriter.