

Language Arts E— George Washington Carver

Week 18

George Washington Carver	chaps. 1–2	chaps. 3–4	chap. 5	chap. 6	chaps. 7–8
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Week 19

George Washington Carver	chaps. 9–10	chaps. 11–12	chap. 13	chap. 14	chap. 15
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Chapters 1–2

Setting

Missouri; Kansas; Iowa; Alabama; late 1880s to early 1900s

Overview

George Washington Carver, born around 1864, works his way through high school. He cannot immediately attend college because of his black skin, but after a few years of homesteading, he first attends Simpson College, a school for blacks, then Iowa State College. When he graduates, he teaches and researches—first at Iowa State, then at Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute. He teaches better agriculture to the blacks in his classroom and, with the help of a traveling classroom, in the surrounding states. He researches and promotes peanuts and sweet potatoes, two crops with diverse qualities and a myriad of possible products. With his faith in God and his willing labor, he seeks with Booker T. Washington to “[bring] people from degradation, poverty and waste to full manhood.”

To Discuss After You Read

Q: Where are George’s parents?

A: *father is dead, mother stolen by raiders, the Carvers become his parents*

Q: Why does George cut a limb off the tree?

A: *bugs kill the limb and they could spread to the whole orchard*

Note: Slavery has been abolished. George is not a slave, but his parents were slaves.

Q: How did George react when he was caught with undone chores?

A: *he made no excuses, told no lies, just accepted a whipping*

Q: As a child, what can George do well?

A: *grow things, take responsibility, memorize, listen, work*

Chapters 3–4

To Discuss After You Read

Q: When 10-year-old George goes off to school does he have a place to stay or planned meals?

A: *no, he walks 8 miles to the city and then seeks room and board*

Q: Why is George’s recitation of the Gettysburg Address a triumph?

A: *he could not speak well when young; the schoolmaster calls him “Master Carver” instead of “Half-wit” for the first time*

Q: How does God provide for George?

A: *he leads George to people he can help and who give him room and board*

Chapter 5

To Discuss After You Read

Q: Where does George work to care for himself in high school?

A: *folding laundry at the nicest hotel in town and at the railroad*

Q: Why can George not attend Highland?

A: *he is black*

Chapter 6

To Discuss After You Read

Q: What does George do after high school graduation?

A: *works on a farm, then homesteaded 160 acres in West Kansas, and painted*

Q: Why does George leave his homestead?

A: *after he is caught in a blizzard he realizes God is not angry with him but that he, like Jesus, needed to go into a wasteland for a time; he needs to be with other people*

Chapters 7–8

To Discuss After You Read

- Q: Besides schoolwork, what does George do or learn at Simpson College?
- A: *plays piano, sings in chorus, mends and washes clothes, works in lab*
- Q: How many blacks graduated from Iowa State before George?
- A: *none—he was the first*
- Q: What is George's next job?
- A: *teacher at Iowa State and caretaker of the greenhouses*

Chapters 9–10

To Discuss After You Read

- Q: What is the Tuskegee Institute? [chap. 9]
- A: *a college, founded in 1881 by Booker T. Washington, that stressed practical trade skills particularly for black students*

Note: Booker T. Washington 1856–1915 was the most influential black leader and educator of his time. [chap. 9]

- Q: Why does George switch jobs? [chap. 9]
- A: *to help bring the blacks from ex-slaves to “full manhood”*
- Q: What are Jim Crow laws? [chap. 10]
- A: *laws that support segregation of blacks and whites*
- Q: Was George's transfer from Iowa to Alabama easy? [chap. 10]
- A: *no, he moved from an established school with good pay and prestige to a poor school with poor land and few amenities*
- Q: How do George and his students build a lab? [chap. 10]
- A: *they ask for odds and ends from everyone in town and use old jars, lanterns, etc.*

Chapters 11–12

To Discuss After You Read

- Q: How does George prepare the land so it produces eighty bushels an acre of sweet potatoes?
- A: *uses two-horse plow to turn over land, adds nutrients such as moss and manure to enrich soil, plants cowpeas first to add nutrients, then plants sweet potatoes*
- Q: Booker T. Washington is sad, for he reaches so few of the blacks and so many still suffer. How does George solve this problem?
- A: *a school on wheels—he takes equipment and goes to different places, teaching the blacks how to grow crops more efficiently, plant good gardens and care and manage their homes*

Chapter 13

To Discuss After You Read

- Q: What killer comes to Alabama in 1914?
- A: *the boll weevil*
- Q: Why are goobers good to plant?
- A: *they enrich the soil, they have the best nutritional value of all legumes, they can produce two crops each year, they are cheap to grow, and they are underground so they aren't eaten by bugs*
- Q: What does George do when there is no market for the peanuts?
- A: *he experiments for days and discovers many uses—soap, cooking and rubbing oil, margarine, cosmetics, inks, candy, flour, shoe polish, salve, dyes, shaving cream, milk, paper, and soil conditioner*

Note: For any product produced, you must create a market.

Chapter 14

To Discuss After You Read

- Q: What are some products made from the sweet potato?
- A: *flour, ink, starch, tapioca, dyes*
- Q: Why does former president Teddy Roosevelt persuade George to stay at Tuskegee?
- A: *to continue the important work to help farmers improve their methods world-wide*
- Q: What does George think about the Lord's world and science? Do you agree?
- A: *science is just a study of God's world—there is no separation*
- Q: How does George begin each day?
- A: *he sits outside and asks God what he is to do that day; then he does it*
- Q: Why does George go to Washington, D.C.?
- A: *to speak before the Senate Ways and Means Committee to add a tariff to imported peanuts*

Chapter 15

To Discuss After You Read

- Q: Why would Thomas Edison want George to work for him?
- A: *George had proven himself a creative inventor and Edison wanted to tap that creativity*
- Q: How does George help 250 children with infantile paralysis?
- A: *he massages them with peanut oil ■*