



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

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

Teacher Guide

Grade Level & Content Areas

Access Reading
Trek Map

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 a slave who, through the kindness of others, has the opportunity to learn about the world around him and eventually go to school. George works his way through college, finding answers to his questions. Eventually, this humble man is invited to share his knowledge by teaching at Tuskegee Institute, and his research provides answers to global hunger questions 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 on an interactive whiteboard using the [Reading Trek map](#) and highlighting its various layers.
2. Watch this [Brain Pop video](#) about George Washington Carver. Create a timeline of Carver's life and identify the adversities that he overcame.
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, using drawings and pictures printed from the internet or from magazines.
5. Read other books illustrated by Aliko and compare the styles of pictures on [Fishink](#). Write and illustrate a short book using WriteReader ([TeachersFirst review](#)).

Extension Activities:

1. Earn the Junior Ranger Badge for the George Washington Carver National Monument. Teachers can request a copy 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.
2. 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.
3. Use food/plant-based dyes mixed with a drop of dish soap and a few drops of water to create natural paints, then paint a picture on watercolor paper or other heavy paper.
4. Learn about the peanut life cycle with the National Peanut Board's video, "[Peanuts: The Crop of Now](#)." Draw and label a peanut plant or use the printable sheet from [Nuts About Peanuts](#).
5. Use scrap pieces of paper, yarn, and other leftover supplies to create a mixed media piece of art.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Engage & Inspire with Reading Treks](#)

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](#)