



# Deaf 1 Out Loud

VIEWING GUIDE

*from Academy Award Winning Actress*

**Marlee Matlin**

*and the producers of*

**Born This Way**



# DEAF OUT LOUD

*Deaf Out Loud* contrasts three predominantly deaf families as they raise their children in a hearing world. Like many people with disabilities, the deaf face social stigmas. For deaf parents, the reaction to this is to prove these people wrong, while doing their best to give their children a wonderful childhood. Surprisingly, there is no one universally accepted way to raise a deaf child; in fact, there is vigorous and passionate disagreement on how deaf children should be raised. Should children embrace being deaf and be exposed to American Sign Language (ASL) as well as deaf role models, or be given the ability to hear and communicate with the hearing world as possible, or a combination of both? *Deaf Out Loud* follows these families as they navigate these challenges and shows how deaf individuals live full and vibrant lives. This special presentation offers an excellent opportunity for students and general audiences to discuss and explore the lives of deaf individuals and their families.

## Curriculum Links:

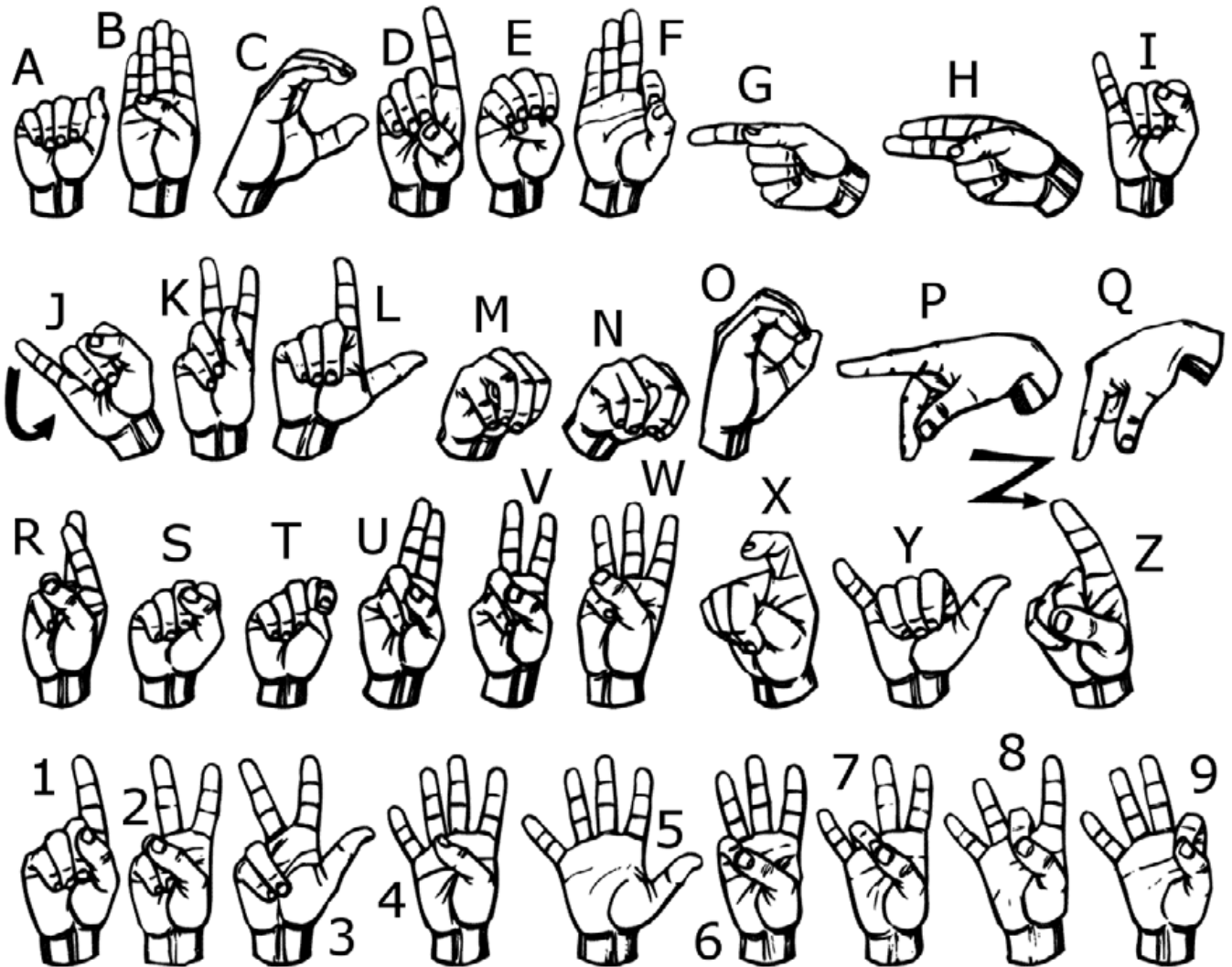
*Deaf Out Loud* would be a great fit for a range of classes including social studies, media, humanities, cultural studies, Deaf studies/ASL programs, and current events. It would also be useful to show or discuss during class, after-school programs and events. This show offers an excellent opportunity for students and general audiences to discuss and explore the lives of those who are deaf and their families. *Deaf Out Loud* is appropriate for upper middle school, high school and college students.

