



THE LITTLE PLANT DOCTOR A STORY ABOUT GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

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GRADES
PRE–3

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About the Book

This bright, bold picture book introduces children to a great scientist and encourages them to cultivate a sense of wonder and a desire to explore.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Literature/Language Arts

Point of View—The author has chosen to have Dr. George Washington Carver’s story told by a very old tree. Discuss with students why they think the author made this choice. Ask students to imagine an object in their own life that might tell a story about them. What would the story be?

For a creative writing activity, ask students to write and edit their stories, then share their stories with the class. They can also add illustrations. The stories can be combined into a class book and shared with other classes.

Answering Questions—In the back matter of the book, the author presents several questions and answers related to Dr. Carver’s life. After reading the book aloud to the class, ask students for their own answers to these questions, and, depending upon the grade level, the actual answers can be revealed to them afterward.

Character Traits—When George was a young boy, and throughout his life, he exhibited many character traits that led to his success as a scientist. Among them were curiosity, observing things carefully, kindness, generosity, humility, persistence, and love of learning and teaching. Students can discuss how each of these traits helped

George, and how these traits can be helpful to them in their own lives. This can also be used as a writing activity.

History

Recognition Day—Share this information with students: During the 79th Congress, Public Law 290 was passed to designate January 5 of each year George Washington Carver Recognition Day. In signing this Joint Resolution on December 28, 1945, President Harry S. Truman said, “I do hereby call upon officials of the Government to have the flag at half staff on all government buildings on January 5, 1946, in commemoration of the achievements of George Washington Carver.” Since the exact date of Dr. Carver’s birth is not known, the date of his death, January 5 (1943) was selected for his day of recognition.

Science/Art

Parts of Plants—The endpapers of the book show the parts of a peanut and a sweet potato plant. Students can search for various types of plants in their neighborhoods and can bring examples to school, where they can then draw similar charts showing the plant parts.

Planting Flowers—In the story, George, as a young boy, planted wildflowers around his tree and then observed them and decided what they needed in order to grow. Perhaps students could plant wildflowers in a window box and observe their growth. They could chart the growth by measuring the plants periodically and drawing them at various stages of development.

Class Cookbook—Dr. Carver found numerous uses for peanuts and sweet potatoes. Students can inquire from their families if there are any family recipes using these two ingredients. They can bring the recipes, which can be illustrated and combined into a class recipe book honoring Dr. Carver. The recipe books can be reproduced and presented to the students' families.

Geography

Using Maps—The book mentions places where Dr. Carver lived, studied, and worked: Diamond, Missouri; Neosho, Missouri; Tuskegee, Alabama; Indianola, Iowa (Simpson College); Ames, Iowa (Iowa Agricultural College). Students can use an atlas or a U.S. wall map to locate these places, and they can use the map scale to compute how far George traveled to get his education.

Online Resources

www.google.com/images?um=1&hl=en&biw=1048&bih=606&tbs=isch%3A1&sa=1&q=%22George+Washington+Carver%22&btnG=Search

Presents many photos of Dr. Carver at various phases of his career.

www.nps.gov/gwca/index.htm

Presents information on the George Washington Carver National Monument, which is operated by the National Park Service. Includes curriculum ideas for teachers, pages for students, and photos and multimedia sections.

www.parentsconnect.com/recipes/Peanut_Butter_Cookie_Cups.jhtml

Presents a “kid-friendly” recipe for peanut butter cookies.

About the Author and Illustrator

Jean Marzollo has written more than 130 books for children, including the award-winning I Spy series. Her website is www.jeanmarzollo.com.

Ken Wilson-Max has illustrated more than fifty books for children. Visit him online at <http://web.mac.com/kenwilsonmax>.

Crop Information—Dr. Carver did a major part of his work with peanuts and sweet potatoes. Students can search for information on where in the United States these crops are grown today. What type of weather do they need? What type of soil? How are they harvested?

Research

Biographical Research—Students can use an encyclopedia and other print and electronic resources in the school or public library to find out more about Dr. Carver's life. What specific uses did he find for peanuts and sweet potatoes? What work is he most noted for? After finding information, students can list the various uses for these two crops.

African American Scientists—Students can search for information on many other notable African American scientists. Some suggestions are: Guion S. “Guy” Bluford, Dr. Benjamin Carson, Dr. Charles Drew, Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, Dr. Mae Jemison, Louis Howard Latimer, Norbert Rillieux, Madame C. J. Walker, and Dr. Daniel Hale Williams.

*Classroom activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett,
school library consultant.*

