

George Washington Carver

Grade Level: 4-8

Lesson Overview

George Washington Carver has been called “the Father of the Peanut Industry.” In fact, he is known for inventing hundreds of products from peanuts. Learn more about this important innovator and the role he played in American history.

Student Objectives

1. Explain how George Washington Carver helped the southern farmers.
2. Describe the life of George Washington Carver through written expression.

Materials

- ✓ “George Washington Carver” by Helen H. Moore
- ✓ George Washington Carver Information Page
- ✓ George Washington Carver Worksheet

Vocabulary

- **innovator** - a person who figures out new ways to do something better with an item that has already been invented.
- **invent** - to make/discover something new.
- **rotate** - change crops grown in a field on a yearly basis so that nutrients may be added by one plant after having been depleted by another crop.

Background Information

See information page provided.

Procedure

1. Read poem, “George Washington Carver,” by Helen H. Moore, to the class.
2. Have students read about George Washington Carver and then apply their knowledge to questions and finding locations on the maps.
3. Have the students complete George Washington Carver Worksheet.

Extension Activities

Choose a quote from George Washington Carver. (Some are provided in this lesson.) Explain what this quote means to you. How is it relevant to today?

Additional Resources

- U.S. Peanut Council Education Services www.peanutsusa.com
- *George Washington Carver: Ingenious Inventor* by Nathan Olson ISBN-13:978-0-7368-6884-6 (A graphic novel)
- *George Washington Carver for Kids* by Peggy Thomas ISBN978-0-915864-00-3
- *In the Garden with Dr. Carver* by Susan Grigsby ISBN: 978-0807536308
- George Washington Carver: An Uncommon Life by Iowa PBS: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3CVmluYFtI
- History Modern Marvels: George Washington Carver, Tech https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nL6TQ_q6nI
- National Park Service Study: <https://www.nps.gov/gwca/learn/management/upload/GWC-For-His-Time-Ours-Spec-History-Study.pdf>
- History Channel: <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/george-washington-carver>
- Live Science: <https://www.livescience.com/41780-george-washington-carver.html>
- National Peanut Board: <https://www.nationalpeanutboard.org/peanut-info/george-washington-carver.htm>
- Did Carver Invent Peanut Butter: <https://www.biography.com/news/george-washington-carver-peanut-butter>
- Peanut Board Lesson: https://www.nationalpeanutboard.org/content/1126/files/9GWC_Peanut_Ed_Guide_9.pdf
- Eating Peanuts: <https://www.nationalpeanutboard.org/news/youre-eating-more-peanuts-than-everthank-you.htm>
- Peanut Eating News Release 2020: <https://www.nationalpeanutboard.org/news/peanut-per-capita-consumption-breaks-new-record.htm>

Standards

Illinois Social Science Standard

SS.H.1.6-8.MdC Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

Illinois English Language Arts Standards

W2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

RI 3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

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These mAGic lessons are designed to bring agriculture to life in your classroom. They address the Illinois Learning Standards in math, science, English language arts and social studies.

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Famous Quotes attributed to George Washington Carver

“I believe the Great Creator has put ores and oil on this earth to give us a breathing spell. As we exhaust them, we must be prepared to fall back on our farms, which are God’s true storehouse and can never be exhausted. Fore we can learn to synthesize materials for every human need from the things that grow.”

“My work is that of conservation...the saving of things that the average person throws away.”

“When you can do the common things in life in an uncommon way, you will command attention of the world.”

“No individual has any right to come into the world and go out of it without leaving behind him distinct and legitimate reasons for having passed through it.”

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.”

“Inspiration is never at variance with information; in fact, the more information one has, the greater will be the inspiration.”

“Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom.”

“Ninety-nine percent of the failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses.”

“How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.”

“Since new developments are the products of a creative mind, we must therefore stimulate and encourage that type of mind in every possible way.”

“George Washington Carver” Poem

by Helen H. Moore

The farmers of the south were frightened
by a little bug!