## Pre-Viewing Activities:

- Ask students to define what it means to be deaf.
- Ask students to refer to the ASL Alphabet (below) and become familiar with it.
- Discuss the ways hearing people may have excluded deaf people from mainstream society and what steps we can take to be more understanding and inclusive.

**Note to Teacher:** On using "Deaf" and "deaf" : According to Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, in *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (1988): We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language – American Sign Language (ASL) – and a culture.

# American Sign Language Alphabet



# Discussion Questions:

The questions below can be used in small or large group settings, or can be answered in essay format for further exploration.

- Each of the families featured in *Deaf Out Loud* is unique and has unique experiences. What are some of the challenges they face, and how do they approach them?
- What is one of the biggest concerns that parents in this show have for their deaf children?
- Many families have a combination of hearing children and deaf children and parents. How do these families communicate with each other?
- What surprised you the most about the experiences of the families on the show?
- What role does community play for deaf people? Do you think it's more important in the deaf world than in the hearing world?
- Now that you know more about the Deaf community, what could you do at school or at home to be more inclusive?
- What is the debate about cochlear implants? Is this something you have heard before?
- What are some of the similarities/differences between the families portrayed? How does this compare with your previous perceptions of deaf families?
- What is a CODA? Is this a term you've ever heard before watching this show? What unique challenges do you think CODAs face in assimilating with the hearing world?
- Have you ever participated in a hearing test? What did you think?
- What do you feel is the most important takeaway from this show?
- Have you met a Deaf person before? What was the experience like?

# COMMUNICATION WITH SOMEONE WHO IS DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Information provided by RespectAbility:

[www.respectability.org/inclusion-toolkits/deaf-hard-of-hearing](http://www.respectability.org/inclusion-toolkits/deaf-hard-of-hearing)

To get the person's attention, touch the person lightly, wave your hand or use some other physical sign. If an interpreter is being used, speak directly to the person who is deaf rather than to the interpreter. If the person is lip-reading, look directly at the person, speak slowly and clearly, but do not exaggerate your lip movements and especially do not shout. Speak expressively because the person will use your facial expressions, gestures and body movements to help understand what you are saying. Keep your hands and any other objects away from your mouth when speaking. If you are still having trouble communicating, feel free to use written notes or text.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons often have different preferences as to mode of communications. Some may wish to communicate via e-mail and/or text/SMS. Social media also has become a popular means of informal communication. Others may wish to communicate through a "relay interpreter," often referred to as a "relay operator" or "communications assistant." It is important to ask the individual what their preferred mode of communication is.

In early years, people who are deaf and hard of hearing would communicate through telecommunications devices known as TTYs or TDDs, either between two users of such devices or between a user and a relay operator. Although there remain numerous references to such devices in many contemporary resource guides, it is important to note that they are generally no longer in widespread use.

Today, the majority if not all telephone communications take place through a video based relay service ("Video Relay Service" or "VRS") or a text-based relay ("Text Relay") services. These services differ only with the respect to the user experience of the deaf/hard of hearing caller. The user experience of the hearing caller will remain the same as with any telephone call. The relay call will be conducted by the Video Relay Operator (video-based) or Communications Assistant (CA).

If you are unfamiliar with using Relay, ask the operator how Relay works. For Video Relay Service calls, you place the call as you would normally place a voice call. An operator will then answer and inform you that your call is being connected. Once the operator lets you know your call is connected, you can speak directly to the person you are calling and not the operator; the operator will interpret everything you say to the person you are calling and in turn, will speak everything the deaf/hard of hearing caller is saying to you.

When using Text Relay, you can begin speaking when the CA says "Go ahead," which means it is your turn to respond. Because Text Relay can take a little longer than Video Relay, speak slowly and expect a slight delay in the response. As in Video Relay, speak directly to the deaf/hard of hearing caller and not the CA.

