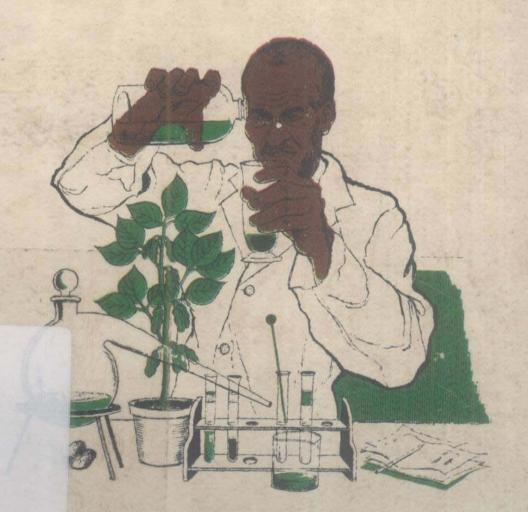


This special edition is for readers for whom English is a second language. It can be read by anyone who has learned 1,000 words of English.

# GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

**A Great American Negro Teacher** 

Rackham Holt



### 美国小说



The Ladder Series books are specially prepared editions of well-known American books. They have been made easier to read for the enjoyment of readers for whom English is a second language.

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The publisher hopes the reader will enjoy this Series, while going up the ladder to more difficult reading.

# George Washington CARVER

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## BY RACKAM HOLT

A LADDER CLASSIC EDITION AT THE 1,000-WORD LEVEL ADAPTED BY ELIZABETH J. GEIGER

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#### CHAPTER ONE

In the cities of the state of Missouri on the night of January 11, 1865, crowds sang in the streets. That day the United States of America, by law, brought an end to a man's right to buy and sell other men, an end to his right to own slaves. The black man was free. He was free to help make the laws of the land. He was free, according to the law, to enjoy equal rights with all other men in the United States. The cities were bright with lights that night. Outside the cities, only a few people knew of the law and not many of them were prepared to change their way of life.

In the farm country of Missouri fighting would continue between those who wanted slavery and those who did not. From the dry fields of Kansas, groups of hungry men would continue to come into Missouri to burn homes and to take clothes and food and Negro workers. Missouri men, carrying black flags and guns, would drive them back to Kansas time and time again. Sick men with no homes were in the fields and forests. There was no law outside the cities.

On a Missouri farm near the small town of Diamond on the night of January 11, 1865, Mary held her baby son, George, close to her to warm him. He was sick and there was little she could do to quiet him. She gave him something sweet to eat and sang to him. Her older son, Jim, lay sleeping on a low bed beside her. He had always been healthy, but George, the baby, had not. George was born in 1864. That year, families hid with their horses and slaves in the woods. The men of Kansas and Missouri had been at war over the amount of land each state was to have. No one farmed. No one had enough to eat. The baby had suffered and never grown strong. Mary held George closer and wished his father were alive.

Suddenly the door was forced open and Moses Carver, Mary's master, was in the room. He ran to the bed where her older boy lay and picked him up in his arms. "Run, Mary! Run!" he shouted and hurried from the room carrying Jim. Mary could not move. She was too afraid. She held George close in her arms and listened to the sound of horses outside the walls. Men she had never seen before crowded through the door. She held George close as the men pulled her from the house and threw her on the back of a horse. She held George close as the men rode into the cold night with her.

Before a week was ended the same men returned to the farm of Moses Carver. This time they caught Moses and tied him to a tree. "Where is your money?" they asked. Moses did not answer. They held burning wood to his feet. Moses would tell them nothing. Finally they left him.

As his wife Susan, put medicine on his burned feet,

there were tears in her eyes. "We must help Mary," she said.

Moses Carver had come to Missouri from the North and for 25 years he and his wife had worked the farm alone. He had not wanted to own slaves. As Susan grew older, Moses had known she needed someone to help her. He bought Mary for 700 dollars. Mary had worked with them for six years.

Moses asked friends and strangers about Mary. In Diamond there was a man who said he could find Mary. Moses told him he would give him a horse and a part of his land if the man could bring her back.

The man took the horse and rode through Missouri and into the state of Arkansas. When he returned there was something tied in a coat on the back of the horse, but there was no Mary. "I will keep the horse to pay for my time and trouble," the man said, "but I cannot take the land." Some people had told him Mary was dead, he said. Other people told him she had gone North with soldiers. And others said she had been sent down the river to Louisiana. The little boy had been left with two women.

The man took the coat off the back of the horse. In the coat was George. "I guess it is still alive," he said.

