

The Incredible George Washington Carver

George Washington Carver was born in 1861. His parents were slaves. They lived on a plantation in Missouri.

1. What does the title tell you about the subject of this passage? _____

2. What opinion word is in the title? _____
3. Was George born into a privileged situation? _____
4. Who do you think he was named after? _____

Day 1

George Washington Carver was often sick as a child. He couldn't help around the plantation. He liked to spend time in the woods. There, he found flowers and plants. He made a collection of them. George taught himself to read. He was very independent. When he was 10 years old, he left the plantation to live on his own.

1. What was the effect of George's childhood illnesses? _____
2. What did George do instead of work on the plantation? _____
3. What is a surprising fact at the end of the paragraph? _____
4. Can you imagine leaving home and living on your own at 10 years old? Explain.

Day 2

George wanted to go to a college. The college refused to admit him because he was African American. But, George refused to give up. Finally, he went to college. He was an excellent student. He took botany and chemistry classes.

1. Does George give up easily? _____
2. What clues helped you answer question 1? _____
3. What kind of classes are botany and chemistry: **literature** or **science**? _____
4. What clues tell you whether George was a hard worker? _____

Day 3

George Washington Carver became a scientist. He discovered more than 300 uses for the peanut plant. Among his discoveries were shampoo, car grease, soap, rubber, wood filler, paint, and shoe polish. His research helped farmers.

1. What was the effect of George's research? _____
2. What character traits did George have? _____
3. What was the effect of George's plant collecting when he was a boy? _____
4. Do you agree with the author's title—is George Washington Carver incredible? Why or why not? _____

Day 4

Name _____

Good News, Bad News

Most people welcome a new invention that makes life easier, but when the cotton gin arrived in 1793, it was the slaves' worst nightmare.

At that time, Southerners weren't making as much money as they wanted from their crops, especially cotton. One kind of cotton was simple to de-seed, but it thrived only near water. Another type was hard to de-seed, but it grew anywhere inland.

Eli Whitney, a Yale graduate who moved to Georgia, sized up the cotton situation. Within a short time, this brilliant young man invented the cotton gin. The gin detached the seeds from the soft, cottony fibers. The sturdy, inland cotton could quickly be de-seeded. The machine was unbelievably simple and used wires, a drum, and a brush.

Growing cotton could now make a lot of money for the plantation owners. They stopped grumbling and began exporting cotton and importing slaves. Who else could work the fields? Who else could pick the large amounts of cotton that were fed into the supermachine?

Between 1790 and 1808, 80,000 Africans were shipped to the South. The cotton gin helped the South produce 75 percent of the cotton the world used. The Southerners wanted an important crop to export, and now they had one. In 1860, the South produced around 5 million bales of cotton. Sadly, about one-third of the people in the South were slaves that same year.

All Eli Whitney wanted was to make life easier. Instead, life for thousands became much harder.

1. What was the **good** news? _____
2. What was the **bad** news? _____
3. What is the author's opinion of Eli Whitney? _____

4. What is the author's opinion of the invention of the cotton gin? _____
