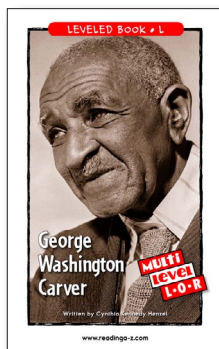


## Lesson Plan

## George Washington Carver



### About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Biography Page Count: 20 Word Count: 1,100

### Book Summary

*George Washington Carver* is a biographical text that chronicles the accomplishments of an African-American scientist. Born into slavery but set free after the Civil War, Carver struggled to get an education during a time of segregated schools. He eventually became a professor of agriculture and inventor who dedicated his life to helping farmers, and became famous in the process. He won the respect of a nation at a time when African Americans faced widespread discrimination. Book and lesson also available at Levels L and O.

### About the Lesson

#### Targeted Reading Strategy

- Retell

#### Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of retelling to understand and remember a timeline of events
- Identify elements of a biography
- Recognize proper nouns: names of people
- Identify and create compound words

#### Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website.

- Book—*George Washington Carver* (copy for each student)
- Extra copy of the book
- Dictionaries
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Sticky notes and a highlighter for each student
- Index cards
- Retell, proper nouns: names of people, compound words worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

#### Vocabulary

\*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on [VocabularyA-Z.com](http://VocabularyA-Z.com).

- Content words:  
 Story critical: *agriculture* (n.), *fertilizer* (n.), *inventor* (n.), *professor* (n.), *segregated* (adj.), *sharecroppers* (n.)  
 Enrichment: *Civil War* (n.), *Congress* (n.), *nutrient* (n.)

### Before Reading

#### Build Background

- Ask students if they have heard of a man named George Washington Carver. Explain that he was a famous African American scholar who lived during a time when most black people weren't able to attend college.

## Lesson Plan *(continued)*

## George Washington Carver

- Ask students to tell what they know about the Civil War and how it affected black families in the southern United States. Explain that this book gives information about this part of U.S. history as it pertains to George Washington Carver's life.

### Preview the Book

#### Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, fiction or nonfiction, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name).
- Preview the table of contents on page 3. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of the book. Ask students what they expect to read about in the book on the basis of what they see in the table of contents. (Accept all answers that students can justify.)

#### Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Elements of a biography**

- Ask students to explain the difference between a biography and an autobiography (biography: the story of a person's life written by someone else; autobiography: the story of a person's life written by that person). Explain that this book is a *biography*. A biography includes information about the person's *personality*, *accomplishments*, and *influence* on the world.
- Write the words *Personality*, *Accomplishments*, and *Influence* in a three-column chart on the board. Ask students to explain the meaning of each of these words (*personality*: the qualities that make each person unique; *accomplishments*: success achieved through practice or training; *influence*: an effect on someone or something).



Have students turn to page 4. Read pages 4 through 7 aloud while they follow along silently. Ask students to identify which element of a biography this information best reflects (personality). Invite them to identify the information about George Washington Carver's personality. (Born into slavery, orphaned, and often sick, George still learned to read, write, and sew. He liked gardening and exploring nature best. He was shocked to see the eroded land. He had given up a good job to help struggling farmers.) Have students highlight 1896, 1861–1865, 1864, and 1865 for their timeline. Point out that in this book, the author flashes forward to 1896 before starting to tell about Carver's life from birth on page 6.

- **Think-aloud:** *I read that George Washington Carver was born into slavery and then freed after the Civil War. He and his brother, who were orphans, lived with Moses and Susan—the couple who had owned them. Often sick, George stayed at home to help Susan. She taught him to read, write, and sew—but what George liked best was to garden and explore nature. I also read that as an adult, George traveled to Alabama as a professor who gave up a good teaching job to help struggling farmers.*
- Ask students to find, on the basis of the information about George so far, words to describe what his personality might be like (*hardworking*, *adventurous*, *caring*, and so on).

#### Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Retell**

- Explain to students that one way to understand and remember what they are reading is to stop now and then during reading to retell in their mind what is happening in the story.
- Explain to students that when someone retells something, he or she explains the details of what happened in order. Point out that people retell stories as part of their daily lives, such as explaining what happened in school to a student who was absent. Ask students to share other examples of when people might give a retelling.
- Model retelling a nonfiction example in detail, such as your own life timeline.

**Think-aloud:** *I was born in Montana in 1972 and then moved with my family to Alaska in 1975. When I was ready to start kindergarten in 1977, my family moved back to Montana, where I was a student through college graduation in 1996. I then moved to Washington State. Today, I still live in Washington with my husband and two children.*

## Lesson Plan *(continued)*

## George Washington Carver

- Draw a timeline on the board and model how to complete a timeline with dates and details. Have students retell the details they remember as you fill in the timeline.
- Explain that in this book, the author shares nonfiction details about the life events of George Washington Carver. Point out that dates are often included when nonfiction details are given in a biography and that a timeline is a good way to record the details.



Give each student a highlighter and six sticky notes. Have students place sticky notes on the bottom of pages 5, 10, 13, 15, 17, and 19. Explain that as they read, they should stop on these pages to think about the information about Carver's life. Instruct students that when they stop to think about the important information, they should highlight the dates on these pages. Encourage them to retell in their mind the events in the book as they read.

### Introduce the Vocabulary

- Write the following story-critical words from the content vocabulary on the board: *agriculture*, *inventor*, and *professor*.
- Point out that these three words can be found in the text and that knowing what they mean will help students understand what's happening as they read the book. Give groups of students three pieces of blank paper and have them write one of the three vocabulary words on each page. For each word, have them write or draw what they know about the word. Create a definition for each word using students' prior knowledge.
- Point out the glossary at the back of the book. Review or explain that a glossary and a dictionary contain lists of words and their definitions.
- Model how students can use a dictionary to find a word's meaning. Have them locate the word *agriculture* in the dictionary. Invite a volunteer to read the definition for *agriculture*. Have students compare the dictionary definition with the glossary definition, pointing out the similarities and differences (glossaries only contain definitions for vocabulary words in that particular story, dictionaries contain longer and sometimes multiple definitions, and so on). Have them compare these with their prior knowledge of the word.
- Have students follow along on page 10 as you read the sentence in which the word *agriculture* is found to confirm the meaning of the word. Repeat the exercise with the remaining vocabulary words.

### Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out about George Washington Carver. Remind them to stop reading at the end of each page with a sticky note to quickly retell in their mind the details of the events so far in Carver's life, including the important dates. Remind them to highlight the dates and time-order words that identify specific events in Carver's life.

## During Reading


### Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read from page 6 to the end of page 10 after rereading pages 6 and 7. Encourage students who finish before everyone else to go back and reread.
- Model retelling the events of Carver's life using the photographs, illustrations, and maps as a guide. **Think-aloud:** *I stopped after a few pages to retell in my mind what I had read so far. George Washington Carver was born in Missouri as a slave in 1864, during the Civil War. When the war ended, he and his older brother were freed, but they were orphans. The couple who had owned them gave them a home and taught George how to read, write, and sew. What George liked best was to garden and explore nature. He wanted to go to school, but many schools at that time were segregated and did not allow black students, so he left home to attend school elsewhere when he was twelve. When he graduated from high school, he earned a scholarship to go to a Kansas college but was turned away because he was black. He attended a college in Iowa instead and studied agriculture. He was the school's first black graduate and later became the school's first black professor.*


## Lesson Plan *(continued)*


## George Washington Carver


- Remind students that a retelling includes detail and description about the events of a story using a sequence of the most important events that someone would need to know to recount that person's history correctly. Remind students that in this book, the author began by writing about an event that occurred later in Carver's life and then wrote about his early life beginning on page 6.