#### CHAPTER TWO

Susan and Moses Carver took Mary's two sons into their simple, one-room house. They had two one-room houses on the farm, but the second one was used only by visitors. When friends of the Carvers came to visit, George ran back and forth carrying food to this house. Because he was sick so much of the time, Susan kept him near to work with her. His brother, Jim, worked in the fields and helped Moses with the fine horses and hunting dogs that Moses raised.

On their farm the Carvers raised all their food, except sugar. To buy sugar, they traded other farm products. They grew plants from which Susan made cloth and dyes to color the cloth. They grew plants to season their food and plants from which they made medicines to fight illnesses. The boys learned to make butter and to care for the farm animals. They learned to hunt wild birds and wild animals, and to make shoes for themselves from the animal skins. There was a smokehouse full of meat. There was a place where they stored dried fruits. They covered the vegetables with six inches of earth and thus were able to keep them through the winter. They dried corn and learned

how corn could be prepared in hundreds of different ways and eaten for breakfast and lunch and dinner. There were bigger farms than the Carver's but few were as successful.

Moses Carver believed in work and in gentleness toward animals and in not wasting or throwing away anything that could be used. He raised the sons of his lost slave in the same manner he used with his fine horses. If he had sons of his own he might have raised them the same way. The boys learned to work long hours. Moses worked longer. He tried to take them with him to the parties of neighbors. Once a year he sent each boy alone to Neosho, the large town eight miles from Diamond. Before the boy went, Moses gave him money and told him a short story.

In Moses' story there were two brothers. One brother threw his money away buying shiny objects of no use. The other brother bought some eggs and raised chickens. He sold the chickens to buy baby animals, which he raised and sold, and then bought more animals and raised and sold them until he could buy a suit of clothes at a store. That was the end of the story. There was nothing more wonderful to a farm boy of the time than a suit of clothes bought from a store.

The story finished, Jim or George walked down the road to Neosho and Moses waited to see what he would buy. If Moses liked what the boy bought, he was loud in saying, "Very good!" If he were not pleased with what was bought, he quietly stated, "A fool and his money are soon parted." When George became interested in the fancy cloth used to edge

women's clothes and brought home a tool for making lace, Moses could not decide whether he liked it or not and said nothing.

As a little boy, George was not easy to understand. He had a nervous way of saying a part of a word again and again before he could say the whole word. The things he said which people could understand they remembered and they remembered laughing at him. Moses had seen George watching Susan making lace and had heard him say, "I can do that!" All George needed was the metal tool which he bought on his trip to Neosho. First he made laces like those Susan made and later he made laces that looked like flowers and leaves he had seen.

He said he could make sick plants healthy. He visited the gardens in Diamond and told their owners how to care for flowers that were not growing well. People laughed and called him "the plant doctor." They gave him plants that were dying. He took these to a lonely place in the forest and cared for them. It was said that none of his plants ever died—that he always returned them healthy.

He saw some pictures hanging on the walls in the large house of the neighboring farmer. Someone explained to him that a man called an artist or a painter had made the pictures with paint, "He made them with his hands!" George said. "He made them with his hands! I can do that!" He gathered fruits and certain roots and pulled off parts of trees and made his colors. He painted his pictures on rocks and cans and little pieces of glass.

Susan said he was as able to do work with his

hands as his mother had been. When he asked Susan to tell him about his mother, Susan cried. She told him his mother had been very honest and remembered things well, and her hands could do almost any job.

One thing George's hands could not control well was a gun. But when Moses allowed him to use his small cutting tool, his knife, George successfully made a wooden device which a small friend who was not able to walk could use to help him play with the other children. George said he must have a knife. A knife was more than a boy like himself could hope for, but he said he must have one. With a knife he could make many things. He could think of no way to make a knife.

One night he dreamed of a place on the farm where three corn plants grew a short distance from the field. In his dream he saw a small lady's knife lying on the ground near a piece of fruit beside the three corn plants. The next morning he hurried to the field and found the three corn plants. Beside them was a piece of fruit and a lady's knife. He said that it was easy for him to see things before they happened. He knew Moses might laugh if he heard what George really thought—that God had found the knife for him.

His eyes were as quick as his hands and he asked the name of every bird and plant and stone that he found on his walks in the woods. Susan gave him a book that listed the meanings of words. George studied the book until he knew every word in it and what each word meant. However, he knew that the book did not list the name of all the birds and plants and stones that he had seen, and he said that someday he would have to go to school to get an education. Moses did not laugh at this.

Missouri now had a written law stating that everyone between the ages of 5 and 20 could go to schools paid for by the state. But in Missouri, as in many other states, black children were not accepted in the same schools as white children. There was one school in Diamond. White children went to it.

Moses sent George one day a week to a school at church where he himself never went. After the church school, George was allowed to sit on the steps of the church and listen to the singing. He said someday he would have a school of his own. People enjoyed the idea. He said in his school he would teach boys to cook and to do housework the same as girls. People laughed. He told Moses he needed more than the church school. Moses listened.