Its name was the boll weevil
(it was smaller than a slug).

It ate up all the cotton crops,
no one knew what to do,
until Professor Carver showed them all
a thing or two!

"Plant some peanuts!"

Carver said, "Those
Weevils just won't eat 'em!
Peanuts will help the soil and those
Boll weevils? We'll defeat 'em!"

The farmers did what Carver said,
The peanuts grew and grew!
"We've got too many nuts," the farmers said.

"Now what to do?"

Professor Carver went into his lab
And had a think.
He worked with peanuts day and night,
and quick as you can wink-
he used the nuts to make all kinds of things,
from bread to ink...in fact,
he made 'bout everything except the kitchen sink,
by using peanuts!

George Washington Carver History

George Washington Carver was born a slave around 1864 on a plantation in Diamond Grove, Missouri. When he was a little boy, night raiders kidnapped him and his mother. His master, Mr. Carver, traded a racehorse as ransom for George. But his mother was never seen again.

Mr. and Mrs. Carver raised George. As a young boy, he learned to read and write at home. George loved to collect and learn about plants and rocks. He also loved art and showed great skill as a painter.

George decided to pursue college and was accepted to Highland University, but was then denied when administrators discovered that he was black. After repeated rejections, he was finally accepted to Simpson College in Iowa, where he was the second African American student to attend. There, he studied art but realized his true love was science. After a year, he transferred to Iowa State Agricultural College, which is now Iowa State University. He was the first African American student to attend and faced many challenges. George continued his studies there and received his master's in agriculture in 1897. He then went to work at Tuskegee Institute, where he worked until his death in 1943.



George Washington Carver
[photo credit George Washington Carver
National Monument]

George Washington Carver was an innovator, a person who figures out new ways to do something better with an item that has already been invented. He was famous all over the world for his work with plants. He helped the farmers in the South by teaching them how to put plant food back into the soil. They had ruined the soil by planting cotton and tobacco year after year in the same fields. The economy of the farming south had been hurt by years of civil war and the fact that an insect called the boll weevil had started to destroy the cotton plants. He found that both cotton and tobacco take the nutrients out of the soil, but peanuts, pecans and sweet potatoes put the nutrients back into the soil. He suggested that farmers rotate their crops (tobacco one year, peanuts the next) then more tobacco was produced because the peanut plants enriched the soil.

However, no one wanted peanuts. George Washington Carver knew what he had to do. He had to make the country want peanuts. How? He took peanuts and invented new products made from the peanuts. He invented over 300 uses for peanuts such as peanut oil, cheese, dyes, flour, inks, milk and plastics. Within fifty years, the peanut was one of the top six leading crops in the United States. George Washington Carver did so much for the peanut industry in the south that he is called the "Father of Peanuts."

Name _____

George Washington Carver Worksheet

1. Fill in the chart below:

	Before 1900s	After 1930
What crops were grown in the south?		

2. What do you think would have happened to the farming in the south if Mr. Carver hadn't suggested crop rotation?
3. Who was Mr. Carver?
4. Where was he born?
5. When was he born?
6. What did he do to help farmers?
7. Why is what he did important?
8. Using the above information, write a newspaper article about Mr. Carver.

George Washington Carver Worksheet ANSWER KEY

1. Fill in the chart below:

	Before 1900s	After 1930
What crops were grown in the south?	Tobacco and cotton	Peanuts, tobacco and cotton

2. What do you think would have happened to the farming in the south if Mr. Carver hadn't suggested crop rotation?
Poor crops, lack of nutrients
3. Who was Mr. Carver?
Man who found uses for peanuts to help farmers.
4. Where was he born?
He was born in Missouri as a slave.
5. When was he born?
He was born at the time of the Civil War.
6. What did he do to help farmers?
He taught them about crop rotation to save the nutrients in the soil.
7. Why is what he did important?
His work saved the economy of the south.
8. Using the above information, write a newspaper article about Mr. Carver.
Student work will vary, but should have important information included in their newspaper article.