 Point out that sometimes, although a date is not directly given, clues may be found in the text that contain information for a timeline of someone's life. Explain how to find a date for when George left Missouri (he was 12 years old, so his year of birth—1864—plus 12 years is 1876). Have students write this date in the margin of page 8.

- Ask students to explain elements of Carver's personality, accomplishments, and influence using the information in the reading so far (*personality*: adventurous, hardworking, resilient, intelligent, determined; *accomplishments*: left home to attend a nonsegregated school, was his college's first black graduate, became the school's first black professor; *influence*: pushed the boundaries of racial discrimination by continuing to work for his education despite adversity). Add this information to the chart on the board.
- Discuss how Carver's personality might have influenced his accomplishments. Facilitate the discussion with questions such as: *How would you describe Carver's personality? What characteristics of his personality might have influenced him to be such a successful academic?*
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read pages 11 and 12. Cut out pages 11 and 12 from an extra copy of the book and place them next to the pages from the beginning of the story in the pocket chart or along the chalkboard ledge. Ask students to work with a partner, using the images and dates on the pages as a guide, to retell the details of events after Carver graduated from college. Listen to students' retellings for correct order and description of the story events.

 Have students turn to a partner to discuss information from the section that reflects Carver's personality, influence, and accomplishments. Have them write this information in the margin of their book. Invite students to share this information aloud.

 Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to think about the order of events in Carver's life and to stop wherever they see a sticky note to highlight and retell in their mind what they have read so far about his life. Encourage them to continue to highlight the dates that give more detail to the timeline of Carver's accomplishments.

 Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

### After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

### Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Retell in detail the events of the story from pages 11 through 13, tying in the content on pages 4 and 5. (Point out that some of the points in this retelling will overlap; however, connecting the beginning of the book with the same dates in the middle of the book is important.)
- **Think-aloud:** *After becoming a professor, Carver went to Alabama in 1896 to help farmers with a big problem. He had given up a good job teaching at an Iowa college to help the struggling farmers. He figured out that years of cotton farming had worn out the soil, leaving it eroded and cracked. He taught the farmers how to fertilize the soil and how to rotate crops by planting sweet potatoes, peas, or peanuts in the fields after the cotton was picked in order to put important nutrients like nitrogen back in the soil. He became an inventor to help farmers sell their new crops. He invented more than a hundred ways to use sweet potatoes and three hundred ways to use peanuts! This helped the very poor farmers spend less money buying food*

## Lesson Plan *(continued)*


## George Washington Carver

*from stores since they were eating what they grew. Contrary to popular belief, he did not create peanut butter, but he did invent these uses for the peanut: pavement, grease, medicines, peanut coffee, peanut mayonnaise, peanut flour, peanut milk, shoe polish, bleach, sandpaper, and more.*

- **Check for understanding:** Have students work with a partner to retell the events of pages 14 through 17. Listen for whether students include the correct events and details of Carver's life in the order in which they happened.
- Ask students how retelling the events of the story in their mind as they read helped them understand the story.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [retell worksheet](#), working to accurately retell the events of George Washington Carver's life. Remind them to accurately identify events on the timeline according to the date and to use context clues to calculate dates when possible. When students are finished, discuss their answers aloud.

### Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Invite students to share information they learned about the rest of George Washington Carver's accomplishments (successfully taught farmers how to rotate crops and fertilize, adding valuable nutrients to the soil; invented hundreds of uses for sweet potatoes and peanuts; spoke in front of U.S. Congress, convincing them to pass a law to help U.S. peanut farmers; became famous and talked to large crowds; won the respect of the nation as a black scholar at a time when few black people were respected; successfully shared his belief that people should respect the Earth because nature would in turn provide the things people needed).
- Ask students to explain how these accomplishments have influenced others (they model the importance of challenging oneself and being persistent with one's goals, they model the importance of working with others in order to achieve success, and so on).

