

The Peanut Wizard

Objective

The student will read about the scientist George Washington Carver and outline the information.

Procedures

1. Hand out copies of the Reading Page and student worksheets included with this lesson.
 - Students will read the information on the Reading Page as a class or read the information independently.
 - Lead a class discussion based on the reading and the following questions:
 - Why did George Washington Carver stay with his owner after he was no longer a slave?
 - What is horticulture? How does this field of study relate to Carver’s love of drawing flowers?
 - Why did the freed slaves have trouble earning a living from the land they were working?
 - How do peanuts improve the soil?
 - Why did Carver have to find ways to use peanuts?
 - How did the boll weevil persuade Southern farmers to start planting peanuts?
2. Review outlining.
 - Students will follow instructions on the student worksheets to complete the outline.
3. Students will make timelines of the life of George Washington Carter based on the reading.

Oklahoma Academic Standards

GRADE 4

Regions: 2D,3,4,5
Speaking and Listening:
R.1,2,3. Reading and
Writing Process: R.1,3,4

The Peanut Wizard

George Washington Carver was born a slave on a Missouri farm. He was freed at the end of the Civil War, while he was still a child, but since he was an orphan, he grew up in the household of his former owner. He went to school in a one-room school for African American children, nine miles from his home.

In 1889 Carver enrolled at Simpson College in Iowa. He earned his \$12 yearly tuition by working as a cook. Carver loved to draw flowers. He wanted to be an artist, but he decided to study horticulture instead. In 1896 he earned a master's degree at Iowa State Agricultural College.

That same year Booker T. Washington asked him to go to work as head of the Department of Agriculture at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. In the South, slaves had been freed but now had no way to support their families. Freed slaves worked long hours in cotton fields that were too worn out to produce crops. The goal of the institute was to teach people how to grow better crops.

The Tuskegee Institute was located on an abandoned cotton plantation. Great gullies cut deep into the land. The topsoil had blown or washed away. Much of the farming land of the South was in the same condition, worn out by many years of poor agricultural practices.

Carver began looking for ways to improve the soil. He experimented with legumes. Legumes are good for the soil, because they capture nitrogen from the air and make it available to the soil. Peanuts are legumes, and they grow well in the South. Carver found that peanuts did an excellent job of improving the soil.

The next step was finding uses for peanuts. Until then peanuts had been considered "circus chaw," containing little or no food value. In 1897 George Washington Carver began experimenting with peanuts. He found ways to use peanuts in cereals, oils, dyes, soaps and many other things. In all he found over 300 uses for the peanut.

In 1892, the boll weevil crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico into Texas and wiped out the few cotton crops that remained in the South. In desperation, Southern farmers began listening to Carver's advice and growing peanuts. The peanut crop was a huge success. By 1940, the South boasted a \$250 million industry revolving around the peanut. Today the annual harvest is worth \$3 billion.

Carver went on the road with his findings. He traveled to farmsteads belonging to Black farmers to show them how to enrich the soil and how to plant and care for peanuts, soybeans, sweet potatoes, greens and other vegetables.

His fame as a scientist and educator grew throughout the world. When he died at Tuskegee, on June 5, 1943, he was one of America's most honored scientists.

Name _____

The Peanut Wizard

Read the information on the reading page. Then copy the following statements in their proper places in the outline provided.

- The Tuskegee Institute was located on an abandoned cotton plantation.
- Carver travelled throughout the South to show Black farmers how to enrich the soil and how to plant and care for their crops.
- George Washington Carver studied horticulture at Simpson College in Iowa.
- Southern farmers began planting peanuts after the boll weevil damaged the remaining cotton crops.
- Carver went to school in a one-room school for African American children nine miles from his home.
- Booker T. Washington hired Carver to head the Department of Agriculture at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.
- George Washington Carver was born a slave on a Missouri farm.
- The goal of the Tuskegee Institute was to teach freed slaves to grow better crops.
- Poor soil conditions on land owned by the Tuskegee Institute was similar to soil conditions all over the South.
- Carver grew up in the home of his former owner because he was an orphan when he was freed.
- Carver first began studying peanuts as a way to improve the soil.
- George Washington Carver earned a master's degree from Iowa State Agricultural College.
- Carver's next step was finding more uses for peanuts.
- Today the annual peanut harvest in the South is worth over \$3 billion.

Name _____

The Peanut Wizard

OUTLINE

I. Early Life of George Washington Carver

A. Childhood

1. _____

2. _____

B. Education

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

II. Tuskegee Institute

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

III. Peanut Research

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

IV. Getting the Word Out

A. _____

Name _____

The Peanut Wizard (answers)

OUTLINE

I. Early Life of George Washington Carver

A. Childhood

1. George Washington Carver was born a slave on a Missouri farm.
2. Carver grew up in the home of the former owner because he was an orphan when he was freed

B. Education

1. Carver went to school in a one-room school for African American children nine miles from his home.
2. George Washington Carver studied horticulture at Simpson College in Iowa.
3. Carver earned a master's degree from Iowa State Agricultural College.

II. Tuskegee Institute

- A. Booker T. Washington hired Carver to head the Department of Agriculture at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.
- B. The goal of the Tuskegee Institute was to teach freed slaves to grow better crops.
- C. The Tuskegee Institute was located on an abandoned cotton plantation.
- D. Poor soil conditions on land owned by the Tuskegee Institute was similar to soil conditions all over the South.

III. Peanut Research

- A. Carver first began studying peanuts as a way to improve the soil.
- B. Carver's next step was finding more uses for peanuts.
- C. Southern farmers began planting peanuts after the boll weevil damaged the remaining crops.
- D. Today the annual peanut harvest in the South is worth over \$3 billion.

IV. Getting the Word Out

- A. Carver travelled throughout the South to show Black farmers how to enrich the soil and how to plant and care for their crops.