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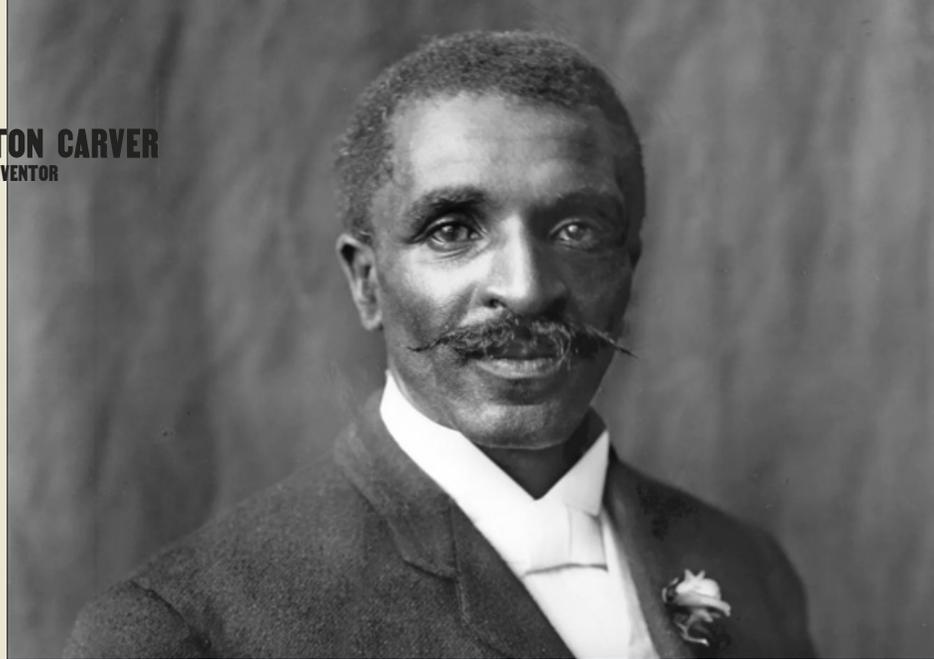


CELEBRATING BLACK INNOVATORS



GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

AGRICULTURAL SCIENTIST AND INVENTOR



Each February, people throughout the United States honor African Americans and explore their roles in our nation's history. HISTORY is pleased to join with Altice to offer Black History Month resources to help students recognize and celebrate the contributions of African Americans to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math.

These activities provide some starting points for exploring African American innovators and change makers in American history.

1. **Exploring Innovators.** Ask students to choose three African American innovators to highlight. Students can research individuals using the tools on this site or their own additional research and create a collage, visual presentation or write an essay about the individuals they picked, explaining their contributions to American history.
2. **Resume for a Leader.** Ask students to choose an African American innovator. Create a resume for this person, highlighting their key activities, contributions, and achievements.
3. **Mini-Bio.** Ask students to create an illustrated mini-biography of an African American innovator. These biographies could be in PowerPoint format, on poster-board, or in essay format.
4. **Memorializing Innovation.** In small groups, ask students to design a memorial or monument honoring an African American leader or innovator. These designs can be shared and discussed with the larger class or group.
5. **Key Characteristics.** Ask students to watch videos or read one article about an African American innovator. Then, they can make a list of their important characteristics. You can also lead students in a discussion of these terms and discuss how and why they apply to African American innovators: innovation, ingenuity, critical thinking, persistence, resilience.
6. **Multimedia Connections.** Individually or in small groups, students can create a short video, write the lyrics to a song, or create an idea for a podcast, video game, or documentary about an African American innovator. Ask them to pick a title or tagline for their project and to think about their intended audience and method of distribution. Students can also develop a basic business plan describing how they would approach creating this kind of project.

BLACK HISTORY INNOVATORS: VIDEO ANALYSIS

Students can choose one video on this site:

<https://preview.history.com/playlists/blackhistoryclassroom>

and write a short essay response or fill out the chart below.

What was the subject of the video you watched?

What did you learn about the Civil Rights movement or the era in history it covers?

What do you think were the outcomes of the events you learned about in the video?



KATHERINE JOHNSON
MATHEMATICIAN AT NASA

EXTENDED ACTIVITY: CHARACTER AND BIOGRAPHY

Helping students understand the characteristics of successful people, and identify specific leadership skills are the focus of the “character and Biography” enrichment activity. This activity helps students think about what personality traits make a person successful, from George Washington Carver (persistence, expertise) to Rosa Parks (courage). It also gives them a chance to think about their own abilities, and what characteristics they would like to develop for themselves.

