Helen Keller altered our perception of the disabled and remapped the boundaries of sight and sense. Keller was less than two years old when she came down with a fever. It struck dramatically and left her unconscious. The fever went just as suddenly. However, she became blinded and, very soon after, deaf. As a child, she managed to learn to do basic tasks, but she also realized that she was missing something. "Sometimes," she later wrote, "I stood between two persons who were conversing and touched their lips. I could not understand, and was vexed. I moved my lips and gesticulated frantically without result. This made me so angry at times that I kicked and screamed until I was exhausted." She was a wild child, but I can understand her rage since I am a disabled woman, too. I was born two months prematurely and was placed in an incubator. The practice at the time was to pump a large amount of oxygen into the incubator, something doctors have learned to be extremely cautious about since my case. However, as a result, I lost my sight. I was sent to a state school for the blind, but I failed first grade because Braille just didn't make any sense to me. Words were a weird concept. I remember being hit and slapped. You act all that in. All rage is anger that is acted in, bottled in for so long that it just pops out. Helen had it harder. She was both blind and deaf. Yet, oh, the transformation that came over her when she discovered that words were related to things! It's like the lyrics of that song: "On a clear day, rise and look around you, and you'll see who you are." I can say the word "see." I can speak the language of the sighted. That's part of the first great achievement of Helen Keller. She proved how language could liberate the blind and the deaf. She wrote, "Literature is my utopia. Here I am not disenfranchised." She struggled so much to master language. In her book Midstream, she wrote about how she was frustrated by the alphabet, by the language of the deaf, even with the speed with which her teacher spelled things out for her on her palm. She was impatient and hungry for words, and her teacher's scribbling on her hand would never be as fast, she thought, as the people who could read the words with their eyes. I remember how books got me going after I finally grasped Braille. With language, Keller, who communicated in the world of sight and sound, was able to speak to it and live in it.

Learning the language of the sighted may seem miraculous, and that achievement of Keller's belongs to the 19th century. It was also a co-production with her patient and persevering teacher, Anne Sullivan. Helen Keller's greater achievement came after Sullivan, her companion and protector, died in 1936. Keller would live 32 more years and in that time would prove that the disabled can be independent. I hate the word "handicapped." Keller would, too. We are people with inconveniences.

Those people whose only experience of her is The Miracle Worker will be surprised to discover her many dimensions. "My work for the blind," she wrote, "has never occupied a central role in my life. My sympathies are with all who struggle for justice." She was a tireless activist for racial and sexual equality. She had such left-leaning opinions that FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover kept a file on her. Her choices for the most important people of the century were: Thomas Edison, Charlie Chaplin, and Lenin.

Keller's main message was that we have the freedom to be as extraordinary as the sighted. She was our first star. I am very grateful to her.
A. What do the following refer to in the text?

1. It (para. 1) : ________________________________________________
2. that achievement (para. 3): __________________________________________
3. in that time (para. 3) : ____________________________________________

B. Find the words in the text which mean the following. DO NOT change the form of the words, and write ONE WORD ONLY.

1. limits (para.1) : ________________________________________________
2. set free (para. 2) : ______________________________________________
3. writing (para.2) : ________________________________________________

C. Mark the following statements True (T) or False (F).

   T F 1. One thing that really annoyed young Helen was that she was unable to produce sounds.
   T F 2. It can be inferred from the text that the writer was beaten by her teachers as she had difficulty in learning Braille.
   T F 3. According to the author, Helen made a great effort to learn the language of the sighted.
   T F 4. Anne Sullivan didn’t play an important role in Helen’s success.

D. Answer the following questions according to the information in the text. Give SHORT answers where possible. Don’t lift the sentences directly from the text.

   1. Why does the writer believe that Helen’s situation was harder than hers?
      ________________________________________________.

   2. What do you think is the reason for the writer’s using “we” in para.s 3 and 5?
      ________________________________________________.

   3. According to para.4, what is surprising about Helen Keller apart from her contributions to the world of the disabled? Use your own words and provide details.
      ________________________________________________.
      ________________________________________________.
      ________________________________________________.

E. Answer the following question.

   Do you believe that disabled people are treated equally and have the same opportunities as able-bodied people? Explain IN YOUR OWN WORDS in 4-6 sentences, giving reasons.

      ________________________________________________.
      ________________________________________________.
      ________________________________________________.
      ________________________________________________.
      ________________________________________________.
      ________________________________________________.
A.

1. (a/the) fever
2. (the achievement of) learning the language of the sighted
   communicating
   being able to speak
   speaking
   to/in the world of sight and sound
3. in/during (the/those) 32 (more) years

B.
1. boundaries
2. liberate
3. scribbling

C.
1. T    3. T
2. T    4. F

D.
1. (Because unlike the writer,) / (The writer is blind but) Helen was both blind and deaf.
2. She is also disabled as a blind person. She sees herself as a part of the disabled as she is blind.
3. (Because she did many other things and) she fought for the justice for all kinds of discrimination/
   for racial and sexual equality./ She was an activist for leftist causes.

E. Students’ paragraphs may vary.