Read the following memoir and biography about Helen Keller. Use the Study Buddies and the Close Readings to guide your reading.

**Genre:** Memoir

**As I read, I’ll think about how Helen Keller’s memory and emotions influence her writing. I’ll put an asterisk (*) next to text details that only she would know.**

**Close Reading**

Circle words and phrases in the title and first two sentences that tell you who is writing this memoir and what she is describing.

Underline words and phrases in the selection that show Helen Keller’s thoughts and feelings about the event she describes. What do you think she wants the reader to understand?

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**from *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller**

1. My teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything had a name. One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled “d-o-l-l” and tried to make me understand that “d-o-l-l” applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the word “m-u-g.” Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that “m-u-g” is mug and that “w-a-t-e-r” is water, but I persisted in confounding the two.* In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts* and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed.* She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine.*

2. We walked down the path to the well-house. Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!
Lesson 19
L19: Comparing and Contrasting Texts

Part 4: Guided Practice

I wonder why the author wanted to write this biography of Helen Keller. I’m going to look for clues that help me understand her purpose as I read.

Close Reading

What event is described in Helen Keller’s memoir on page 190? Box the information about the same event in this biography.

Underline at least three important facts that the author of this biography includes that are not present in Helen Keller’s memoir. How does the inclusion of these facts help you understand that the author’s purpose for writing is different from Helen’s?

A Remarkable Life
by Mary Wilkes

1 For a year and a half after Helen Keller’s birth on June 27, 1880, she was a healthy, bright child. She started to talk at six months old and walked at one. However, all of that changed when, in February of 1882, she came down with a high fever. Although she survived, her family soon discovered that the illness had left her blind and deaf.

2 Young Helen found ways to cope with her new situation, such as developing a limited system of signs with a playmate. By the time she was seven, though, she had also become wild and undisciplined. Desperate, her family finally contacted the Perkins Institute for the Blind, which recommended a recent graduate, Anne Sullivan, to work with Helen. Of course, most people know the story of how Sullivan helped Helen realize that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the liquid running over her hand. Helen learned thirty new words that first day and went on to quickly master finger signs, touch-lip reading, and Braille reading and typing.

3 Determined to complete college, Helen graduated with high honors from Radcliffe in 1904; she also wrote and published her autobiography, The Story of My Life, in 1903. She wrote ten other books and many articles in her lifetime. Her greatest achievements, however, were her efforts to help others around the country and throughout the world. Many of her visits prompted the creation of new resources for blind and deaf-blind individuals. Because she could relate to people’s difficulties, she worked with leaders to improve their situations. Everywhere she went, she spread a message of strength and courage, a legacy that stands to this day.
Look at your marked-up text. Then use the Hints to help you answer the questions.

1. How does Helen Keller’s purpose for writing her memoir differ from that of the biographer who wrote about her life?
   A. Helen tries to inform people about the facts of her life, but the biographer wants people to know about Helen’s personality.
   B. Helen tries to explain her childhood actions, while the biographer writes to tell people about Helen’s wild childhood.
   C. Helen wants to reflect on her experiences, while the biographer writes to inform people about events in Helen Keller’s life.
   D. Helen wants to entertain people by describing her point of view, but the biographer wants to amaze people with facts.

2. What event appears both in Helen Keller’s memoir and the biography of Helen Keller?
   A. how she lost both her hearing and sight
   B. how she learned that things have names
   C. how she learned to touch-read people’s lips
   D. how she helped the blind all over the world

3. Explain how the two accounts of Helen Keller’s life are different. Think about the event they both describe. What do you learn about it in the memoir? What do you learn from the biography?

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