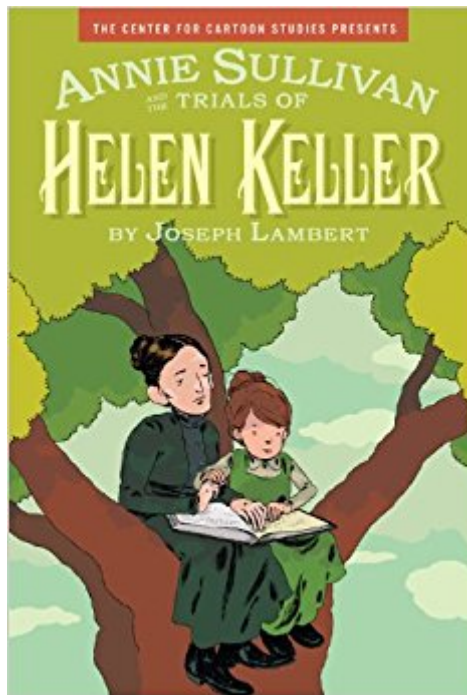




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# **Annie Sullivan And The Trials Of Helen Keller (Center For Cartoon Studies Presents)**



## Synopsis

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 public 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 on 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.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

The story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan is given new life in an imaginative graphic novel. This volume from The Center for Cartoon Studies focuses on the trials both Annie and Helen struggle

with in their lives. If Helen was a trial for her family and Annie over the years, she is literally put on trial at the Perkins Institution. The final third of the book is devoted to this "trial," not nearly as well known as the famous scene at the well, where Helen finally makes the mental connection that water is always water, whether in a cup, in a pitcher or running from a pump. Having gone on to learn to write, she is accused of plagiarizing her story "The Frost King," which was published in the Perkins Institution's alumni magazine. Interrogated for two hours, Helen was so devastated that she never wrote fiction again. The incident allows Lambert to go beyond the famous well scene to further explore the nature of words, language and ideas. "If your ideas don't come from teacher, where do they come from?" Helen's interrogators ask. It's a sophisticated, sometimes overly abstract, presentation, but the volume, like its predecessors, is visually appealing and daring. Helen's perspective is powerfully communicated in dialogue-free black panels in which she is represented as only a gray silhouette. A visual stunner that covers new ground. (panel discussions, bibliography, suggested reading) (Graphic nonfiction. 10-14) Kirkus

The latest graphic-format book to come out of the Center for Cartoon Studies (which has done books on Satchel Paige, Harry Houdini, Amelia Earhart, and Henry David Thoreau) opens yet another fascinating page into history. The relationship between Helen Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan, is a well-documented and celebrated one: Sullivan, who was visually impaired herself, bridged the seemingly insurmountable communication gulf for the deaf and blind Keller. But it's one thing to know the story, and a whole other thing to actually experience it. In a brilliantly conceived and executed maneuver, Lambert uses a dynamic interplay between words and images to convey how someone could learn to communicate without access to either. In compact 16-panel grids that focus tightly on hands and faces, six-year-old spitfire Keller initially wanders through a blacked-out void, then struggles to interact with others and the nameless objects that surround her, and finally begins to make sense of the world as language takes root and allows her to know what distinguishes, say, a log from a branch or one color from another. At the same time, Lambert folds in the story of Sullivan's own anguished upbringing and provides a running commentary lifted from Sullivan's journals and letters, documenting both the severe setbacks and astounding breakthroughs she shared with Keller. The rest is history, but rarely is it presented in such a breathtaking, original, and empathetic fashion. - Ian Chipman

Booklist

A gray silhouette of a child in a dark room opens this latest addition to the exemplary line of comic strip biographies from the Center for Cartoon Studies. Cartoonist Lambert employs three pages of such panels to show the child, Helen Keller, eating with her hands while a pair of tentacle-like blue arms forces her into a chair, trying-and failing-to persuade her to use a spoon. At intervals throughout the book, the silhouettes return to give a sense of how Helen's world might

