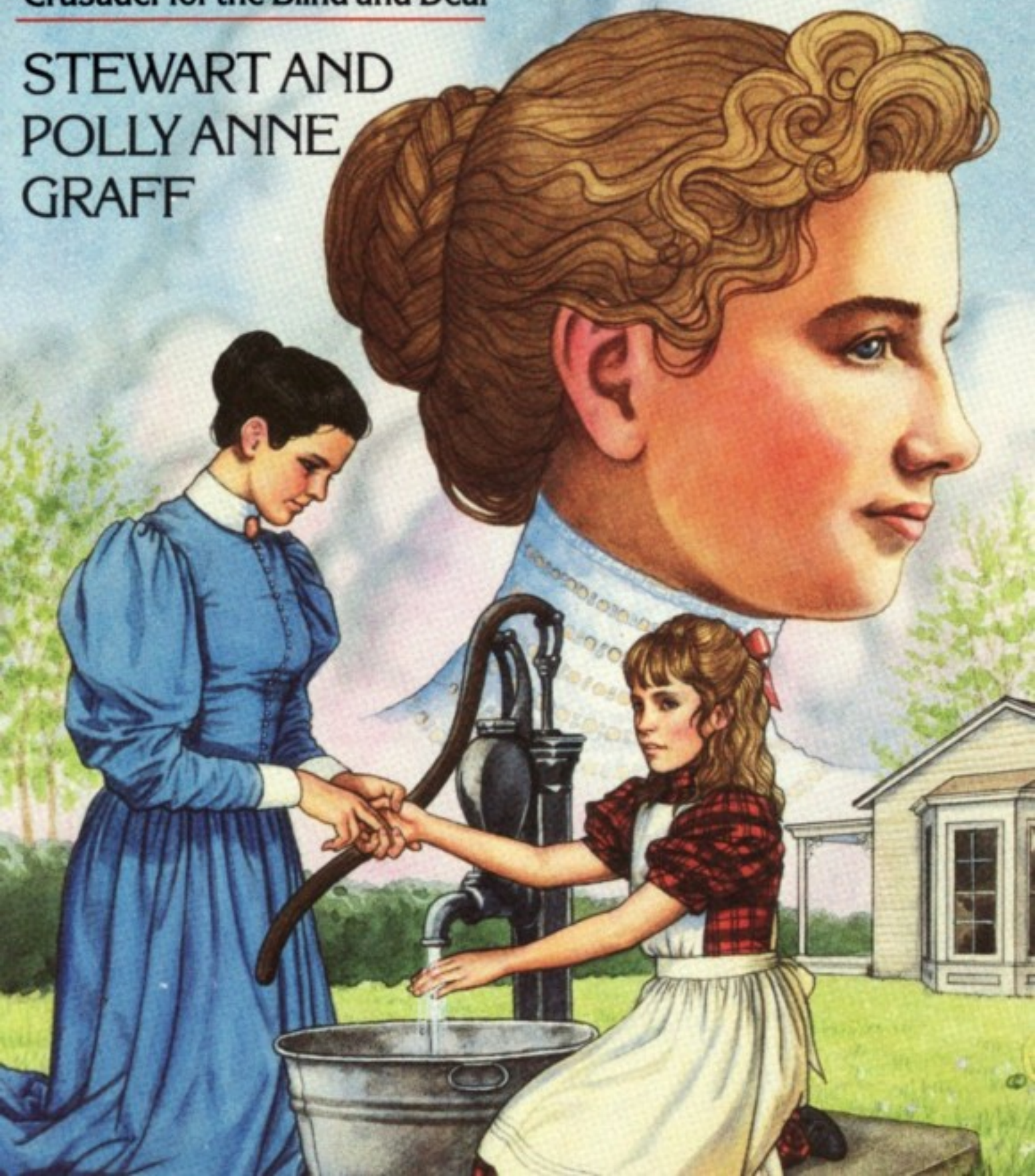




# HELEN KELLER

Crusader for the Blind and Deaf

STEWART AND  
POLLY ANNE  
GRAFF



# 1 ... Darkness

One afternoon a little girl sat on the porch steps of her home. It was her sixth birthday, June 27, in the year 1886. The house was in the small town of Tuscumbia, Alabama.

The little girl had curly golden hair. Her bare arms and legs were sturdy. But there was something different about her eyes. When she stared into the bright sun she did not blink.

Roses bloomed in the arbor. Across the yard, a pony whinnied in the pasture. It would have been a nice afternoon to ride, but the little girl sat alone. There was an angry expression on her face.

She could feel the warm sun, but she could not see anything but blackness, because she was blind. She could smell the roses, but she could not see their color. She could not hear her pony whinny, because she was deaf also.

The little girl's name was Helen Keller. She lived with her parents and her baby sister Mildred in a comfortable house with wide fields and a big barn. Helen's father had been a captain in the Civil War. Now he owned a newspaper.

When Helen Keller was born she could see and hear like other children. But when she was a year and a half old she became very ill. Fever burned her small body. The doctors could not help. Her mother and father were afraid Helen would die.

At last Helen got better, but the fever left a terrible mark. When her mother brought a lamp, Helen did not look at the bright light. When her father clapped his hands loudly, she did not turn toward the sound. Then they knew that their little girl was blind and deaf.

