

Primary Elementary Students' Historical Literacy, Thinking, and Argumentation about Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan

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CONTEMPORARY educational initiatives require more non-fiction reading in English/language arts (ELA), close readings of primary and secondary sources in social studies/history (SSH), and text-based writing in all curricula.¹ The new prescriptions, which begin in the primary grades, are significant as ELA and SSH have been historically synonymous with fiction and textbooks, respectively, and bereft of text-based writing.² Within both SSH's Inquiry Arc and ELA's reading and writing standards, students are expected to consider important questions, use discipline-specific techniques to scrutinize relevant primary and secondary sources, and demonstrate understandings through historical argumentation.³ The educational initiatives, though, do not direct teachers towards specific topics or curricular materials.⁴

Most every historical topic has dozens of possible trade books, a common curricular resource.⁵ Teachers rely on various objective reading measures to determine a suitable challenge level for students. To differentiate for students' diverse abilities, teachers select multiple books at distinctly different reading levels to use in literacy circles.⁶ Research on trade books' historicity, or historical accuracy and representation, indicates frequent yet unpredictable

historical misrepresentations; for instance, slavery is habitually depicted sans violence and Rosa Parks is regularly (mis)characterized as a tired seamstress whose unintentional arrest initiated the modern Civil Rights Movement.⁷ Primary sources, a key element to the aforementioned education initiatives, can fill these gaps and balance the misrepresentations within trade books. Innumerable newspaper accounts, photographs, and letters are freely available for teachers at the Library of Congress and other digital repositories. Novice learners, especially young ones, are easily overwhelmed and miss important nuances when reading sources written decades or centuries ago,⁸ so teachers should adjust the length, prose, and syntax and provide prompts to guide close reading.⁹ While they are not ready-made for an elementary classroom, primary sources position students to view history like a historian: as an edifice assembled from interpretations of diverse—and sometimes competing—sources.

Historians do not read a textbook to answer multiple-choice questions; they engage in history literacy, historical thinking, and historical argumentation. Historical literacy, or content area reading, involves the close scrutiny of primary documents, considering the source, the source's perspective or bias, the source's credibility, and other sources' corroboration, and context.¹⁰ Historical thinking requires consideration of historical perspectives, historical significance, ethical dimensions, and the tensions between continuity and change.¹¹ Historical argumentation, or content area writing, emerges when students make text-based claims to demonstrate newly generated understandings. Historical argumentation, historical thinking, and history literacy must be initiated and cultivated early; they are not downloaded into students' cognitive operating system at high school graduation.¹² Primary elementary students can—and must—be given discipline-specific, yet age-appropriate tasks. This article reports how a second-grade teacher, Ms. Sandburg (a pseudonym), positioned students to engage in inquiry, history literacy, historical thinking, and historical argumentation, which align with SSH and ELA education initiatives.¹³

History and Historical Inquiry

Ms. Sandburg wanted students to learn more than just historical names and dates. She selected a topic that would spark discussions

about character and noble ideals. Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan (later, Anne Sullivan Macy), the celebrated student and teacher duo, were chosen. Like public memory, most trade books memorialize—and minimize—Keller and Sullivan to simply the water pump scene where Keller finally grasped Sullivan's teaching.¹⁴ The historiography and Keller's own writing demonstrate that the complexities of teacher and student are perhaps more meaningful than just their collective breakthrough moment.¹⁵

