



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

A Weed is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver

Teacher Guide

Access Reading
Trek Map

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages: 4–8

Grades: Pre-K–3

Reading Level: 4th grade

Lexile Measure: AD640L

Guided Reading Level: N

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 28–30

Content Areas: English/language arts, reading, literature, and social studies (including individual development, identity, history, and geography).

Synopsis of Book

In this picture book biography, author and illustrator Aliko shares the story of George Washington Carver, a man born into slavery who, through the kindness of others, has the opportunity to learn about the world around him and eventually attend school. George works his way through college and is eventually invited to share his knowledge by teaching at Tuskegee Institute, where his research provides answers to questions about global hunger and agricultural concerns.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS
- Theme 4: INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY
- Theme 9: GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class by displaying the [Reading Trek map](#) on an interactive whiteboard and highlighting its various layers.
2. Watch this [video](#) about George Washington Carver, then create a timeline of Carver's life and identify the adversities that he overcame. For a digital option, consider having students create timelines using Canva's Timeline Infographic Templates ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
3. Watch "[The Wildflowers of George Washington Carver National Monument](#)"—these are the same wildflowers that young George tended and studied. Go on a wildflower hunt around the school and draw pictures of the wildflowers you find. Identify the names of as many flowers as possible.
4. Create a wall-sized Venn diagram with images of items made from peanuts, sweet potatoes, and both plants. Use drawings and pictures sourced from the internet, magazines, or free image resources like Unsplash ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
5. Have students map out George Washington Carver's life journey using MapMaker ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Be sure to include where he was born, the cities in which he attended college and worked, and where he is

buried. Have students label the years he was in each location.

6. Have students explore a map of the southern United States and label it with the crops grown there after the Civil War, such as cotton, peanuts, sweet potatoes, and tobacco. Research how Carver promoted sustainable farming practices, then compare what Carver's work and life were like then with what the US grows and produces in the same area now.

Extension Activities:

1. Create a Google My Maps ([TeachersFirst review](#)) map depicting your home, school, and other places you visit regularly.
2. Create a booktrailer for the story using Sway ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or Google Vids ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
3. Earn the Junior Ranger Badge for the George Washington Carver National Monument. Teachers can request a copy of the booklet and make the necessary number of duplicates by contacting gwca_interpretation@nps.gov or calling 417-325-4151. Teachers can submit completed work for the students' badges, which will be mailed.
4. Learn about life on a farm during the time of George's youth by watching videos about [blacksmithing](#), [spinning wool](#), [making soap](#), and [making ropes](#). Discuss how these items are made today. Compare examples of handspun yarn with commercially made yarn and generate a list of descriptive terms for each.
5. Mix food- or plant-based dyes with a drop of dish soap and a few drops of water to create natural paints, then paint a picture on watercolor paper or another heavy paper.
6. Learn about the peanut life cycle with this [video](#) from The Natural History Museum. Draw and label a peanut plant or use this printable sheet from [Nuts About Peanuts](#).
7. Use scraps of paper, yarn, and other leftover supplies to create a mixed-media artwork.
8. Read other books illustrated by Aliki and compare the picture styles on [Fishink](#). Write and illustrate a short book using WriteReader ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
9. Explore personal qualities that made George Washington Carver successful. Make a character trait chart and give examples from the book.
10. Have students create a timeline of Carver's life. Include pictures or symbols to represent each major milestone using Canva's Timeline Infographic Templates ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
11. Make a graphics-based chart of the many things Carver made from peanuts.

Students can use ReadWriteThink's Interactive Two Circle Venn Diagram ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to compare how farming practices have changed, what is grown now that was not in Carver's day, and how geography influenced his opportunities and challenges.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

Other Resources:

- [George Washington Carver National Monument YouTube Channel](#)
- [National Park Service Curriculum Materials](#)
- [The Development of the Negro Public School System in Missouri](#) (April 1920)
- [Fish Ink Blog – “Aiki Children’s Book Illustrator”](#)



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<https://teachersfirst.com/reading-treks/content/weed-flower-life-george-washington-carver>