

The Secret Garden of George Washington Carver

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Sit back and enjoy listening to the story and looking at the illustrations.

Introduce yourself. Tell you group your first impression of the book or if the book reminds you of something in your life.

Read the book with your group.

Discussion questions:

1. When George was young, his family and neighbors told him that growing flowers was a foolish waste of time. Why did they think this was a waste of time?

Have you had an experience of others telling you something you enjoyed was a waste of time?

Did you continue spending time doing it, or did you take their advice?

2. At first, George Washington Carver kept his garden secret. Why?

Later, he decided not to keep it a secret. Why?

3. George Washington Carver talked to his plants. Does that seem like a silly thing to do? Why or why not? Have you ever talked to plants, trees, birds, or other things in nature?

4. Carver created a traveling schoolhouse. He asked the farmers he worked with, "What would you like to learn today?" What do you think about this method of teaching?

5. What words would you use to describe George Washington Carver?

6. The book ends with Carver's words "Regard nature. Revere nature. Respect nature." Discuss what those words mean and how George Washington Carver lived those values with his life.

7. What do you think of the illustrations? Do you have a favorite?

8. George Washington Carver had many interests: rock collecting, painting, music, and textile arts – needlepoint, crocheting, knitting, and weaving. He found everything to be useful, even

things we would consider waste. An excerpt from “The Man Who Talks with Flowers” by Glenn Clark, includes an example:

He [George Washington Carver] brought out a painting of fruit. After we had looked at this, he brought out a marvelous painting of roses. We gasped.

“How did you do that?” we asked.

“With my fingers,” he said.

“Did you copy these roses?” One asked.

“I never copy. I paint only what I see inside.”

“What kind of canvas is this painted on?”

“Material which I created from cornstalks.”

“Where did you get the paint?”

“Workmen were excavating to put a new pipe under my steps, and I used some of the clay they dug to create these colors.” He paused, then added, with a smile, “When you came into my ‘Den’ just now you were literally ‘walking on roses.’”

Have you used natural materials to make something?

9. Below are some quotes from George Washington Carver. Choose one to read and discuss:

“It is simply service that measures success.”

“Learn to do common things uncommonly well. We must always keep in mind that anything that helps fill a dinner pail is valuable.”

“You have to love it enough. Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough. Not only have I found that when I talk to the little flower or to the little peanut they will give up their secrets, but I have found that when I silently commune with people they give up their secrets also — if you love them enough.”

“Sometimes in my experiments the things I wanted to find I did not find. I found something else. I was temporarily disappointed. Sometimes a whole series of experiments had to be laid aside. The truth had to be followed.”

“No individual has any right to come into this world and go out of it without leaving behind him distinct and legitimate reasons for having passed through it.”

“There is much to learn from simple people.”

“Wherever the soil is wasted the people are wasted. A poor soil produces only a poor people - poor economically, poor spiritually, and intellectually, poor physically.”

“Selfishness and self are at the bottom of a lot of the troubles in the world. So many people fail to realize that serving God and one’s fellowman are the only worth-while things in life. It is service that counts.”