

Peanut Detective

A Pre-Visit Lesson to *Dr. Carver: Soil Scientist*

Objectives: To give a brief description of Dr. George Washington Carver's life.
To explain several uses for the peanut.
To observe and measure the physical attributes of a peanut.

Curricular Area: Science

Skills: Communication
Cooperation
Observation
Measurement

Time: One class period

Background Information:

About George Washington Carver—George Washington Carver, born in the United States of America, was not sure of his birth date but thought it to be 1864. He was born into slavery and won international fame for his agricultural research. He was especially noted for his work with peanuts and made more than 300 products from peanuts, including a milk substitute, face powder, and soap.

George was born in the household of Moses and Susan Carver in Diamond Grove, Missouri. Shortly after George's birth, his father was killed while hauling wood to town on an ox wagon. George, his mother, and his sister were kidnapped by night raiders and sold in Arkansas. Mr. Carver sent a man for them, but only George was returned. George was raised by the Carvers, Moses and Susan.

As a child, George showed interest in plants and a desire to learn. The Carvers taught him to read and write, and when he was approximately eleven years old, he moved to Neosho, Missouri, where he attended a school for black children. For the next twenty years, George worked at various jobs to support himself and pay for his education. He was admitted to Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, from which he transferred in 1891 to Iowa State Agricultural College (now Iowa State University) in Ames. He received a bachelor's degree in agriculture in 1894 and a master's degree in 1896.

In 1896, George moved to Alabama to join the faculty at Tuskegee Institute, an industrial and agricultural school, where he became the head of the agricultural department and director of a state agricultural station. He researched fungi, soil conservation, and other ways to improve crop production. He wrote pamphlets and bulletins about applied agriculture and distributed these publications to farmers in Alabama and other states all the while teaching more productive agricultural practices to Southern farmers through conferences, demonstrations, and public lectures.

George Washington Carver never married, and in 1940, he gave his life savings to the Tuskegee Institute to establish the George Washington Carver Foundation for Agricultural Research. He died on January 5, 1943. He spent his life helping others, especially those in need.

Materials: For each student: pencil /paper
ruler
6 inch piece of string

For the teacher: 1 box or container (for the teacher)

Procedure:

1. Divide students into groups and allow time for them to write down everything they know about George Washington Carver.
2. When finished, instruct students to write down everything they know about items made out of peanuts.
3. Let student groups share their answers with the class. Write down everything that the students share.
4. Use the student answers, and discuss the life of George Washington Carver along with his connection to the uses of peanuts.
5. Pass out a peanut, a ruler, and piece of string to each student in your class. **CAUTION: Do not use real peanuts if you have students who are allergic to them. You might consider candy or find other items that will challenge their identification skills.**
6. Instruct students to investigate their peanut by measuring its length, the distance around the middle, and the distance around the ends (use ruler and string). Allow time for students to make a list of all the identifying features of their peanut, including mass, color variations, length, noticeable flaws, etc. Students should also use this time to draw a picture of their peanut from different views (top and bottom).
7. When everyone is finished, collect the students' peanuts and put them all into one big box.
8. Challenge your students to find their peanut. The students must prove that the peanut is theirs based on the detailed information they gathered earlier.

Extension:

*Bring students to the computer lab, and have them visit the following fun websites to learn more about peanuts.

www.buddymcnutty.com

www.gapeanuts.com/kids/kindex.asp

www.nationalpeanutboard.org