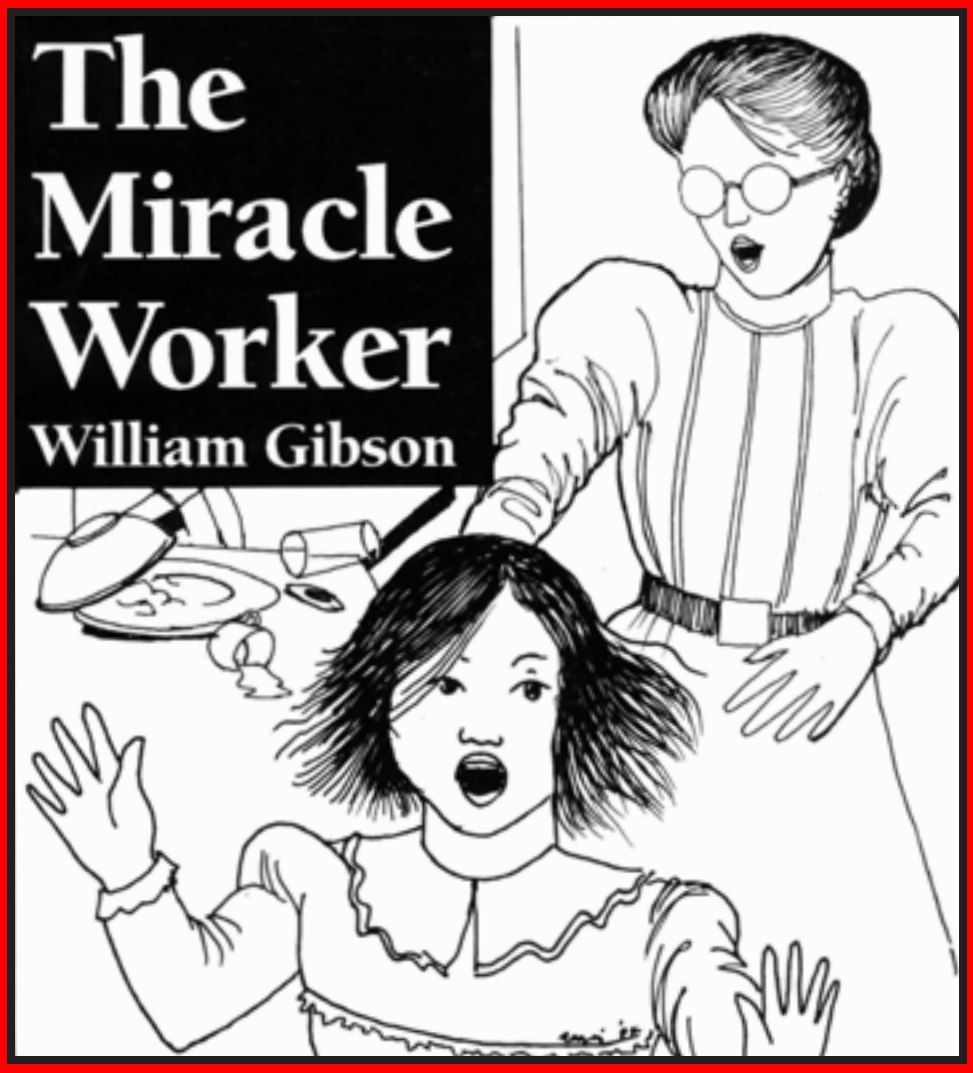
Novel·Ties



A Study Guide

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide consists of lessons to use in conjunction with the novel *The Miracle Worker*. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel on its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for guided reading by distributing the novel and a folder to each child. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter or group of chapters; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students' love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Read the Background Information on page two of this study guide and do some additional research to learn about Helen Keller's extraordinary life.

2. Which do you think is a greater disability — the loss of sight or the loss of hearing? What severe problems does the loss of either faculty create? How could someone who has lost both senses learn about the world and become a literate adult?

3. Conduct a brief classroom simulation in which class members are first blindfolded, then given ear plugs, and finally given both. Assign simple tasks under each of these handicapping situations. Class discussion should follow.

4. What special treatment should be given to people with physical handicaps? Should they be expected to behave in a disciplined manner and work toward independence?

5. Develop classroom posters to show both Braille and American Sign Language alphabets. Add more posters with images and with words shown in those alphabets.

6. Language separates human beings from animals. The great mystery is how we learn language. We learn it at a very young age, and we never remember how we learned it. Try to draw your own conclusions about how people learn language by observing a baby or toddler between the ages of six months and two years. Keep notes of your observations and tape record the baby's efforts to speak. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you observe:

    - What are the first sounds the baby makes?
    - What does the baby imitate?
    - Does the baby start with individual sounds or with longer rhythms?
    - What words do adults use in talking to the baby?
    - What do you notice about the baby's reactions to the adults' words?
    - How does the baby react to the adults' expressions?

7. Reading a play differs from reading a novel. Preview the play by noticing the special format for dialogue and stage directions. Find out about the following conventions:

    - How is the dialogue (spoken words) printed?
    - How are the stage directions printed?
    - What words are printed in small capital letters?
    - What is the difference between information in brackets [like this] and information in parentheses (like this)?

ACT I, PAGES 5 - 33 [Bantam Edition]

Vocabulary: Draw a line from each stage term on the left to its meaning on the right. Then use the numbered terms to fill in the blanks in the article below.

1. conventions	a. smoothness
2. counterpoint	b. customary ways of doing something
3. crescendo	c. telling a story through silent action alone
4. fluidity	d. free; without any interference
5. pantomime	e. how action and movement of a play are planned
6. *sotto voce*	f. gradual increase in intensity
7. staging	g. opposite, but complementary, elements
8. unencumbered	h. in a low voice; under one's breath

Theatrical Conventions and Staging

Until well into the twentieth century, the _____[1] of most dramatic plays followed certain _____.[2] The setting was representational; that is, sets were designed to look as real as possible, often like an actual room with the "fourth wall" removed. Lighting was used primarily so that the audience could see what was happening on stage. The time was chronological; events on stage happened in a logical sequence, and the curtain came down to tell audiences that the time had changed. Although an actor might deliver a quiet comment _____[3] to provide background information, events on stage began and ended in real time sequence. A series of events and problems built in a dramatic _____,[4] growing more and more intense until a climactic scene, and then the plot was resolved. Many plays are still staged following these conventions.

Newer conventions in theatrical staging came about in part because traditional staging, with several elaborate sets, was very expensive to produce. Authors and directors began to experiment with scenery and lighting to establish scenes through suggestion rather than representation. A _____[5] of action could be achieved by drawing the viewer's eye to a new part of the stage, rather than by closing and opening the curtain. Lighting and scenery were developed to work in _____[6] to one another, each providing an element of the general atmosphere on stage. A new setting could be suggested by a change of lighting, which could be more tightly focused on a small part of the stage with just one or two items of furniture; scenes were successfully _____[7] of confining walls.

Although such theatrical conventions may have seemed new, the success of _____,[8] based on an actor's ability to communicate through movement alone, proved centuries earlier that audiences respond as surely to suggestion as to realism.