Helen Keller's resiliency to overcome seemingly incapacitating disabilities and Anne Sullivan's effective instructional procedures garnered both women international attention, yet there is so much more to their story. Keller went on to attend college, work in vaudeville and Hollywood, author half a dozen books and countless articles, and become the face of the American Federation for the Blind. Keller could not have done so without Anne Sullivan's teaching (and others' financial support). Sullivan's "courage, determination, inspiration, talents, and common sense" enabled her to succeed where others failed.¹⁶ Sullivan's mettle was rooted in a penniless childhood underscored by her mother's death, father's abandonment, and placement at Tewksbury Almshouse, an institute for orphaned, indigent, and disabled citizens. At Tewksbury, Sullivan lost her beloved little brother, Jimmie, and acquired a life-threatening eye infection that blinded her. Sullivan's sight resurfaced, although never fully, after surgery and her world expanded through schooling paid for by a benefactor. Keller benefited from Sullivan's empathy and the dispositions forged by the figurative fires of Tewksbury. Sullivan's pedagogy and Keller's responses reaped worldwide fame, which provided them both countless opportunities and novel experiences. In elementary-based trade books, Keller's resiliency largely overshadowed Sullivan's teaching;¹⁷ the titles of the 1962 movie, *The Miracle Worker*, and Keller's final book, *Teacher: Anne Sullivan Macy* (1955), suggest more credit belongs to Sullivan. As Keller's teacher and closest companion for decades, Sullivan's contributions cannot be disentangled from Keller's accomplishments. Keller's statements, including, "I am glad that many people are interested in me and *the educational achievements of my teacher*" (emphasis added) indicate her humble acceptance of others' fascination while explicitly attributing her success to Sullivan.¹⁸

Ms. Sandburg positioned her second-grade students to consider the historical significance of Keller and Sullivan. She engaged students

in historical inquiry by asking, “What is the historical significance of Helen Keller, the student? What is the historical significance of Anne Sullivan, the teacher? Should they receive the same or different levels of credit?” The queries were catalysts for students’ involvement in close readings and careful considerations of historical sources or, stated differently, history literacy and historical thinking.

Historical Sources, History Literacy, and Historical Thinking

Students scrutinized two types of historical sources: secondary trade books (**Appendix A**) and primary sources (**Appendix B**). Multiple literacy circle formats enabled both variety and differentiation, as each student read two developmentally appropriate trade books (**Appendix C**). The initial literacy circle involved three groups and three trade books, one each for the strongest students,¹⁹ the struggling students,²⁰ and students reading at grade level.²¹ The second literacy circle involved two groups and two books, one for the stronger²² and another for the struggling students.²³ Each book had distinctly different levels of historicity, or historical accuracy and representation.²⁴ For instance, all five trade books noted Helen Keller’s disabilities and early life experiences, yet only one explicitly detailed Anne Sullivan’s miserly childhood, wretched isolation as an orphan, and enduring battles with blindness.²⁵ Other trade books significantly minimized it²⁶ or omitted it entirely.²⁷ Similarly, the trade books represented Sullivan’s and Keller’s adult accomplishments quite differently; whereas historians contextualize their success as collaborative, only two trade books did,²⁸ while the others credited only Keller²⁹ or just Sullivan.³⁰ The trade books’ uneven historicity was as essential for the teacher’s pedagogy as it was for meeting students’ vastly different reading levels.

Students individually read their assigned, developmentally appropriate trade book. They arrived at literacy circle discussions with answers to questions about the trade books’ historicity (**Appendix D**), which enabled students to see how their particular book included and disregarded specific content. Students also answered general literacy circle questions as in-class and homework assignments (**Appendix E**). Literacy circle writing and discussions enable students to refine answers and better understand how their particular trade book

historically represented Keller and Sullivan. Whole-class discussion enabled students to hear answers about different books that peers read in other literacy circles, which sparked students' recognition of trade books' disparate historicity. Literacy circle and whole-class discussion thus compelled each student to carefully scrutinize two trade books and hear interrogations about five. Students soon realized that seemingly similarly trade books had such starkly different levels of historical representation. They were then reminded of the initial inquiry questions about the historical significance of Keller, of Sullivan, and if they should receive similar or different levels of recognition. This elicited confusion, which was intended.