 **Independent practice:** Have students use the inside front cover of their book to create a three-column chart with the headings *Personality*, *Accomplishments*, and *Influence*. Have them reread pages 18 and 19, and write information that describes each of the elements of a biography on the chart in their book. When students have finished working, discuss their answers.

- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned about a very successful man and his ambitious, dedicated nature. Now that you know this information, what qualities do you think can help you achieve your own goals throughout your lifetime?

## Build Skills


### Grammar and Mechanics: **Proper nouns: names of people**

- Review or explain that a *noun* is a *person, place, or thing*. Ask students to turn to page 5 and give examples of nouns from the text (*slave, brother, boys*, and so on).
- Review or explain that a *proper noun* is the name of a specific person, place, or thing. A proper noun always begins with a capital letter. Tell students that, in this lesson, they will focus on the names of people. Write examples of the proper nouns/names of people from page 6 on the board (*George, Moses and Susan Carver*).
- Remind students not to confuse a proper noun with the capital letter used at the beginning of a sentence or the title of a chapter. Point out instances in the book where capitals are used but a proper noun is not present.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following nouns in a column on the board: *boy, brother, woman, man*. Ask volunteers to give examples of proper nouns or names of people for each, and write them on the board to the right of each common noun (*boy: John, Dylan*, and so on).
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [proper nouns: names of people worksheet](#). When they have finished, discuss their answers aloud.



**Word Work: Compound words**

- Write the word *sandpaper* on the board. Ask students which two words were joined together in the word *sandpaper* (*sand* and *paper*). Explain that this word is called a *compound word*. A compound word contains two words that together create one word meaning. Explain that the definitions of the two separate words can help students figure out the meaning of the bigger word (*paper* made with or feeling like *sand*).
- Write the following sentence on the board: *George taught himself about plants and animals*. Have students read the sentence and identify the compound word (*himself*). Ask them which two words are joined together in the word *himself* (*him* and *self*). Ask a volunteer to share how the definitions of the two separate words can be used to figure out the meaning of the larger word.

 **Check for understanding:** Have students read page 17 in their book. Have them identify and underline the compound words on the page (*sharecroppers* and *landowner*). Ask students to circle the two words contained in the compound word. Have them use these words to discuss the meaning of the larger word with a partner. Then discuss the meaning of the word with students as a group.

- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [compound words worksheet](#). When they have finished, discuss their answers aloud.

**Build Fluency**
**Independent Reading**

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

**Home Connection**

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have them retell the events of their day with someone at home.

**Extend the Reading**
**Biography Writing Connection**

Have students look at the photograph on page 15. Ask who is pictured. Provide print and Internet resources for students to research the life of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Remind them to search specifically for information about his *personality*, *accomplishments*, and *influence* on the world. Have them take notes on a timeline, highlighting the major events in his life. Model how students can then create a report using the timeline as a reference, and assign them the task. Require a final draft of the report and display their finished work.

Visit [WritingA-Z.com](http://WritingA-Z.com) for a lesson and leveled materials on biography writing.

**Social Studies Connection**

Have students use the Internet to research school segregation in the United States. Have them take notes on index cards, looking for information such as: *Which states had segregated schools? What laws were in effect to make segregation legal in the United States? What was the motivation behind segregated schools? When were black and white students allowed to attend the same schools, and what happened that caused this to change? How did school segregation affect racial relations in the United States?* Allow time for students to discuss their findings aloud, bringing their index card notes to a roundtable discussion. Encourage them to share their opinions about what they learned.

**Skill Review**

[Discussion cards](#) covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

## George Washington Carver

- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

**Assessment****Monitor students to determine if they can:**

- accurately and consistently demonstrate retelling the facts in the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- accurately identify elements of a biography during discussion and on a separate piece of paper
- identify proper nouns that are the names of people during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify and form compound words during discussion and on a worksheet

**Comprehension Checks**

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)