

Taking Action to Overcome Obstacles:

A Hero's Life Story



BIG IDEAS

- › We naturally try to overcome obstacles that get in the way of our goals.
- › Using empathy, we can learn about and root for other people's goals.
- › Using integrity, we can support one another in overcoming obstacles and reaching goals.

Photo Credit: www.anniesullivan.org



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- › Define **goals** and **obstacles**.
- › Identify **actions** taken by one person to help another reach a goal.
- › Examine how actions display **empathy** and **integrity**.



VOCABULARY

Action › Any of a variety of things people do to address social issues and support liberty

Character Strength ›

A trait you have and can develop that helps you put your values into action

Goal › What you want

Obstacle › What blocks you from your goal



CHARACTER CONNECTION

Students examine how actions display **empathy** and **integrity**.

THEME

Heroes of Liberty

GRADE LEVEL

4-8

TIME

45 minutes

MATERIALS

Taking Action to Overcome Obstacles worksheet (attached); *Taking Action to Overcome Obstacles* PowerPoint (attached); pens/pencils; computer, projector, and screen, for PowerPoint and videos;

1930s TV Footage of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan (video), available:

- › On our website, with this lesson plan
- › On YouTube: <http://youtu.be/GzlrQv16gg>
- › On TeacherTube: <http://www.teachertube.com/video/340963>



Directions

1. Use the PowerPoint presentation, *Taking Action to Overcome Obstacles*, to facilitate the lesson.
2. After briefly introducing the Learning Objectives, Big Ideas, Vocabulary, and Character Connection, have students watch the video, *1930s TV Footage of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan*. Ask them to tell you about **any examples they see of someone using empathy or integrity**, based on the definitions from the Character Connection slide.
3. The PowerPoint then leads students through the story of Helen Keller from four points of view: Helen, Anne Sullivan, Tommy Stringer, and the factory workers whose rights Helen campaigned for. For each story, students are asked to identify the main character, their **goal**, their **obstacle**, and the **action** that was taken toward overcoming their obstacle.

Taking Action to Overcome Obstacles cont'd.



ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Common Core Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.

RH.6-8.2 › Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source

PA History

8.1.8.B › Compare and contrast a historical event, using multiple points of view from primary and secondary sources.

NJ Social Studies

6.1.4.A.9 › Compare and contrast responses of individuals and groups, past and present, to violations of fundamental rights.

4. **Story 1:** Helen Keller, as a child, wanted to communicate. However, being blind and deaf made it hard for her to learn language. She overcame this obstacle by learning a special form of sign language from her teacher, Anne Sullivan.
5. **Story 2:** Anne Sullivan wanted her student, Helen Keller, to be able to communicate. However, being blind and deaf made it hard for Helen to learn language. Anne overcame this obstacle by teaching Helen a special form of sign language.
6. **Story 3:** Tommy Stringer, a young boy who was blind and deaf, wanted to go to school. However, no one could afford his tuition at the School for the Blind. Helen Keller learned about his story and was moved. She remembered wanting to learn too. She asked people to donate money and collected enough to send Tommy to school.
7. **Pair-Share:** Students think about why Helen might have wanted to help Tommy.
8. **Character Connection:** Students learn that **empathy** is a **character strength** people use when they look at things from another person's perspective and begin to care about that person's feelings and root for them to reach their goals. Students are asked to think of a time when they were rooting for someone else to reach their goal and to consider why it mattered to them.
9. **Story 4:** People working in factories in the early 1900s wanted to be safe and healthy, just like you do. However, their working conditions were dangerous. Sometimes, they would get injured and sick. Helen Keller, now an adult, learned about their obstacles and wanted to help them be safe. She made speeches to convince people the laws should be changed to protect workers.
10. **Think About It:** Check for understanding by having students think about why Helen would want to help the factory workers. Reinforce definition of empathy, and connect to the idea that Helen had to move from empathizing with the factory workers to taking action for them.
11. **Character Connection:** Students learn that **integrity** is a **character strength** people use when they make their actions match their words by acting according to what they think is important. They review the examples of Helen's actions matching what she thought was important (Tommy going to school, and the factory workers being safe).

Taking Action to Overcome Obstacles cont'd.

NOTES

12. **Pair-Share:** Students think about a quote from Helen Keller, “I cannot do everything, but still I can do something,” and describe how her actions match this statement. The idea is reinforced that when you make your actions match your words, you are using integrity.
13. **Assessment and Wrap-Up:** Have students complete the worksheet, *Taking Action to Overcome Obstacles*, in which they fill in the blanks in several stories with the character strength, goal, or action, that makes sense. Assesses students understanding of the way the character strengths **empathy** and **integrity** motivate specific **actions** that are aligned to reaching specific **goals**. As they finish the worksheet, students should complete an Exit Ticket responding to the prompt: **What is one thing you learned from this lesson today?**



Sources

- > Perkins School for the Blind, Archives: <http://www.perkinsarchives.org/>
- > Helen Keller International: <http://www.hki.org/>
- > “Who’s Helen Keller,” Teaching Tolerance: <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-24-fall-2003/feature/whos-helen-keller>



Helen Keller was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964 for her activism.

Photo Credit: www.nps.gov



Taking Action to Overcome Obstacles

Worksheet

NAME _____

WORD BANK

When you use an answer, cross it out.

empathy

safe working conditions

integrity

communicating

made persuasive speeches

empathy

going to school

taught her sign language

raised money

empathy

Fill in the blanks with answers from the Word Bank:

- Anne Sullivan used _____ (character strength) to help her see things from Helen Keller's point of view, and she began to care about Helen reaching her goal of _____ (goal), so she _____ (action).
- Helen Keller used _____ (character strength) to help her see things from Tommy Stringer's point of view, and she began to care about Tommy reaching his goal of _____ (goal), so she _____ (action).
- Helen Keller used _____ (character trait) to help her see things from factory workers' point of view, and she began to care about them reaching their goal of _____ (goal). Helen's _____ (character strength) motivated her to take action; she thought it was important for people to know and care about the factory workers' situation, so she _____ (action).