have felt from the inside-dim, bewildering, rageful, and, eventually, enlightened by language. Annie Sullivan's own words convey her determination to teach Helen despite obstacles such as Helen's coddling parents. Lambert shifts back and forth in time, sometimes disorientingly, to depict episodes from Sullivan's hardscrabble past-as an orphan at the Tewksbury Almhouse and then a charity student at the Perkins Institution for the Blind (as it was called in 1880). The book continues through Annie and Helen's 1891 stay at Perkins, ending abruptly (and oddly) with Helen's dismissal for unintentional plagiarism. Still, though most readers will be familiar with the historic moment at the water pump when Sullivan's lessons suddenly take hold, it's hard not to be moved by Lambert's depiction of the scene, from outside and in. On the outside it's a brilliant sunny day, while inside Helen, though still dark, the gray figure and the blue figure finally have names, their embracing shapes labeled "Helen" and "Teacher." Appended with notes on particular cartoon panels and a bibliography.

christine m. heppermann Horn Book"Gr 6-8 The story of Sullivan, who was visually impaired herself, starts off with her in the Keller home wrestling with the difficult task of teaching the young blind and deaf child. As the story progresses, readers see the difficult times that Sullivan had as a child, losing family and becoming an orphan, and then being hired by the Kellers. None of these things is easy, but she finally breaks through to Helen and, as her understanding reaches new levels, she still has to deal with perceptions and expectations that others hold over both of them. Told from Sullivan's viewpoint, this color-filled graphic novel has many of the simple drawings blacked out with shapes or colored blobs to represent how she sees people and items. Much of the narration also comes from letters written to her old schoolmaster and is done in script. A wonderful resource for reports or interesting nonfiction reading, this graphic novel does a great job of describing how things were for the teacher and her pupil and the challenges they both faced. The book concludes with a four-page section that explains aspects of the various panels.

Mariela Siegert, Westfield Middle School, Bloomingdale, IL SLJ"Lambert's graphic novel focuses on the early years of the relationship between Helen Keller, who had been blind and deaf since she was a toddler, and her live-in teacher, Annie Sullivan, a young woman whose own visual impairment and pedagogical instincts gave her insight on how to reach and educate the unsocialized child. Many readers will already be familiar with the story, particularly the famous breakthrough moment at the water pump and Helen's insatiable curiosity and rapid accrual of vocabulary and syntax. Perhaps less known, however, is the bitter episode on which this title ends, in which Helen and Annie are accused of plagiarism after Helen's published story, "The Frost King," is discovered to be a close retelling of another work. Lambert relies heavily on a layout of sixteen frames to a page, a stylistic choice that allows him to slow the action and zero in on the painstaking effort involved in acquiring

and transmitting information by finger spelling, an effect that's informative if a touch monotonous. More successful is the book's frequent use of an amorphous suggestion of Helen's shape on a black background, which helps the reader assume Helen's paradoxically sightless "view." A bibliography is included, but readers will be more immediately drawn to the closing notes, which coordinate with specific passages to supply additional background. Suggest this title in conjunction with Lawlor's *Helen Keller: Rebellious Spirit* (BCCB 9/10) and Delano's *Helen's Eyes*. EB BCCB"

Joseph Lambert ([www.submarinesubmarine.com](http://www.submarinesubmarine.com)) is the creator of various self-published comics, and also a co-editor of the "Sundays a"nthology series and "I Will Bite You!," a collection of short comic stories published by Secret Acres. A graduate of the Center for Cartoon Studies, his comics and illustrations have appeared in "The Best American Comics," "Komiksfest! Review," and "DarkHorse Presents," as well as in "Business Week" and "Popular Mechanics." Joseph lives in White River Junction, Vermont.

I purchased these for a teacher in my school district as requested. She has been very happy with them so far.

All members of our family from ages 10 to 50 have enjoyed this book. And we have recommended it to many friends, who have also liked it, and passed it on to yet other friends and family members. Very highly recommended.

My daughter took to this book quickly, loving the 'cartoon' illustrations. What ever it takes to get them excited about reading, I am all for!

Dramatic graphics, insightful text. Top quality.

Lovely book! I wish it didn't end so suddenly, but the story that is told is beautiful.

Lovely book, fast shipping

Needed for school, my daughter liked the book.

I ordered this figuring that it was something I could share with my seven year old. It delivers. The

story is relatable and cleanly told, but it has true narrative depth for a lifetime comics reader such as myself. I haven't finished it yet, but I am enjoying it greatly.

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