



George Washington Carver National Monument

Grade 4, Lesson 1: *The People in George Washington Carver’s Life –
Biography Cards*

Instructional Time: **Two 30-minute segments**

Preview

In this lesson, students will view a video of the life of George Washington Carver. Then they will learn about some of the people who helped him achieve his goals.

Objectives

Students will:

- List at least three individuals who helped Carver achieve his goals.
- Compare and contrast the ways various individuals provided support to Carver.

Standards

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2-4

Missouri Standards

IL.2.A.

TS.7.B.4.a.

MH.2.A.4.f.

MH.2.A.4.a.



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Materials You Will Need to Teach This Lesson

- The video *George Washington Carver: A Man of Character* (length 12:14) or *Struggle and Triumph: The Legacy of George Washington Carver* (length 28:14). (Found in the “Resources” folder for this lesson.)
- One copy of each of the biography cards: Moses Carver, Susan Carver, Stephen Frost, Andrew Watkins, Mariah Watkins, Etta Budd, Booker T. Washington, Dr. John Milholland, Helen Milholland, Ben Seymour, Lucy Seymour, James Wilson, Louis Pammel, Sophia Liston, Austin Curtis, Frank Beeler, Robert Moton. (Found in the “Resources” folder for this lesson.)
- Computer with a presentation device to show the Biography Cards one by one.

Lesson Plan

1. View a video *George Washington Carver: A Man of Character*, or *Struggle and Triumph: The Legacy of George Washington Carver*. Select the video you think is most appropriate for your class. Discuss the following key points about Carver’s life with your students:
 - a. He was born into slavery. Yet he grew up to be one of the best-known scientists, educators and African American role models of his country.
 - b. From a very early age, he “thirsted for an education.” Yet given the time, it was often a struggle for Carver to obtain an education.

Q. What were the challenges George Washington Carver faced in seeking an education?

Q. Talk about the challenges Carver faced because he was African American. Although slavery had ended, racial discrimination continued after the Civil War.

Q. How did Carver overcome these challenges?

Q. What are some conclusions you might draw about George Washington Carver’s personality and character based on his ability to overcome these challenges?

Q. List some of the people who helped Carver as he was pursuing his dream of an education.



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Q. What were the ways these individuals helped Carver? Compare and contrast the different types of help that people provided to him.

Q. In addition to the help Carver received from other people, how else was he able to deal with his struggles?

Q. What do you think might have happened if these individuals had not reached out to help George Washington Carver? How might his life have changed? How might our country have been different?

Q. Just as others reached out to help George Washington Carver, he also reached out to help many others. Describe some of the most important ways that Carver helped others.

Carver had no family of his own to help him. But throughout his life, he made friends with people who could help him pursue his dream of an education. His faith in both God and nature helped him deal with the struggles he faced throughout his life.

He became the first African American graduate and faculty member of Iowa State University. His success there brought him an invitation to join the faculty at Tuskegee Institute. There, he set up a lab and began to learn more about how to improve the lives of southern farmers. He shared that knowledge with thousands through his bulletins and his Jesup Wagon, which traveled across the state. This “traveling classroom” was so successful that it was adopted nationally by the US Department of Agriculture as part of its outreach program.

Later in his life, he began to work on the issue of racial cooperation. At a time when relations between the races were sometimes very difficult, Carver promoted interracial understanding by his own example as well as his words. After his death the George Washington Carver National Monument was created at his birthplace in Diamond, MO. This was the first national park to honor an African American.

2. Divide your class into groups. Give each group a biography card. Tell students that these cards include information about some of the individuals who helped George Washington Carver throughout his life. Encourage students to use other primary sources so they can learn more about these individuals. Have the student groups present information about these historical characters to the class. You could use any of these approaches:



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- **Time Line** – Have students create a time line of the key events and people in Carver’s life. They then place the people who were important in his life on the time line in the appropriate place. Students may add quotations from Carver and these individuals to their time line. (Use the quotations from the biography cards, “George Washington Carver in His Own Words,” or have students do research in the library or on the internet.) You might want to make this a living time line in your classroom.
- **PowerPoint** – Have students create a PowerPoint presentation of the most important people in George Washington Carver’s life.
- **Talk or News Show** – Have students perform a news show, a documentary, or a talk show featuring the characters from George Washington Carver’s life.
- **Wax Museum** – Students could create a living Wax Museum of the characters. They may use costumes and simple props. They come to “life” and share their presentation with other classes or for parents.

Assessment

After students present their character to the class, have students complete a 3 – 2 – 1 card:

- 3 people who helped George Washington Carver
- 2 ways that people provided support to Carver as he pursued an education
- 1 way that Carver gave back.

Ask students to write one or two sentences describing their participation in the group project. Did they take a leadership role? In what aspect of the project?

Extending the Lesson

Have students create a Caring Chain – write an example of one way someone helped George Washington Carver on a slip of paper. Using glue, form the paper into a ring. Create a paper chain of all the examples your students can think of.

Then create your own Caring Chain for your classroom. Each time a student does something to help another student learn, add a ring to your chain.