Helen was soon well and strong again. When she grew older she wanted to run and

play. But when she ran she crashed into trees and fences or fell and hurt herself.

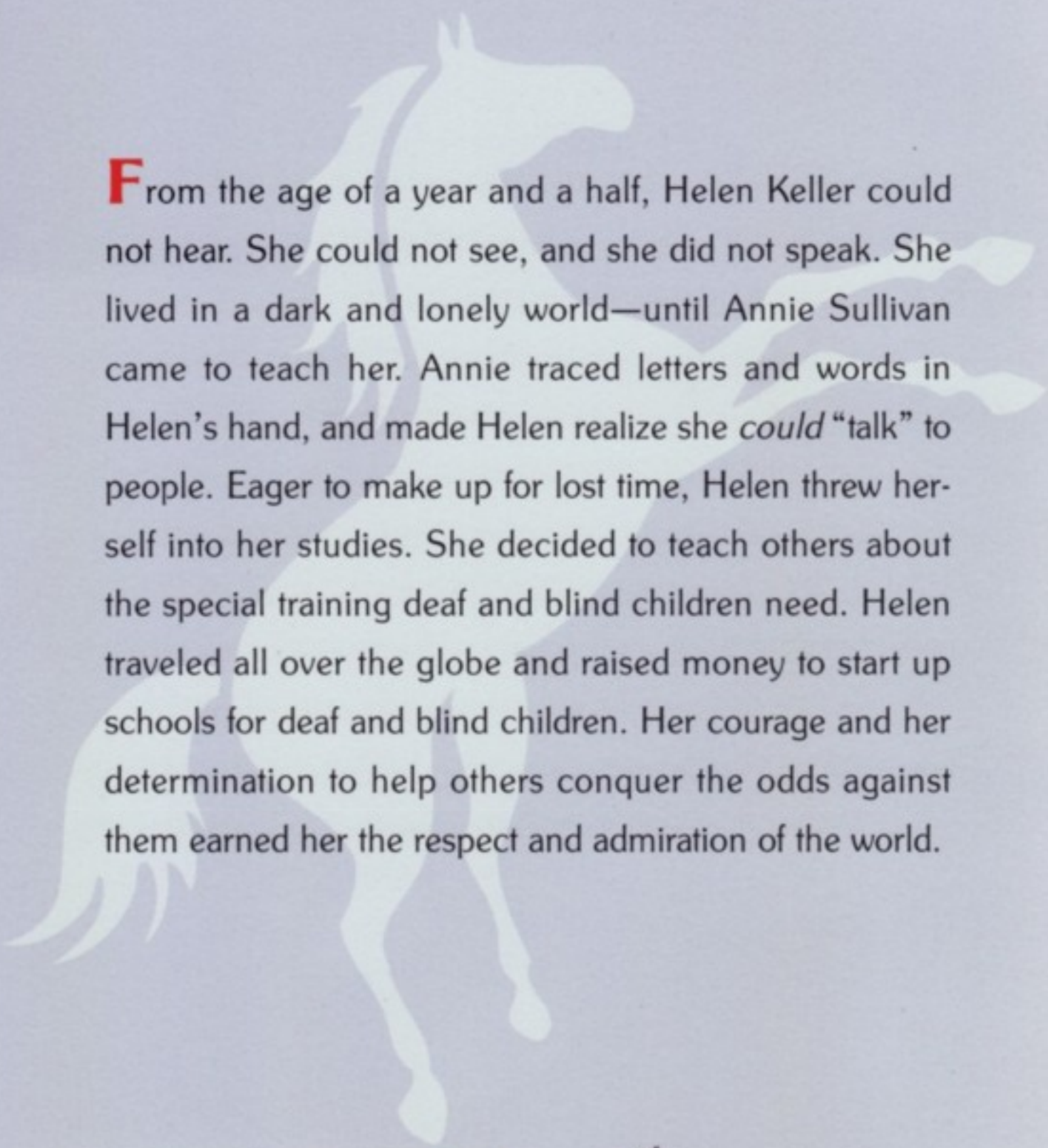
Other children were afraid to play with her because she often hit them roughly and broke their toys. Even Belle, the family's setter dog, ran away from her. Helen did not understand that anyone had feelings except herself. Once she pushed her baby sister out of her cradle.

Worst of all, Helen could not speak or understand others. Her mind was bright and active. She could feel her way quickly through the house or follow the path to the barn. She learned a few signs. She would pull or push to mean "come" or "go." She could show her mother that she was hungry or thirsty.

But Helen could not hear voices. She could not see people talking. She did not know that people talked in *words*.

Sitting on the porch steps, Helen was restless and lonely. She did not know it was her birthday. She did not know that her mother was in the house baking her a cake.

Suddenly the screen door slammed. Helen turned. She could not *hear* the slam but it made a shake. It was a *vibration* that she



**F**rom the age of a year and a half, Helen Keller could not hear. She could not see, and she did not speak. She lived in a dark and lonely world—until Annie Sullivan came to teach her. Annie traced letters and words in Helen’s hand, and made Helen realize she *could* “talk” to people. Eager to make up for lost time, Helen threw herself into her studies. She decided to teach others about the special training deaf and blind children need. Helen traveled all over the globe and raised money to start up schools for deaf and blind children. Her courage and her determination to help others conquer the odds against them earned her the respect and admiration of the world.

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