# COMMUNICATING IN ASL



American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual language. With signing, the brain processes linguistic information through the eyes. The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements, all play important parts in conveying information.

American Sign language is not a universal language — each country has its own sign language, and regions have dialects, much like the many languages spoken all over the world. Like any spoken language, ASL is a language with its own unique rules of grammar and syntax. Like all languages, ASL is a living language that grows and changes over time.

ASL is used predominantly in the United States and in many parts of Canada. If you'd like to learn more, you can [watch this video](#). The video will teach you basic signs. There are also additional resources to learn ASL, fitted for a variety of audiences:

[Marlee Signs](#): An iOS based App for learning the basics of ASL taught by Deaf actress, Marlee Matlin.

[ASL Nook](#): A online hub of videos of a Deaf family teaching ASL based around topics such as daily routines, sports, and feelings to name a few.

[Life Print](#): A resource site for ASL students and teachers to learn as well as improve your signing.

[The ASL App](#): It is all about teaching you conversational ASL. Packed with 1500+ signs and phrases, easy navigation and features, and with different signers.

## DEAF COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Information provided by National Association of the Deaf: <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>

Note: Students can read the information below and then discuss this material in a small group or large group discussion.

**What is the difference between a person who is "deaf", "Deaf", or "hard of hearing"?**

The deaf and hard of hearing community is diverse. There are variations in how a person becomes deaf or hard of hearing, level of hearing, age of onset, educational background, communication methods, and cultural identity. How people "label" or identify themselves is personal and may reflect identification with the deaf and hard of hearing community, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset. For example, some people identify themselves as "late-deafened," indicating that they became deaf later in life. Other people identify themselves as "deaf-blind," which usually indicates that they are deaf or hard of hearing and also have some degree of vision loss. Some people believe that the term "people with hearing loss" is inclusive and efficient. However, some people who were born deaf or hard of hearing do not think of themselves as having lost their hearing. Over the years, the most commonly accepted terms have come to be "deaf," "Deaf," and "hard of hearing."

### "Deaf" and "deaf"

According to Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, in *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (1988): We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language – American Sign Language (ASL) – and a culture. The members of this group have inherited their sign language, use it as a primary means of communication among themselves, and hold a set of beliefs about themselves and their connection to the larger society. We distinguish them from, for example, those who find themselves losing their hearing because of illness, trauma or age; although these



people share the condition of not hearing, they do not have access to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that make up the culture of Deaf people.

Padden and Humphries comment, “this knowledge of Deaf people is not simply a camaraderie with others who have a similar physical condition, but is, like many other cultures in the traditional sense of the term, historically created and actively transmitted across generations.” The authors also add that Deaf people “have found ways to define and express themselves through their rituals, tales, performances, and everyday social encounters. The richness of their sign language affords them the possibilities of insight, invention, and irony.” The relationship Deaf people have with their sign

language is a strong one, and “the mistaken belief that ASL is a set of simple gestures with no internal structure has led to the tragic misconception that the relationship of Deaf people to their sign language is a casual one that can be easily severed and replaced.” (Padden & Humphries)

### **“Hard of Hearing”**

“Hard-of-hearing” can denote a person with a mild-to-moderate hearing loss. Or it can denote a deaf person who doesn’t have/want any cultural affiliation with the Deaf community. Or both. The HOH dilemma: in some ways hearing, in some ways deaf, in others, neither.

Can one be hard-of-hearing and ASL-Deaf? That’s possible, too. Can one be hard-of-hearing and function as hearing? Of course. What about being hard-of-hearing and functioning as a member of both the hearing and Deaf communities? That’s a delicate tightrope-balancing act, but it too is possible.

As for the political dimension: HOH people can be allies of the Deaf community. They can choose to join or to ignore it. They can participate in the social, cultural, political, and legal life of the community along with culturally-Deaf or live their lives completely within the parameters of the “Hearing world.” But they may have a more difficult time establishing a satisfying cultural/social identity.

Deaf Life, “For Hearing People Only” (October 1997).

Individuals can choose an audiological or cultural perspective. It’s all about choices, comfort level, mode of communication, and acceptance. Whatever the decision, the NAD welcomes all Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and deaf-blind Americans, and the advocacy work that the NAD does is available to and intended to benefit everyone.

