



# The World I Live In

*Helen Keller , Roger Shattuck (Editor)*

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Out of print for nearly a century, *The World I Live In* is Helen Keller's most personal and intellectually adventurous work—one that transforms our appreciation of her extraordinary achievements. Here this preternaturally gifted deaf and blind young woman closely describes her sensations and the workings of her imagination, while making the pro-vocative argument that the whole spectrum of the senses lies open to her through the medium of language. Standing in the line of the works of Emerson and Thoreau, *The World I Live In* is a profoundly suggestive exercise in self-invention, and a true, rediscovered classic of American literature.

This new edition of *The World I Live In* also includes Helen Keller's early essay "Optimism," as well as her first published work, "My Story," written when she was twelve.

## The World I Live In Details

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Author : Helen Keller , Roger Shattuck (Editor)

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**Download and Read Free Online The World I Live In Helen Keller , Roger Shattuck (Editor)**

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# From Reader Review The World I Live In for online ebook

## PlumJo says

My experiences with the Helen Keller story are like everyone else's: you read a story in elementary school about how deaf and blind Helen learned to speak and went to college because of her teacher, Annie Sullivan. Then a little while later you see one version or another of The Miracle Worker because every few years, without fail, The Miracle Worker comes on TV and you're like, "Oh, yeah, I remember that Helen Keller thing..." And between those experiences you hear the jokes about rearranging the furniture and "reading" the waffle iron. Then later on you discover Apples to Apples and learn that a (more or less) properly played "Helen Keller" card is an instant win because it's pretty freaking hilarious every time. In fact, you can even Like it on Facebook: "Apples to Apples: The Helen Keller Card".

People make offhand Helen Keller jokes all the time, but their thoughts never seem to go much deeper than "Being deaf and blind would suck a lot." I myself never really thought that long about it even though I had my mother rent The Miracle Worker every week for months. But I never really thought about it.

Maybe it's because I never had to-- that I was never faced with it on an everyday basis. Or maybe I did think about it as in-depth-ly as my 8 year-old brain could go and when my questions went unanswered they dissipated.

In any event, while reading The World I Live In, I was continually surprised by the little things that never occurred to me and I found myself saying, "Oh, yeah! How does she do/experience that? What's that like?"

Helen takes us through her world in 15 chapters and explains how her world compares to ours in day to day life- speaking, reading, writing, and her life before Annie Sullivan.

Then, in Chapter 15, Helen lets loose a rhapsodic torrent of ethereal beauty. Chapter 15, "A Waking Dream", weaves history, literature, and fantasy into a veritable tapestry of...of...of...beauticiousness. I sincerely want Herbert to come over and read "A Waking Dream" to me while I drift off to sleep. I loved this chapter. I think it was included to show that her imagination is just as good as-- if not better than-- the average person's, and it is. It's most certainly better than mine; my actual dreams are only half as good and that's only because of the drugs I'm on, and she's talking about a daydream. That's serious creativity.

The World I Live In is a quick, pretty, and interesting read, and absolutely worth it.

5 stars

Blauthor, Blauthor!

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## H.A. Leuschel says

A beautiful rendition from an exceptional woman who tells the reader in this moving essay what it is like to be blind, deaf and mute. 'In touch is all love and intelligence', she writes and 'Imagination puts a sentiment to every line and curve'. She may not be able to 'touch the world in its entirety' but she touched me as a reader by her positive outlook and courage! Poetic and gentle.

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## Maddie Cramer says

The overall impression of this book was beauty. There was palpable optimism and all melancholy was balanced perfectly with humour. I suggest this to every poet I know.

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## Kathy says

A wonderful insight into the mind of an amazing woman. This work seems to be a response to those who think that the blind or the blind/deaf cannot experience reality but poorly. "The only lightless dark is the night of ignorance and insensibility," she replies. Then she explains her world of touch, smell, and taste, particularly how touch and feeling allow her to experience the world around her. "It is more difficult to teach ignorance to think than to teach an intelligent blind man to see the grandeur of Niagara." She displays intelligence, humor, and humanity in the pages of this little gem.

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## Kylee Wright says

This book would be good to use in a creative writing class. I liked reading her insights about the three senses she uses to interact with the world.

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## Ryan says

**This book is so inspiring.** To think that someone can be transformed from a self-described state of "vacancy absorbing space" into a thoughtful, brilliant person writing beautiful observations about her three senses, is amazing.

"It is not for me to say whether we see best with the hand or the eye. I only know that the world I see with my fingers is alive, ruddy and satisfying."

"I have walked with people whose eyes are full of light, but who see nothing in city streets, nothing in books. What a witless masquerade is this seeing!"

"The thousand soft voices of the earth have truly found their way to me - the small rustle in tufts of grass, the silky swish of leaves, the buzz of insects, the hum of bees in blossoms I have plucked, the flutter of a bird's wings after his bath, and the slender rippling vibration of water running over pebbles."

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### **Renah says**

Ok, so, it is interesting to hear about the senses and language from Hellen Keller's perspective. BUT her style of writing is archaic and grandiose and very hard to remain interested in. Here's a representative sample: "While I walk about my chamber with unsteady steps, my spirit sweeps skyward on eagle wings and looks out with unquenchable vision upon the world of eternal beauty." And so on, for the entire book. I finished reading it because I hate leaving books unfinished, and that was about the only reason.