Confusion is a powerful element of cognition and pedagogy. It is "the antecedent of discovery...spark[ing] the motivation to explore and solve mysteries. Manageable, engaging mysteries provide students the space and incentive to explore for answers they know are discoverable."³¹ Trade books (**Appendix A**) evoked students' confusion, while primary sources (**Appendix B**) provided the clues students used to solve the enigma as they initially considered the historical inquiry questions. Anne Sullivan's diary, Document One, illustrated her miserable childhood and detailed how she and Helen Keller both benefitted from it. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell's letter to John Macy, Document Two, indicated the latter's marriage to Sullivan, the symbiotic nature of Keller's and Sullivan's partnership, and Keller's position as author. Keller's letter to Dr. Bell, Document Three, revealed at least three important elements: an upcoming cinematic representation of Keller's book; Keller crediting Sullivan as the force behind her accomplishments; and Keller appreciatively acknowledging the financial contributions that paid Sullivan to be her teacher. While maintaining original intent, the sources' lengths were abridged and prose was adjusted. To fully consider a source, one must engage in both history literacy and historical thinking.

History literacy is a close reading, or scrutiny, of a historical document; it centers on carefully considering its source, the source's perspective, context, corroboration by other sources, and other emergent nuances.³² Clues were given to assist in reading specific types of documents along with background for each source (**Appendix B**). Ms. Sandburg positioned students to engage in history literacy tasks, specifically *Question the Author*, *Guess the Source*, and *TKQ* (What do you think? What do you know? What

questions do you have?). These brief activities whetted students' interest in the documents; the multifaceted queries centered on source, context, and corroboration to guide students' primary source interrogations (**Appendix F**). Students' evaluation of, and subsequent discussions about, particular primary sources compelled reconsideration of understandings and alteration of previous answers to the inquiry questions. Students' history literacy involvement induced historical thinking.

Historical thinking involves a larger view of interconnected cognitive tasks like interrogating primary evidence in juxtaposition with secondary sources to determine historical significance, considering historical perspectives included (and excluded), pondering ethical dimensions, and analyzing causes and consequences of emergent tensions between continuity and change.³³ Ms. Sandburg positioned students to engage in historical thinking as they constructed evidence-based answers to historical inquiry questions. Specifically, she positioned students to evaluate historical evidence—both primary and secondary sources—to determine the historical significance of Helen Keller, of Anne Sullivan, and the relative magnitude of the obstacles they each overcame. Ms. Sandburg considered the historical content, students' age, students' emerging history literacy, and students' fledgling experience with historical thinking when she selected the historical argumentation activities.

Historical Argumentation

Historical argumentation relies on scrutiny of relevant primary and secondary sources using particular history literacy strategies; interrogation of initial findings using specific elements of historical thinking; recognition of divergent interpretations of incongruous historical evidence; and, lastly, reconsideration and revision of understandings.³⁴ Historical argumentation is the assembly of an evidence-based stance; it is not a single culminating act. It can take many forms, should be adjusted for students' age and abilities, and should be done continuously throughout the unit to enable students' constructions and revisions of understandings. By assessing at multiple points and not only at the unit's end, students can refine their understandings and make them increasingly complex. Ms. Sandburg's second-grade students' historical argumentation, entitled *Biography*

Postal Stamp, was one summative assessment that took three days to complete. Students' historical argumentation within *Biography Postal Stamp*, however, was cultivated through two, smaller formative assessments. The two formative assessments—*Biography Notecards* and a Venn diagram—assisted students' integration of diverse sources and emergent understandings generated over previous days.

Students created *Biography Notecards* for each historical figure. The required tabs within *Biography Notecards* directed students towards important elements; students synthesized understandings developed from scrutiny of two trade books and multiple primary sources as they considered the initial two inquiry questions: What is Helen Keller's historical significance? What is Anne Sullivan's historical significance? *Biography Notecards* initiated students' considerations of historical significance, guided students' integration of diverse sources to support claims, and alerted Ms. Sandburg to conspicuous gaps in students' understandings. Eleanor's work, seen in **Figure 1**, is an illustrative example.