When George was 13 years old, Moses ordered him to put on his best clothes and make a cloth bag to carry those things that were his. He told George he was to go one more time to Neosho. This time he was to stay and go to school. Neosho had two schools.

#### CHAPTER THREE

Dusty from his eight-mile trip, George arrived in Neosho late in the afternoon. He walked the streets of the town wondering what he should do and how he should start. Night came. He saw a large open door in a building and heard horses moving around inside. He went through the door. Feeling less lonely in the company of the horses, he went to sleep there.

Before the sun was up he started for the school in the part of town where the Negroes lived. Knowing the school would not be open until much later in the morning, he sat down on a small mountain of firewood from which he could see, over a fence, the door of the school. The fire-wood was in the yard of Andrew and Mariah Watkins and Mariah needed wood. George watched her coming toward him. She looked at him carefully and decided he needed something to eat. She took him into her house and gave him food to eat. Then she washed him until his skin shone. Then she tied a big white cloth around him and put him to work washing clothes.

Mariah was famous from Neosho to the city of Joplin. Whenever a child was to be born, either white or black, Mariah was sent for. There were hundreds of children Mariah had helped to bring into this world, but George was the first she had brought into her home. She decided he should stay there. When the doors of the school opened, Mariah sent George over the fence and into the school.

Though the people of Missouri were still fighting one another because they did not agree on whether or not they had the right to own slaves, a national Office for Freedmen was at work in the state. This office had successfully started a number of schools for Negro children.

The Lincoln School, next to the Watkins' home, was a broken old building. Its one room, measuring 14 feet by 16 feet, held 75 black children.

The young Negro teacher, Mr. Frost, asked George his name. "George" was not enough for the teacher's records. Freed slaves usually took the name of the man who had been their master. The teacher made Carver's George into "George Carver" and school began.

When the bell sounded for the time to rest, George Carver jumped over the fence with his book and read while he finished washing the clothes. When the bell sounded for the next class, George Carver jumped the fence again with his book. When school ended for the day, George Carver was back at the Watkins' place helping with the milking and bringing in the wood. When his work was done, he opened his book again. This was why he had left home. The fact that he now had a new home within fence-jumping distance of the school was almost too good to think about.

Mariah and Andrew Watkins were members of a small church and George liked to go there with them. Andrew's singing voice was clear and high and made the church songs a thing George loved. And he liked the man who led the church service. Mariah, who could not read, gave George a Bible. In it he kept a page marker that she had helped him make of cloth. When he was an old man of 80 years Mariah's Bible was still in his room, usually opened with the cloth marker at the place where he was reading.

Having done what she could about George's hunger and his mind and his soul, Mariah turned her attention to his hands. In a short time it was his hands that did her ironing and cooking and cleaned her house while she was away helping women with their babies.

At the Lincoln School George soon knew all that Mr. Frost could teach and something more. He knew that Mr. Frost was sorry he was a Negro. From the town he learned that it was thought wrong for young Negroes to dream of riches or fame or even to want to better their way of life. His life on Moses Carver's farm had not prepared him not to dream. He became more quiet than before and more guarded in what he said.

Then, to George's delight, his brother Jim appeared at the Negro school in Neosho. George had many friends at the school but it was not often he joined in their games. He was small for his age and had poor health. Noisy play was the least of his pleasures. Jim was older, bigger, and stronger, but the two boys laughed at the same things and had always been closer than most brothers.

On weekends George and Jim walked the eight miles back to Diamond to visit the Carvérs. If there happened to be a party when they were there, they would read to the others from the books of Mark Twain and Josh Billings.

Back in Neosho George began to go out in the town to work wherever he could find jobs. He worked in several homes, cooking and cleaning.

Jim loved living in the "big" town but had no real interest in the school. He left the school and went to work in the building trade.

George wondered if his health would be better in another place and if there would be more to learn in another place. When he was almost 16 years old, he heard of a family who were moving to Fort Scott in Kansas and he asked if he could go with them. They agreed to take him.

When George was ready to leave, Andrew Watkins wrote a statement that when he died, everything he owned was to go to George. George, who had nothing, wrote his own statement leaving anything he might one day have to Andrew.

Jim walked with George back to the Carvers' farm to make a last visit. George wore a new shirt—the first shirt he had bought from a store. After he saw Moses, he said good-bye to Jim and joined the wagonload of chairs and pans and beds that was going to Fort Scott.

Fort Scott was 75 miles from Neosho. The trip took many days. The load on the wagon was heavy, and the family took turns riding on the wagon and walking to make the load lighter.