### **What is wrong with the use of these terms “deaf-mute,” “deaf and dumb,” or “hearing-impaired”?**

Deaf and hard of hearing people have the right to choose what they wish to be called, either as a group or on an individual basis. Overwhelmingly, deaf and hard of hearing people prefer to be called “deaf” or “hard of hearing.” Nearly all organizations of the deaf use the term “deaf and hard of hearing,” and the NAD is no exception.

Yet there are many people who persist in using terms other than “deaf” and “hard of hearing.” The alternative terms are often seen in print, heard on radio and television, and picked up in casual conversations all over. Let’s take a look at the three most-used alternative terms.

**Deaf and Dumb** — A relic from the medieval English era, this is the granddaddy of all negative labels pinned on deaf and hard of hearing people. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, pronounced us “deaf and dumb,” because he felt that deaf people were incapable of being taught, of learning, and of reasoned thinking. To his way of thinking, if a person could not use his/her voice in the same way as hearing people, then there was no way that this person could develop cognitive abilities. (Source: Deaf Heritage, by Jack Gannon, 1980)

In later years, “dumb” came to mean “silent.” This definition still persists, because that is how people see deaf people. The term is offensive to deaf and hard of hearing people for a number of reasons. One, deaf and hard of hearing people are by no means “silent” at all. They use sign language, lip-reading, vocalizations, and so on to communicate. Communication is not reserved for hearing people alone, and using one’s voice is not the only way to communicate. Two, “dumb” also has a second meaning: stupid. Deaf and hard of hearing people have encountered plenty of people who subscribe to the philosophy that if you cannot use your voice well, you don’t have much else “upstairs,” and have nothing going for you. Obviously, this is incorrect, ill-informed, and false. Deaf and hard of hearing people have repeatedly proved that they have much to contribute to the society at large.

**Deaf-Mute** – Another offensive term from the 18th-19th century, “mute” also means silent and without voice. This label is technically inaccurate, since deaf and hard of hearing people generally have functioning vocal chords. The challenge lies with the fact that to successfully modulate your voice, you generally need to be able to hear your own voice. Again, because deaf and hard of hearing people use various methods of communication other than or in addition to using their voices, they are not truly mute. True communication occurs when one’s message is understood by others, and they can respond in kind.

**Hearing-impaired** – This term is no longer accepted by most in the community but was at one time preferred, largely because it was viewed as politically correct. To declare oneself or another person as deaf or blind, for example, was considered somewhat bold, rude, or impolite. At that time, it was thought better to use the word “impaired” along with “visually,” “hearing,” “mobility,” and so on. “Hearing-impaired” was a well-meaning term that is no longer accepted or used by many deaf and hard of hearing people.

## THE TAKE AWAY

For many people, the words “deaf” and “hard of hearing” are not negative. Instead, the term “hearing-impaired” is viewed as negative. The term focuses on what people can’t do. It establishes the standard as “hearing” and anything different as “impaired,” or substandard, hindered, or damaged. It implies that something is not as it should be and ought to be fixed if possible. To be fair, this is probably not what people intended to convey by the term “hearing impaired.”

Every individual is unique, but there is one thing we all have in common: we all want to be treated with respect. To the best of our own unique abilities, we have families, friends, communities, and lives that are just as fulfilling as anyone else. We may be different, but we are not less.

What’s in a name? Plenty! Words and labels can have a profound effect on people. Show your respect for people by refusing to use outdated or offensive terms. When in doubt, ask the individual how they identify themselves.

Source: <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>



# Causes of Hearing Loss & Deafness

The causes of hearing loss and deafness can be congenital or acquired.

## Acquired causes

Acquired causes may lead to hearing loss at any age, such as:

- infectious diseases including meningitis, measles and mumps;
- chronic ear infections;
- collection of fluid in the ear (otitis media);
- use of certain medicines, such as those used in the treatment of neonatal infections, malaria, drug-resistant tuberculosis, and cancers;
- injury to the head or ear;
- excessive noise, including occupational noise such as that from machinery and explosions;
- recreational exposure to loud sounds such as that from use of personal audio devices at high volumes and for prolonged periods of time and regular attendance at concerts, nightclubs, bars and sporting events;
- ageing, in particular due to degeneration of sensory cells; and
- wax or foreign bodies blocking the ear canal.

Among children, chronic otitis media is a common cause of hearing loss.



# Deaf Community by the Numbers



WORLDWIDE  
**466**  
MILLION  
HAVE HEARING LOSS



**34M**  
OF WHICH  
ARE CHILDREN



**BY 2050**

It's estimated that  
**900M People**  
will have disabling hearing loss

Hearing loss may result from genetic causes, complications at birth, certain infectious diseases, chronic ear infections, the use of particular drugs, exposure to excessive noise, and ageing.