Eleanor harvested essential events and accomplishments from Helen Keller's life; she appropriately placed them in sequential order according to the tabs. Eleanor's work, like any second grader, was not without errors; she did not mention Keller's sister, Mildred, nor brothers, James, Phillips, and William. This formative assessment alerted Ms. Sandburg to Eleanor's emergent yet imperfect understandings; it provided Ms. Sandburg the opportunity to guide Eleanor towards overlooked historical content, clarify any confusion, or refine a misunderstanding. Eleanor's writing indicated a stronger grasp of content derived from the trade book than from primary source analysis. The assignment's parameters, though, align more closely with biographical details conveyed in trade books than with nuances originating from historical documents. Ms. Sandburg noted that students largely completed the first three tabs (Early Years, Later Years, and Accomplishments) more effectively than the final tab, Timeline. Even though students could use their books and notes, nearly all students needed to revise Timeline in one or more areas. This, perhaps, is a result of the distinctly different cognitive tasks associated with the former (Early Years, Later Years, and Accomplishments) and the latter (Timeline). The former (Early Years, Later Years, and Accomplishments) requires application of comprehended content, whereas the latter (Timeline) requires both

application and linear sequencing, which derives from evaluation of where to apply the comprehended content. The *evaluation* necessary to complete the Timeline is a higher level of critical thinking than the *application* required to do the Early Years, Later Years, and Accomplishments.³⁵ Students completed *Biography Notecards* about each historical figure after reading each trade book, but prior to contrasting the two historical figures within a Venn diagram.


Venn diagrams in the primary elementary classroom are like the wheel in daily life: helpful and common. Venn diagrams enable juxtaposition of convergence and divergence; a Venn also allows young students to visualize these distinctions and organize their understandings. Students individually completed the Venn utilizing content developed from two *Biography Notecards*. Students work on the Venn sparked consideration of the initial two inquiry questions—specifically, the historical significance of the teacher and student. Emma Jane's Venn, reported in **Figure 2**, represents a typical student's work.

If *Biography Notecards* ensured students' grasp of significant elements of each historical figure, then Venn diagrams enabled students to categorize and position newly generated understandings. *Biography Notecards* guided students' constructions of initial answers for the first two inquiry questions, and the Venn enabled refinement of those answers. The Venn ensured students' precise placements and alerted Ms. Sandburg to an oversight; Emma Jane positioned each point in the correct location. Ms. Sandburg encouraged students to articulate lengthy points on the Venn's backside, since its format—specifically the lines of various lengths—prevented explanation. Emma Jane even attempted to cite the origin of her understandings, as evidenced in the statement, "I found it in the book." The Venn also enabled students to contemplate preliminary answers to the final inquiry question: Should Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan receive the same or different levels of credit? By doing so, Ms. Sandburg reduced students' work into small, manageable portions; to do otherwise might overwhelm young learners.

Students' understandings originated from primary and secondary source analyses, which were first articulated and then refined within *Biography Notecards* and the Venn diagram, two formative assessments. Students' involvement in these tasks was akin to a rehearsal for historical argumentation within a *Biography Postal*

Name: _____ Date: 02-19-16

Venn Diagram



Helen

Annie

1. Blind and deaf.

2. Bad behavior.

3. Famous.

both

girls. both blind.

1. Blind for a few years.

2. Taught Helen.

3. Great teacher.

~~1. She was blind and deaf and she gagged and talked to many people. I found it in a book.~~

2. She was mostly alone. I found it in a book.

1. Helen was important because...

She was blind and deaf and she gagged and talked to many people. I found it in a book.

