



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE MIRACLE WORKER BY WILLIAM GIBSON

1. Annie Sullivan insists that Helen must learn that things have names before she can truly think. Do you agree that language is necessary for thought? How did Helen "think" before she understood the word "water"?
2. The climax at the water pump is one of the most famous moments in theater history. Why did the word "water" finally click for Helen at that specific moment, rather than in the weeks of lessons before?
3. For much of the play, the Kellers just want Helen to be "behaved" and quiet. Annie wants her to be "free." What is the difference between a child who is well-behaved and a child who is truly learning?
4. Annie Sullivan says, "*Pity at a dinner table is a poison.*" How did the Kellers' pity for Helen actually hinder her progress? Is it possible to love someone too much to help them?
5. Why was Helen's father so skeptical of Annie? Was it just his era's view of women and education, or was it a defense mechanism to avoid being disappointed again?
6. The subplot involving Helen's half-brother, James, often gets overlooked. How does his struggle to stand up to his father mirror Helen's struggle to find her voice?
7. Who is the "Miracle Worker"? Is it Annie Sullivan for her patience, or is it Helen for her breakthrough?
8. Annie is haunted by "voices" from her time at the Tewksbury Almshouse and the loss of her brother, Jimmie. How did her own traumatic childhood make her the only person capable of reaching Helen?
9. Some scenes involve physical wrestling between Annie and Helen (especially the breakfast scene). Does Annie's "tough love" approach cross a line, or was it necessary given Helen's isolation?
10. Annie Sullivan had to teach Helen the concept of "cake" by letting her feel it, smell it, and taste it while spelling the letters into her hand. If you had to teach someone a word using only one sense (Touch, Taste, or Smell), which word would you choose and how would you do it?

Discussion questions generated by Gemini AI.



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