**60%**

of childhood hearing loss is  
due to preventable causes.

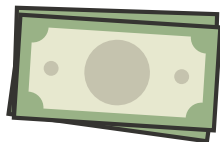
**ASL**

is the **third** most used  
language in the U.S.



**1.1BILLION**

young people (aged between 12–35 years) are at  
**risk of hearing loss** due to exposure to noise in  
recreational settings.



Unaddressed hearing loss  
poses an annual global cost of  
**US \$750 Billion**

Interventions to prevent, identify and address  
hearing loss are cost-effective and can bring  
great benefit to individuals.

People with hearing loss benefit from early  
identification; use of hearing aids, cochlear  
implants and other assistive devices; captioning  
and sign language; and other forms of educational  
and social support.

# Activities

Source: <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss>

- Have students get together in small groups to discuss cochlear implants. Ask them to make a visual presentation that outlines the pros and cons of cochlear implants. Then, ask the class to engage in a discussion about how they'd handle deciding whether or not to get a cochlear implant either for themselves or their child. Additional research will be required.
- Group students into groups of two and ask them to take opposing viewpoints on attending a hearing school or a deaf school as a deaf child. Ask them to discuss the pros and cons of each option. Be sure to emphasize that neither viewpoint is correct and that it all depends on the individual's preference.
- Using the ASL alphabet, ask students to write a short essay (100-150 words) and practice signing it in ASL. Students can write on any topic they would like, the key takeaway is practicing



# Recommended Reading

## **Deaf Culture: Exploring Deaf Communities in the United States** (Plural Publishing)

by Irene W. Leigh, Jean F. Andrews and Raychelle Harris.

How does Deaf culture fit into education, psychology, cultural studies, technology and the arts? Deaf Culture: Exploring Deaf Communities in the United States addresses this through both theoretical and practical information. With the recognition of American Sign Language (ASL) as a bona fide language, the perception of Deaf people has evolved into the recognition of a vibrant Deaf culture centered around the use of signed languages and the communities of Deaf people.

## **A Journey into the Deaf-World** (DawnSignPress)

by Harlan Lane, Robert Hoffmeister, and Ben Bahan.

Three distinguished scholars of Deaf culture—one hearing, one deaf, and one coda (child of deaf adults)—offer clear, penetrating insights into the existence and makeup of the deaf world, the community whose natural language—American Sign Language in the United States—is manual and visual. Bringing the latest social and cultural findings and theories into sharp focus, the authors take us on a fascinating journey to discover what deaf culture is; the benefits of signed language and deaf culture for deaf children and hearing people; how deaf children are now educated and how they could be; how deaf people integrate into the larger society; the nature of American Sign Language; how technology helps (and hurts) deaf people; what can be learned from deaf societies in other lands; the future of the deaf world.

## **Finding Zoe: A Deaf Woman's Story of Identity, Love, and Adoption** (Benbella Books, Inc.)

by Brandi Rarus and Gail Harris.

At just a few months old, Zoe was gradually losing her hearing. Her adoptive parents loved her – yet agonized – feeling they couldn't handle raising a Deaf child. Would Zoe go back into the welfare system and spend her childhood hoping to find parents willing to adopt her? Or, would she be the long-sought answer to her mother's prayers?

## **Seeing Voices** (Vintage)

by Oliver Sacks.

This is a fascinating voyage into a strange and wonderful land, a provocative meditation on communication, biology, adaptation, and culture. In Seeing Voices, Oliver Sacks turns his attention to the subject of deafness, and the result is a deeply felt portrait of a minority struggling for recognition and respect--a minority with its own rich, sometimes astonishing, culture and unique visual language, an extraordinary mode of communication that tells us much about the basis of language in hearing people as well.

# Recommended Reading

**Deaf Like Me** (Gallaudet University Press)

by Thomas S. Spradley and James P. Spradley.

Deaf Like Me is the moving account of parents coming to terms with their baby girl's profound deafness. The love, hope, and anxieties of all hearing parents of deaf children are expressed here with power and simplicity.



# Recommended Organizations for Additional Information

[National Association of the Deaf - NAD](#)

[Gallaudet University](#)

[RespectAbility](#)

[American Society for Deaf Children \(ASDC\)](#)

[Association of Late-Deafened Adults, Inc. \(ALDA\)](#)

[Communication Service for the Deaf \(CSD\)](#)

[Hearing Loss Association of America \(HLAA\)](#)