2. Annie's biggest challenge was that was she was mostly alone. I found it in a book.

Figure 2: Emma Jane's Venn diagram for Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan

Stamp. Through this summative assessment, students answered the final inquiry question about if Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan should receive the same or different levels of credit. To do so persuasively, students needed no less than three text-based justifications. To build evidentiary arguments, students first formed an opinion, wrote it in a sentence, brainstormed supporting reasons in a list, and cited the source from which their reasons originated. Students then engaged in small-group discussion, which provided space to share ideas, obtain compliments about good ideas, hear other students' claims, and see how peers justified claims using text-based statements. To refine claims, align supporting evidence, and polish the prose, Ms. Sandburg required revision and resubmission in diverse formats. Peer review targeted capitalization and punctuation. After alterations and improvements were made, teacher review addressed spelling and provided guidance to ensure claims were evidence-based. Students' historical argumentation required a complementary artistic representation in the form of a postage stamp, which aligned with previous SSH content about the American mail system and ELA content about formatting letters and envelopes. Students' artwork supplemented their text-based claims. Students affixed written claims and artwork to a larger piece of paper to complete their historical argumentation. Samuel's *Biography Postage Stamp*, seen in **Figure 3**, represented a typical student's work.

Samuel's historical argumentation was apparent within his *Biography Postage Stamp*. He ably supported his thesis sentence with three text-based claims rooted in both logic and diverse sources. Samuel articulated understandings that were constructed from close readings of both primary and secondary sources. Samuel wrote (with corrected spelling to limit distraction), "Annie [Sullivan] is blind and she could get it [blindness] fixed but Helen [Keller] could not get it [blindness] fixed and Annie [Sullivan] got her eye fixed so she [Sullivan] could see to help [Keller]." Every trade book indicated Helen Keller's irreparable blindness and deafness; Document One indicated Anne Sullivan's blindness ("I got sick and had an infection in my eyes. I could not see for a long time...As I got older, I was glad that Tewksbury...gave me surgeries to fix my eyesight"). Samuel's subsequent sentence suggested careful reading of the primary source and use of history literacy; he wrote (with corrected spelling), "Annie [Sullivan] helped many people even Helen [Keller] [who] was the



I recommend that ANNIE is featured on a postage stamp.

ANNIE is blind and she could
 it find but help could not get it
 find and ANNIE got her eye find
 so she could see to help.

ANNIE help many people and
 help was the best student
 and she was happy to people
 so she could be come to people.

ANNIE is a family and she is to
 people so they could read and
 be come safe ANNIE was helping
 blind people.

as you can see ANNIE is the
 best.

Sincerely, [Redacted]

Figure 3: Samuel's Biography Postage Stamp for "Annie" (Anne Sullivan)

best student and she [Keller] was help to people.” This conception was likely constructed from a close reading of Document One (“I am glad that I was blind because it helped me be a good Teacher to Helen Keller”). Samuel appropriately used source (Sullivan), context (a reflective declaration stated *after* Sullivan’s successful instruction), and corroboration (with the Sullivan-centered trade book); source, context, and corroboration are three history literacy strategies that Ms. Sandburg cultivated. Samuel determined Anne Sullivan’s historical significance using primary and secondary sources, which represented two elements of historical thinking; his *Biography Postage Stamp* was a historical argumentation task that is age-appropriate for primary elementary students. Samuel’s text-based writing is developmentally appropriate historical argumentation, just as the math equation $3 + x = 8$ elicits developmentally appropriate algebraic thinking.

Discussion

Students engaged in historical argumentation through construction of a *Biography Postage Stamp*, a summative assessment reliant on evidence-based claims that originated from diverse sources, daily activities, and multiple formative assessments. Ms. Sandburg cultivated students’ historical argumentation using understandings derived from historical thinking—specifically, use of diverse primary and secondary sources to establish historical significance—and refined from completion of *Biography Notecards* and a Venn diagram, two formative assessments. Students’ historical thinking originated from close readings of distinct sources paired with text-specific prompts: history literacy questions (**Appendix F**) targeted source, context, and corroboration for students’ analyses of modified primary sources; close reading prompts (**Appendix E**) assisted students’ comprehension of secondary sources; and content analysis questions (**Appendix D**) guided students’ interrogations of the disparate levels of historicity within the secondary sources.