Because the individuals that can be studied range from scientists to civil rights leaders, the interdisciplinary aspects of this activity are extensive and include social studies, science, government, history, language arts, and personal development.

Skills:

Research, note-taking, outlining, critical thinking, and verbalization.

To the teacher: There are two ways of approaching this project. Suggestion one involves independent research on the part of each student. Suggestion two uses groups or teams of students working together. Each student/group may choose or be assigned one individual to study.

To introduce this project, establish that your students are familiar with the concept of a biography and the idea of character. The following questions are suggested to guide your class discussion: What do we learn by studying a biography? (The story of someone's life, when they lived, what they did, etc.) Why do we study a person's life? (Because they are..., because we can learn about their accomplishments, because an individual's life can teach us about history, inspire us, etc.)

You or a student may write the characteristics on the board. Create two columns for positive and negative attributes. Some words or phrases may be on both the positive and the negative side. For example, “strong leadership” can be both a positive attribute and also can be negative if harnessed in a destructive way.

MADAME C.J. WALKER
ENTREPRENEUR, PHILANTHROPIST, AND A POLITICAL
AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST



CHARACTER AND BIOGRAPHY[®]

Suggestion One: Individual Project

Allow students to choose an African American innovator they are interested in learning more about to study.

Assignment:

Each student should research the life of the individual he or she has chosen, and write a short, one-page outline of the person's life and his or her most important achievements. Students can include a short bibliography or list of the sources they have consulted. During their research, the students should consider what characteristics or personality traits are essential attributes of the individuals they have studied. What traits made these people successful?

Suggested length of time:

When the students have completed their research and outlines, a class discussion should follow, focusing on what they have learned. A worksheet is provided that may be photocopied for each student. The worksheet should be completed in class.

Classroom discussion:

Using the worksheet, make sure that the students understand what the characteristics mean. What is the difference between aptitude and proficiency? Although a brief definition is provided; the class should be able to provide their own definitions. What other character traits are important? Guide your students from a general discussion to specific examples from their research. When you feel that they are familiar with the terms, give them time to fill out the worksheet. Upon completion, have your students tell the class whom they studied and what characteristics were displayed by the person they chose. Remind them to be specific.

Suggestion Two: Group Project

Divide the class into groups of two to four students. Each group should choose one individual to study together. Explain that they might not get their first choice, so they should have a second choice.

Assignment:

Working together, the group should research the life and accomplishments of the individual they have chosen. Each group is responsible for creating a poster about that individual. The poster might include a timeline of the person's life, quotations by or about the person, and information about his or her greatest achievements. Illustrations will help make the poster more visually interesting and informative. Each group can attach a short bibliography or list of the sources they have consulted. During their research, the students should consider what characteristics or personality traits are essential attributes of the individual they have studied. What traits made the person successful?

When the students have completed their research and poster, a classroom discussion should follow, centering on what they have learned. A worksheet is provided that may be photocopied for each student. The worksheet can be completed by groups in class.

CHARACTER AND BIOGRAPHY[®] WORKSHEET

Student's name:

Person Studied:

Using the worksheet below, circle examples of behavior illustrating each quality that pertains to the individual you studied. Not every characteristic will apply to "your" person. You may discover more than one example for each trait.

Characteristics	Behavior that illustrates characteristic
Perseverance	(Persistent belief in one's goals; holding to a course of action without giving up)
Industriousness	(Willingness to work hard)
Proficiency	(Quality of being an expert or highly skilled in a specific field)
Assertiveness	(Ability to express oneself forcefully)
Ingenuity	(Inventive skill; imagination)
Aptitude	(Natural talent, gift or tendency)
Courage	(Daring; willingness to risk social disapproval)
Persuasiveness	(Ability to communicate ideas effectively, bring people to agreement)

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. Which characteristics contributed most to this person's success? What characteristics would you add to this list that played a significant role in this person's success? Which traits do you share with this famous person? Which qualities do you most admire in this person? In others? What characteristics do you think make up the personality of a successful person?
2. What about the personality of an "everyday" person – someone who is not famous? Being a successful person does not mean being a celebrity. What influence does a person's character have on his or her life? What characteristics would you like to develop in yourself?