

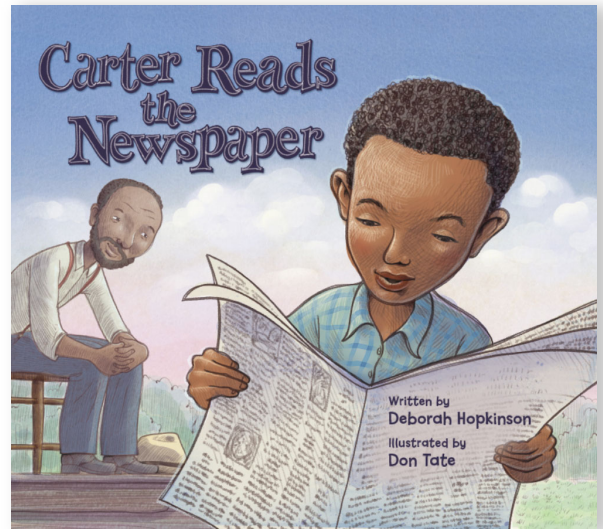
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PEACHTREE
TEACHER'S GUIDE

Carter Reads the Newspaper

Written by Deborah Hopkinson
Illustrated by Don Tate

HC: 978-1-56145-934-6

Ages 6–10 | Biography
Lexile • F&P • GRL P; Gr 3



ABOUT THE BOOK

Each year, we celebrate the lives of Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, and many other famous African Americans. Yet there are many African Americans throughout history who have made great contributions we know nothing about. This is the story of one man, Carter G. Woodson, and his commitment to learning, truth, and the creation of Black History Month.

THEMES

Education | Determination | Heritage | Truth
Black History | Black History Month

BEFORE YOU READ

- Have the class make a list of as many people from Black history they can think of. Ask students to tell in one sentence what they know about each one. Can they name their accomplishments? Have them give one characteristic they all have in common.
- Read the 43 names listed at the end of the book. Have students raise their hands each time they recognize a name. Tell the class that these people had a huge impact on history.
- Tell them they are going to learn about another person from history whom they may not know anything about but who also made a huge impact on history.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Carter got all his information from reading newspapers. Was this a good way to become informed? How do we get our information today? How does that compare to Carter's experience? Which method is the most reliable and why?
- Carter was born ten years after the end of the Civil War. Why is this noteworthy? When did the Civil War end? Would his story be different if he was born thirty years earlier or thirty years after the Civil War?
- Carter grew up hearing stories from his parents' lives when they were enslaved. How do you think these stories affected Carter and shaped him? How would hearing similar stories about your parents affect you? Why do you think Carter's parents told him the stories?
- James Henry made \$100 a year as a farmer. How far would \$100 have gone in 1875? Research this.
- Anna Eliza asked her master to sell her instead of her mother, so her mother could raise her other five children. What does this tell you about Eliza? Would you have done that? No one offered enough money for Eliza so she was not sold. How would you feel in this situation? Would you be relieved, embarrassed, worried, ashamed, all of the above?

- Many times Carter and his family left the table hungry. How do you think this shaped Carter's character? If you and your family were continually hungry, what would you be willing to do to remedy the situation?
- Carter had to go to bed early Saturday nights so his mother could wash his only pants and shirt for church the next day. If you only had the clothes on your back, how would you get them clean? If you only had one set of clothes would you hide that fact from people? Your friends? What would Carter think about you and your family if he were present in your home today and looked in your closet?
- Carter was only able to attend school for four months each year, yet he learned all year long. What are other ways to learn? What can be learned outside of school? Which is more important and why? Describe something you learned outside of school.
- Compare Carter's education to that of President Abraham Lincoln's.
- James Henry believed it was important to be an informed citizen. What is a citizen? Why is it important to be informed?
- Carter's father taught his children to stand up for themselves and take pride in who they were. Why did he need to teach his children this lesson? Was it related to the time in which they lived? Does it still need to be taught today? How does one stand up for one's self?
- James Henry gave Carter the courage to look anyone in the eye and declare, "I am your equal." Was Carter everyone's equal? Why wouldn't everyone see Carter that way? How is it possible to give someone else courage? Has anyone ever given you courage or have you given someone else courage?
- Carter read old papers that had been used to wrap up food or packages. Why did he have to use old newspapers? Was it difficult to find newspapers in 1875? Did everyone have the same experience?
- How would you feel if you had grown up only knowing your neighborhood or town, and then you suddenly learned that there was a whole big world out there? Would you feel depressed about what you had missed or excited about new opportunities?
- Carter longed to go to high school, but his family needed him to earn money. Often, an educated person can earn more money than an uneducated one. If this was the case in Carter's time, why would his parents have made this decision? Would you choose work over an education? In what circumstances?
- Carter worked from the time he was young. What does this teach a person?
- Carter drove a garbage wagon. Do people look down on those who do menial labor? Are all jobs respectable?
- Carter worked in the coal mines of West Virginia, beginning at the age of seventeen. It was a dangerous job. Would Carter be allowed to hold this job today? Carter said, "I am a coal miner and I can take anything." What did he mean? What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
- Oliver Jones changed one life, and that life changed many others'. How is this possible? What can you do today to change one person's life for the better? What project could your class or school do to change someone's life?
- Oliver fought in the Civil War. He was still willing to do his part to further the cause of freedom and equality. If the War was over and the slaves were free, what was left to be done? How can a free man be made more free or equal? What role might education play?
- Oliver filled his home with books and newspapers and invited the miners to read and discuss them. What do you think Carter and the other miners got out of the experience? Why is it important for people to have a place to hang out together?
- Some of the books in Oliver's home were written by African Americans. Why was it important to have these books available to the miners? Is it important to read books authored by someone like you?
- Oliver sold ice cream and fruits to the miners. Why was it important to provide food? How does eating together affect a group's relationship?
- Carter admired Oliver. "He was a well educated man, but he could neither read nor write. He learned through others." What does this tell you about Oliver? Is it more important to be well-educated or literate? Today if you can't read or