Limitations did appear within the pedagogy. It was noteworthy that no students integrated understandings that clearly derived from the second or third primary source. In Document Two, Alexander Graham Bell complimented John Macy on the successful pedagogy of his wife, Anne Sullivan Macy. In the Document Three, Helen

Keller wrote to Bell to praise her teacher and, among other things, invite Bell to participate in the upcoming movie. Students frequently noted—and celebrated—Sullivan’s teaching prowess, but they did not appear to tie her expertise to either of these two particular documents. Perhaps the content was too complex, esoteric, or simply not novel enough to be distinguished in students’ historical argumentation. Maybe the nuances were too similar to the content conveyed more simply in their respective trade books. While the Documents Two and Three are historically meaningful, they are possibly not evocative enough to be included again with second graders. Perhaps instructional procedures could be adjusted to integrate the primary sources more effectively into the formative assessments, which underpinned students’ historical argumentation. If students interrogated one primary source, say, after each trade book, then they would presumably appear in both the *Biography Notecards* and the Venn diagram. This slight adjustment could possibly insert the seemingly disregarded primary sources more effectively into students’ active memory prior to historical argumentation. Another modification might be to use other, different primary sources. It was notable that all three sources were text-based documents. Photographs of events or activities could illustrate meaningful content; newspaper headlines, a diminutive text-based source, could convey similar happenings in a more efficient manner than the multi-sentence format of Documents Two and Three. Reflective considerations of alternative sources and methods can position teachers to cultivate young students’ engagement more effectively in both the historical content and the historical process.

The primary elementary students learned both history content and how to *do* history through the historical process. The latter manifested in history literacy, historical thinking, and historical argumentation. Students’ understandings of the historical content—Helen Keller’s and Anne Sullivan’s accomplishments and experiences, both individual and collective—were more likely to be retained and refined because students’ position statements were constructed and polished, not simply comprehended for a test. In sum, Ms. Sandburg positioned second-grade students to *do* history as they considered important questions, used history-specific techniques to scrutinize relevant and age-appropriate primary and secondary sources, and demonstrated understandings through historical argumentation. Ms.

Sandburg's students' experiences *doing* history are not necessarily typical. Discipline-specific pedagogy, like this, did not arrive with the aforementioned education initiatives and was never ubiquitous in the primary elementary classrooms beforehand. The place of such curricula within primary elementary classrooms can be viewed quite differently, especially when one considers the students' cognitive abilities, the content's complexity, and the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.

Some may deem history literacy, historical thinking, and historical argumentation to be *inappropriate* cognitive tasks for primary elementary students. Primary elementary students, it could be argued, are new readers and usually learn cursive and double-digit addition; critical evaluation of diverse, competing historical sources is unproductive. The highest levels of criticality, though, are well within the grasp of primary elementary students.³⁶ Further, Ms. Sandburg's students' work indicated all elements of the history process. Primary elementary students' cognition is not comparable with adults, yet *doing* the history process is more dependent on experience and training than age or ability.³⁷ Historical literacy, thinking, and argumentation are developed, not uploaded.

Some may suggest the historical content is too intricate to be anything other than convoluted in primary elementary students' minds. These students, it could be argued, may struggle distinguishing their city from their state, country, and continent. Carefully selected content, like these trade books and Document One specifically, can make the material manageable. That students did not integrate Documents Two and Three into their historical argumentation could suggest unsuitability. Documents Two and Three were perhaps less aligned with the trade books' content and maybe not as evocative as Document One, but they were not beyond students' grasp. Students' in-class work did not indicate Documents Two and Three were unnecessarily complex; discussion comments suggested they were relevant, not esoteric. Ms. Sandburg, an experienced primary elementary teacher, did not perceive Documents Two and Three as too elaborate for young learners. Students' age and abilities should shape historical topic and content selection.³⁸ The topic should not give nightmares, and the content should not overwhelm. Beyond these prudent, if pithy, maxims, teachers should select content that will likely engage or intrigue.

