Match the words with their meaning:

| | |
|---|---|
| circumstances | a fact or condition connected with or relevant to an event or action. |
| agricultural | a person who is studying or has expert knowledge of one or more of the natural or physical sciences. |
| discrimination | the practice or system of owning slaves. |
| slavery | having the quality or power of producing especially in abundance. |
| scientist | relating to agriculture. |
| productive | the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or disability. |

LIVEWORKSHEETS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| scientist | agricultural | discrimination |
| slavery | productive | circumstances |

# The Plant Doctor

George Washington Carver was an agricultural scientist who became one of America's most well-known inventors. His accomplishments are even more remarkable when we learn how his life began.

George certainly did not have an easy start to life. He was born into slavery just one year before it was made illegal in America. As a child, he lived with his mother's previous owners, the Carvers, who owned a farm in Missouri. There, Mrs. Carver taught him how to read and write and how to work the land.



LIVEWORKSHEETS



From a young age, George was naturally curious. He loved art, music, and science. He was especially interested in farming and enjoyed experimenting with soil and plants. He had a knack for understanding how to protect crops from pests and diseases. He became so skilled that neighboring farmers recruited him to help them with their orchards and farms. George soon became known in the area as the "Plant Doctor."

Though he was already quite an expert at a young age, Carver was hungry to learn more. "I wanted to know the name of everything," he said. "Every stone and flower and insect and bird and beast. I wanted to know where it got its color, where it got its life. But there was no one to tell me."

At age eleven, Carver left the farm to seek his education elsewhere. For the next ten years, Carver attended various schools across the Midwest, working to support himself financially. He faced a lot of discrimination in these years, and he was often turned away from educational opportunities because of his skin color.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Eventually, he was accepted at Iowa State College. There, he became the first African American to earn his master's degree in Agriculture. George then left Iowa to teach at a school for black students in Alabama. He wanted to help students rise out of their difficult circumstances. Education, he believed, was "the key to unlock the golden door of freedom."

In Alabama, he taught farmers a thing or two as well. Carver saw that the southern soil had been worn out from growing cotton year after year. He believed it could be made healthier by growing other crops during certain seasons. He encouraged farmers to grow peanuts, soybeans, and sweet potatoes.

His plan worked perfectly. By rotating crops, the soil became more productive. The Plant Doctor was alive and well. The local farmers were ecstatic. Not only were their cotton crops better than ever, but they now had a surplus of potatoes and peanuts!



LIVEWORKSHEETS

Carver also used his creative genius to invent over 150 uses for sweet potatoes, including flour, vinegar, paint, and ink. Carver is best known today for also inventing over 300 uses for peanuts. These included milk, oil, paper, and makeup.

George's lasting reputation, though, did not come easily. As an African American living at a time when slavery had just ended, he faced many unjust obstacles and dangers. However, through education and hard work, Carver achieved his goals. His passion for plants and people led him from slavery to success.



*George Washington Carver (1864 - 1943)*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

# The Plant Doctor (exercises)

## 1. Multiple Choice.

Which of the following is NOT one of the crops George encouraged farmers to grow in Alabama?

a. soybeans
b. sweet potatoes
c. peanuts
d. broccoli

Based on what you know about George, which of the following was probably his favorite school subject?

a. English
b. science
c. history
d. recess

Which of the following was George sometimes called during his lifetime?

a. The Tree Hugger
b. The Plant Doctor
c. The Flower Child
d. The Nutcracker

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2. **True (T) or False (F)? Circle the right answer. If the story does not say the answer, circle (X).**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Today, George is best known for what he did with sweet potatoes. | T | F | X |
| George's plan for farming in Alabama worked, and the soil and the cotton crops were healthier than ever. | T | F | X |
| George liked farming in Alabama better than in Iowa. | T | F | X |
| George did not really enjoy learning, and he often slacked off in school. | T | F | X |

LIVEWORKSHEETS