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Summary of Breaking Through

Keller was born healthy, able to walk, but at 19 months of age, Keller developed a disease, which took a heavy toll on her—the loss of her sight and hearing. As she grew from infancy into childhood, she became wild and wayward. Seeking assistance, she was advised to contact the Perkins Institution, known today as the Perkins School for the Blind. Brilliant at the manual alphabet, a way of using fingers to spell words into a person's hand, Anne Sullivan was recommended to educate Keller. Her life changed on March 3, 1887, when Sullivan came to be her teacher. Initially, she managed to teach and discipline the bright but stubborn and spoiled little kid by isolating her from her family and living alone with her in the nearby cottage. Sullivan began teaching her how to communicate with the outside world. In one lesson, Sullivan spelled the word "water" in one of Keller's hands as she threw water on Keller's hand, thereby instructing her to connect objects with letters. Keller eventually made her first major breakthrough, connecting the concept of sign language with the objects around her.

Under her guidance, Keller also learned to write and to read braille, a system of printing for blind people. Sullivan, whom Keller called "Teacher," devoted most of her time to instruct her. The two worked together for many years, during which Keller acquired may subjects like arithmetic, geography, and history, to name only a few. Besides, Keller left no stone unturned in learning to speak. Later, she had her heart set on going to college despite others' caution about her aspirations. In 1899, with her perseverance and Sullivan's incessant assistance, she passed Radcliffe College's entrance exam, which enabled her to become the first deafblind person to register at a U.S. college. While she was in college, a popular women's Magazine asked her to write her autobiography, which caused a sensation. After many trials and tribulations, she earned her own degree and distinguished herself in the world usually dominated by men. Indeed, Keller was a tireless advocate for social causes and an active contributor to her own well-being. Her dedication to the welfare of blind persons and her message of faith and strength through adversity resonated throughout the globe.