write are you considered educated? Which would you choose?

- At Oliver's house, Carter's job was to research the answers to questions the miners had about items in the newspaper. How would you do this in an era before public libraries, television, Internet, or radio? What does this tell you about Carter?
- Carter was inspired by Oliver and this circle of men committed to freedom, equality, and knowledge—men whose own life stories would never be in history books. Is there a cause that you are so committed to that you are willing to work without recognition?
- Carter said, "My interest in penetrating the past of my people was deepened." Black Americans' stories had not been written down and published. How did Carter find out about the past?
- Carter eventually went back to high school and then to college and graduate school. He was the first and only Black American whose parents had been enslaved to receive a doctorate in history. Is it hard being the first to achieve something? Can you achieve something that your parents and grandparents were unable to do? What do you want to do or be that your family has not been able to do?
- One of Carter's professors said that Black people had no history. Carter disagreed. Why would the professor believe this? Is it possible for a person or people to have no history? How would you go about proving you had a history? What is racism? Do you think racism had anything to do with the professor's beliefs?
- In 1926, Carter established Negro History Week, which eventually became Black History Month. He chose the week of Frederick Douglass's and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays. Why did Carter choose to honor these two men in this way? If Carter were alive today do you think he would choose the same men to honor, or would he choose others? What two people from your own heritage would you choose to honor and why?
- Why do we celebrate Black History Month today? Why is it important to have a Black History Month? What is an ethnic group? Should all ethnic groups have a month?
- Carter fought for a history that was based on truth, a history that included all people. If the history is not based on truth, can it be history? If

it does not include all people, can it be history? Why is it important that history includes all people?

- "Carter G. Woodson didn't just study history. He changed it." How can a person change history when history is the past? What can you do to change history today? Are you going to try?

ACTIVITIES

- Do some research. What was it like to be a coal miner in the late nineteenth century? What are child labor laws? When were they enacted?
- Think about the people around you. Who do you know who is making a difference who will never be in a history book? Write their story.
- Interview your family and relatives. Ask for stories from their past. Write them down and share them with your class.
- Come up with a class plan to make a difference in your community. Write a Make a Difference pledge. Take the Make a Difference pledge.
- Read the newspaper and pick a current event you are passionate about to discuss with your class. How could you become involved?
- Create a holiday, celebration, or event for your people. How would you celebrate? What day, week, or month would you choose and why?
- Choose someone from the portraits in the book and research him or her. What kind of character traits were needed for him or her to accomplish what he or she did? Which of these character traits do you hold?

Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 1.2
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 1.3
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 1.9
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 2.1
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 2.2
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 2.3
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 2.6
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 2.7
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 3.1
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 3.2
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 3.3
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 3.6
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 4.1
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 4.2
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 4.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 5.1
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 5.2
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 5.3
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI. 5.6

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah Hopkinson grew up in the historic town of Lowell, Massachusetts. As a girl, she became curious about the people left out of history books. Hopkinson is the award-winning author of nonfiction and historical fiction for young readers including *Sweet Land of Liberty* and *Keep On! The Story of Matthew Henson: Co-Discoverer of the North Pole*. She lives in Oregon.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Don Tate grew up in Des Moines, Iowa where he learned about Black history at the Center for Study and Application of Black Theology. He grew up to become the author and illustrator of numerous award-winning children's books, including *Strong as Sandow: How Eugen Sandow Became the Strongest Man on Earth*; *Whoosh! Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions*; and *Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton*. He lives in Texas.

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REVIEWS

"Young readers will be caught up in his story.... Quotes are seamlessly woven into the narrative, and a time line, list of sources, and bibliography add research appeal. Of special note are the illustrations, which include more than 40 portraits of black leaders... Their images and one-line biographies will pique further interest, making this a valuable resource for school and public libraries."

—*Booklist*

"Hopkinson skillfully shapes Carter's childhood, family history and formative experiences into a cohesive story....the inclusion of notable figures from black history reinforces the theme (a key is in the backmatter).

An important and inspiring tale well told."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Conversational... Delicately textured mixed-media illustrations...offer spare, stylized images..."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Thorough back matter... A charmingly illustrated picture book biography for elementary schoolers."

—*School Library Journal*

"Fascinating... Expressive artwork..."

—*Foreword Reviews*

Teacher's Guide for
CARTER READS THE NEWSPAPER
 prepared by Gail Shipley

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