

## Discussion Questions for *The Miracle Worker*

### Act 1

1. In real life, the discovery that Helen was deaf occurred several weeks after the discovery that she was blind. How did William Gibson change this in the play? Why do you think he changed it?
2. What does Helen's father do for a living?
3. Describe Helen at age six and a half (the beginning of scene 2).
4. How did Kate Keller change since scene 1?
5. What is James' solution to the problem of Helen? How does the rest of the family react to his suggestion?
6. Captain Keller had initially said that he would not write to Dr. Chisholm, a famous oculist in Baltimore. Why does he change his mind?
7. What do we learn about Annie Sullivan's life?
8. What presents do the blind children give to Annie?
9. How do the various members of the Keller household spoil Helen?
10. What clue do we get to the reason for the conflict between James and his father?
11. Why does Kate initially have some reservations about Annie?

12. What three reasons does Annie give for having confidence in her ability to work with Helen?
13. Why does Captain Keller disapprove of Annie at their first meeting?
14. When Annie gets Helen to “spell” doll, what is James’ reaction?
15. What does Helen do to Annie?
16. After Annie is rescued, she watches Helen. What does she see Helen do with the key? What does Annie think of Helen at the end of Act 1?

## ***Act 2***

17. How do Kate and Annie differ in working with Helen?
18. What are James and Captain Keller arguing about?
19. During breakfast, what does Helen do?
20. What correlation does James draw between what’s going on at the breakfast table between Helen and Annie and the Battle of Vicksburg?
21. What does Annie think of Helen’s behavior?
22. In Act 2, Scene 3, there is no dialogue. Summarize what happens in this action-packed scene.

23. What three things has Annie managed to get Helen to do?
24. When Annie tells Kate that Helen folded her napkin, how does Kate react? What does her reaction show?
25. What had happened to Annie's brother Jimmie?
26. Why does Captain Keller think that Annie should be fired?
27. What defense does Kate offer?
28. What new information does Annie give the Keller's about her past?
29. What does Annie propose should be done?
30. How does Helen react to being left in the garden house?
31. What do we learn about the strained relationship between Captain Keller and his son?
32. How does Annie get Helen to let her touch her?

### **Act 3**

33. Act 3 takes place on the last day of the promised two weeks. How do the members of the Keller family feel about Helen's two week absence?

34. Kate and James establish a truce. What advice does Kate give to James about improving his relationship with his father?

35. What common problem does Annie have with using a dictionary?

36. Annie says to Kate, "I go to bed with--writer's cramp from talking so much." To what is she referring?

37. Kate and Captain Keller are really pleased with the changes in Helen. How has Helen changed during her two weeks in the garden house?

38. Why does Captain Keller say, "Miss Sullivan, you are a tyrant"?

39. William Gibson wrote that Annie was "like a defeated general on the deserted battlefield." What battle has Annie lost?

40. Why is James' choice of grace an interesting one?

41. How does Helen act at her "welcome home" dinner?

42. How do the other people at the table react to her behavior?

43. James finally stands up to his father. What does he tell his father?

44. What “miracle” takes place at the water pump?

45. Why is Kate Keller “torn both ways” by which has happened at the pump?

46. How has the relationship between Helen and Annie changed after the “miracle” at the pump?