



George Washington Carver

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- describe the discoveries and contributions made by George Washington Carver.
- illustrate the impact of these discoveries within the context of national historical events.

National Learning Standards:

National Social Studies and History Standards from the National Council for Social Studies

- NSS-USH.K-4.4: Understand major discoveries in science and technology, some of their social and economic effects, and the major scientists and inventors responsible for them.
- NA-VA.K-4.1: Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories.

Activity Description: Students will review key information about George Washington Carver and use this information to create an artistic representation of Carver's contributions to science and our nation. Students will illustrate an index card they can wear as a story-telling lanyard.

Materials

- 5x7 index card (1 per student)
- Peanuts (1 per student)
- Hot glue gun and glue (for adult use)
- Yarn (approximately 2' per student)
- Hole punch
- Coloring utensils
- Projector or printed copy of "Getting to Know George Washington Carver"

Activity Steps

Activity Prep:

- Prepare copies of "Getting to Know George Washington Carver" or plan to display it using a projector.

- Prepare one lanyard per student. Use a hole punch to put one hole in the top of a 5x7" index card. Cut one 2' section of yarn for each student.
- For more information check out the George Washington Carver video at www.biography.com.

Step 1: Hold up a peanut. Ask students to quickly brainstorm as many uses as they can think of for a peanut. Capture the list on the board.

Step 2: Introduce George Washington Carver as a man most famous for researching more than 300 products using the peanut! Reinforce the importance of Carver's research. He did not invent these just for fun! Carver developed new uses for the peanut crop as a way to help the south after the damage of the Civil War and cotton crop loss from pests.

Step 3: Display key information, or distribute copies, and walk students through the key moments in Carver's life. See "Getting to Know George Washington Carver" at the end of this activity.

Step 4: Distribute one, hole-punched index card to each student. Have students review the key information and select three to five key points about Carver's life to capture on the lined side of the cards.

Step 5: Instruct students to create an illustration on the blank side of the card that represents Carver's significant contributions to science and society.

Step 6: As students finish, glue one peanut in shell to the blank side of the card. *Note: Observe all recommended safety precautions for hot glue gun.

Step 7: Give each student a piece of yarn. Loop yarn through the hole in the card and tie to create a story-telling lanyard.

It's A Fact!

Carver's epitaph reads: "He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world."¹⁶

Social Science: George Washington Carver (con't)

Step 8: Have students partner up and retell the story of George Washington Carver, referencing their lanyard as needed.

Processing Questions:

1. What was George Washington Carver known for?
 - a. Listen for student to recall his contributions to science, botany, and his research for 300+ uses for the peanut, which transformed the economy of the southern United States.
2. What challenges may have prompted Carver to research uses of the peanut?
 - a. Listen for students to recall the destruction of the Civil War, devastation from the boll weevil infestation, and racial inequality.
3. What challenges do we face today and how might you help find a solution?
 - a. Answers will vary.

Getting to Know George Washington Carver¹⁷

- Carver was born as a slave in Diamond, Missouri during the Civil War, around 1864.
- He lived with Moses and Susan Carver after slavery ended. Susan taught George and his brother to read and write.
- Carver was sick as a young child so he could not work in the fields. He worked in the gardens and became known as the "Plant Doctor."
- He graduated from Minneapolis High School in Kansas.
- He was rejected from Highland College in Kansas because of his race, so he studied biology and geology at home.
- He was accepted to Simpson College, in Iowa, to study music and art.
- Because of his talent for drawing plants, he was the first African-American accepted to what is now Iowa State University.
- In 1892, a pest called the boll weevil ruined the cotton crop in the south.
- In 1896, he was hired to run the agriculture department at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.
- Cotton farmers who lost their crop to the boll weevil started growing peanuts. Carver worked to help the farmers, and the southern U.S., recover.
- He became famous for his work in plant biology, developing new ways to use peanuts, sweet potatoes, soybeans, and pecans.
- Carver researched more than 300 uses for the peanut, including chili sauce, shampoo, shaving cream, and glue.
- Carver died in 1943.