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### **Kasie says**

The irony that I can hear the audiobook and read the printed does not pass me

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### **Noé Ajo caamaño says**

Una obra maravillosa que expresa toda la luz que habita en la mente de quien algunos se empeñan en llamar sordociega. No es solo un estilo hermoso, ni siquiera una deliciosa descripción de la riqueza de un mundo dominado por el tacto, el olfato y el gusto. Es un manifiesto que expresa una inmensa gratitud por la existencia, y ensalza el valor que ilumina todos los valores: el amor, lo mas bello, el bien que ilumina al mundo.

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### **Becky Safarik says**

I read this because Annie Dillard, in *The Writing Life*, referenced it. They have some similarity of style, but this was a very interesting read to help us see outside of the normal box that we are in.

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### **Shaikha Al-jassasi says**

The greatest book ever. I'll read it from now and then to awaken my soul and emotions. It explained to me how feelings and real experiences can create meanings to the surrounding objects. It made me rethink the humans' faculties.

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### **Jack Wolfe says**

The majority of Americans seem to understand Helen Keller in one of two ways: as an inspiring hero who overcame deafness and blindness in young life to become, well, an inspiring hero (see the play "The Miracle Worker" or just about every kid's book on Ms. Keller), or as an inspiring hero who overcame deafness and

blindness in young life to become an ardent supporter of human rights and a champion of human dignity (she co-founded the ACLU, for Pete's sake!). "The World I Live In" has introduced me to a third Helen Keller--the creative Helen Keller. As it turns out, the woman was one HELL of a great writer. Her work shows a deep knowledge of the American tradition (her philosophy is akin to Emerson's; at one point she uses an image that MUST come from Whitman's "Patient Noiseless Spider"; the final chapter riffs on dozens of literary tropes, etc), but her style and mood and vision must all be counted as uniquely her own. It's one thing for Emerson to describe a transparent eyeball; it's quite another for Helen to describe her "seeing hand," especially in her calm, clear prose, which almost approaches the Tao Te Ching in its simple beauty. You of course get her famous optimism here (again, with an Emersonian cast, so it's sharp and moving, not just a Hallmark card); you also get a fair amount of archness (see the preface, where she seems to castigate those who would confine her to only talking about herself) and humor (that final chapter, again, which seems to be an extended satire on the idea of her dreams... her dreams which every psychologist believes to be so interesting, but that are in fact not much different from anyone else's). How could this possibly be as "under-read" as its release in the NYRB classics series would seem to indicate? Students of literature, history, psychology, religion, and wonder will all find something unforgettable here.

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### **Kathleen Brugger says**

What a beautiful person Helen Keller was. This book is a collection of essays that she wrote when she was about 24. It's a quite interesting look into her mind. I read the book because I saw a quote from it in Daniel Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*; the quote implied that before she possessed language, she had no self-consciousness. What astounded me was her ability to visualize! She makes it clear that there is a physical world of vision, and a mental world of vision, and if anything the world of the mind is more beautiful and full than that of the physical.

This was the quote that so amazed me: "Before my teacher came to me, I did not know that I am. I lived in a world that was a no-world. I cannot hope to describe adequately that unconscious, yet conscious time of nothingness. I did not know that I knew aught, or that I lived or acted or desired. I had neither will nor intellect. I was carried along to objects and acts by a certain blind natural impetus. I had a mind which caused me to feel anger, satisfaction, desire. These two facts led those about me to suppose that I willed and thought."

At the end of the book she has a short autobiography; if you're interested in that you should read "The Story of My Life." But if you're interested in the thoughts of this remarkable person, this is a fascinating short book.

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### **Catie says**

"The only lightless dark is the night of ignorance and insensibility. We differ, blind and seeing, one from another, not in our senses, but in the use we make of them, in the imagination and courage with which we seek wisdom beyond our senses."

"Ideas make the world we live in, and impressions furnish ideas."

"...for, without egotism, the mind is as large as the universe."

"The silent worker is imagination which decrees reality out of chaos."

"The bulk of the world's knowledge is an imaginary construction."

"Of us it is as true as it is of the seeing that the most beautiful world is always entered through the imagination. If you wish to be something that you are not,--something fine, noble, good,--you shut your eyes, and for one dreamy moment you are that which you long to be."

"The infinite wonders of the universe are revealed to us in exact measure as we are capable of receiving them."

"Man looks within himself and in time finds the measure and meaning of the universe."

"The next important thing seldom happens in dreams."

"The highest result of education is tolerance...Tolerance is the first principle of community; it is the spirit which conserves the best that all men think."

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## **Will says**

Helen Keller is a surprisingly good writer. The interesting thing is that she is of her time -- she does not write like a modern writer would. She says things that no modern writer would say, or says things in a way that take a while to unpack. There is a section where she talks of her disabilities and her mental facilities, and it takes a while to realize that she's saying that she'd rather be blind and deaf than stupid. And then starts talking about people who don't get the kind hint to stop asking her.

At the same time, there are fascinating questions about the "no-mind" that she experienced as a child without access to language. Did she really have no apprehension or planning at all? What about empathy -- did she know if her mother was in pain, and try to fix it? Her knowledge of herself here is vague, and part of it is that she absorbed language (and the mental imagery surrounding language, involving sight and sound) to such an extent that she can't put it aside and see herself as she was.

It's a short book, really a series of essays, and free on Amazon Kindle. Recommended.

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