Some may worry that teachers are unprepared to implement pedagogy that positions students to *do* history. Most elementary teachers' university courses were focused more on activities and methods than content, the content courses were few in comparison to secondary teachers, and the required content was broad in scope, inclusive of all disciplines, and not primarily focused on history.³⁹ The elementary grades, though, are ideal for *doing* history for many reasons. History-based curricula can be incorporated efficiently within interdisciplinary units, which are both common in elementary grades and perhaps more practical in elementary school than in middle or high school.⁴⁰ Ms. Sandburg purposefully scheduled literacy circles and discussions of trade books during reading time, individual primary source analysis during writing time, discussions of primary source analysis during social studies time, and academic vocabulary during word study time. Students spent about half of every day working on historical content about and historical tasks targeting Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller, which would be impractical or impossible in a middle or high school schedule. Elementary teachers may not be trained in history-based pedagogy, yet history literacy is akin to the close reading within ELA, historical argumentation is comparable to text-based writing within ELA, and the reading and writing expectations of ELA Common Core align seamlessly with the Inquiry Arc of the C3 Framework. While history literacy, historical thinking, and historical argumentation may appear as an abstract process when given a cursory look by the uninitiated, experienced teachers will find many agreeable parallels with ELA. The history process is not rocket science and is not written in hieroglyphics; it is manageable for both the teacher and for their students.

Students' work and Ms. Sandburg's observations all suggest that history pedagogy was not beyond the students' cognition, the content was not too difficult, and the process was not unnecessarily cumbersome. Ms. Sandburg reported that the most difficult task was containing individual students' excitement during whole-class discussions. They were a talkative bunch, but they also had a lot to be excited to talk about. Primary elementary students can *do* history if engaging content is given in small, manageable chunks and understandings are developed and refined with age-appropriate scaffolding.

Appendix A

Selected Books

- Davis, Cathy Mackey. *A Teacher and a Friend*. Huntington Beach, CA: Teacher Created Materials, 2006.
- Hurwitz, Johanna. *Helen Keller: Courage in the Dark*. New York: Random House, 1997.
- Lakin, Patricia. *Helen Keller and the Big Storm*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002.
- Lundell, Margo. *A Girl Named Helen Keller*. New York: Scholastic, 1995.
- Walker, Pamela. *Helen Keller*. New York: Scholastic, 2001.

Appendix B

The Modified Primary Sources

Document One

This is a short excerpt or section from Anne Sullivan's diary. A diary is like a notebook full of letters that a person writes to herself or himself. The writer writes to remember what they felt or thought.

I remember about living at Tewksbury after my mother died and my father ran away. Tewksbury is an orphanage for children who have no parents or people who have disabilities, like if they cannot see or walk or talk. It was sad, scary, lonely, and dirty. I got sick and had an infection in my eyes. I could not see for a long time. I was blind. It was at Tewksbury that my brother Jimmie died. As I got older, I was glad that Tewksbury helped me go to school and gave me surgeries to fix my eyesight. I am glad that I was blind because it helped me be a good Teacher to Helen Keller.

(Excerpt modified from Kim E. Nielsen, *Beyond the Miracle Worker*, 58-59, 72.)

Document Two

This is a letter about Helen Keller. The letter was written by Alexander Graham Bell. Mr. Bell was the fellow who invented the telephone and also gave money to Helen and Anne. The letter was written to John Macy, who was Anne Sullivan Macy's husband in 1903.

April 2, 1903

Dear Mr. Macy:

I have read the book *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller. The book is great. It will be read and loved by a lot of people. You, Mr. Macy, did a fine job gathering and collecting all the information from so many letters to and from Helen. The book shows that Helen's successes and achievements are because she is smart girl and because Anne, her teacher, is a wonderful teacher. Other teachers can help other children if they use the same steps or methods that Anne did. Congratulations to you.

Sincerely, Alexander Graham Bell

(Modified version of Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to John Macy, April 2, 1903. Series: General Correspondence. MSS51268: Folder: Helen Keller, 1888-1918, undated. Source Collection: Alexander Graham Bell family papers, 1834-1974. Repository: Manuscript Division. Digital Id: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/magbell.12400309>.)

Document Three

This is a letter from Helen Keller. This letter is written to Alexander Graham Bell. Mr. Bell was the fellow who invented the telephone and also gave money to Helen and Anne.

July 5, 1918

Dear Dr. Bell:

When we saw you several weeks ago, we told you that *The Story of My Life* will be made into a movie. Will you appear in it? The movie makers want to film people who have been important like you and Teacher. Indeed, it was because of you that Teacher came to me. You paid for her to come and have paid for her ever since.

Oh, it all comes back in my mind. I see me as the sad little child and Teacher as the young lady God sent. My fingers still glow with the "feel" of the first word: *water*! I love you for being so generous to pay for Teacher to come to me and to stay with me for so long. This is why I want so very much to have you in the movie.

I am always your friend, Helen Keller

(Modified version of Letter from Helen Keller to Alexander Graham Bell, July 5, 1918. Series: General Correspondence. MSS51268: Folder: Helen Keller, 1888-1918, undated. Source Collection: Alexander Graham Bell family papers, 1834-1974. Repository: Manuscript Division. Digital Id: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/magbell.12400318>.)

Note: Students were told that the italicized descriptions included clues and background for the primary sources.

Appendix C

Trade Books’ Developmental Appropriateness

Trade Book Author (Year)	Guided Reading	Lexile Measure	Rigby Score	Grade Level Equivalent
Davis (2006)	Q	~650-700	26-27	3
Hurwitz (1997)	N	520	~22	2
Lakin (2002)	K	410	17-18	2
Lundell (1995)	K	350	16-17	2
Walker (2001)	F	150	6	1

Note: A rating preceded by ~ denotes an approximate measurement.

Appendix D

Content Analysis Tool

1. Did the author describe Anne’s childhood before she met Helen? What was mentioned?
2. Did the author describe Helen’s childhood before she met Anne? What was mentioned?
3. Which of Helen’s teenage and adult experiences did the author describe:
 - a. Her education, like at school and in college?
 - b. Her involvement in entertainment industry, like vaudeville and Hollywood?
 - c. Her work publishing books and giving speeches?
 - d. Her work to help disabled, blind, and/or deaf people?
4. Which of Anne’s teenage and adult experiences did the author describe:
 - a. Her marriage (and/or her later separation)?
 - b. Her involvement in entertainment industry, like vaudeville and Hollywood?

- c. Her work publishing books and giving speeches?
- d. Her work to help disabled, blind, and/or deaf people?

Note: Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan, two adults separated by a century from the young students, were made to seem more approachable, so the teacher referred to them as Helen and Anne. The questions originated from previous content analysis research in John H. Bickford III and Cynthia W. Rich, “Trade Books’ Historical Representation of Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, and Helen Keller,” *Social Studies Research and Practice* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 18-65 and John H. Bickford III and Katherine A. Silva, “Trade Books’ Historical Representation of Anne Sullivan Macy, The Miracle Worker,” *Social Studies Research and Practice* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 56-72).

Appendix E

Common Trade Book Questions

1. What is one thing you learned? Why was this important? (I learned that _____ and this is important because _____.)
2. Make an inference about a person from the book. (I can infer that _____ because the text said _____.)
3. Write down one way that a person changes or learns. (I noticed that _____ changed because the text said _____.)
4. Write down one word or phrase you are unsure about. (I read _____ and I think it means _____.)

Note: Students experienced these text-dependent questions many times prior to this curricular unit. They were not required to answer two, but could select which particular questions to answer. They also experienced similar prompts for answering each question.

Appendix F

History Literacy Questions

1. *Source.* Who is the author? Why is the author writing this? What is the author's main points? What is the author's perspective or point of view?
2. *Context.* When was this created? What do we know about this point in their lives? What other things were happening around the time this was created? Why might this have been created at this time?
3. *Corroboration.* Do you see similar points in other documents or books? Do you see things here that are different than in other documents or books?

Note: To make the concepts within the questions more digestible, the teacher employed words within students' academic vocabularies.

Notes

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