Have you ever wished that you could invent things? What would you invent? What would you do with it? George Washington Carver was a great scientist and inventor. What he did might surprise you.

He was born in January about 1864 on the Moses farm near Diamond Grove, Missouri. When he was still just a baby, slave raiders came and kidnapped him and his mother. After the Civil War, his former master was able to ransom him back, but his mother could not be found. Mr. Moses raised George and his brother as part of his own family. As he grew up on the farm, George learned to love plants and nature. He loved to take care of plants so much that people started calling him "The Plant Doctor".

When George was 12 years old, he was ready to start his formal education, but there were no schools for black children where he lived. He left home and found a town in southern Missouri where there was a school. He went to school and worked as a farm hand to earn his keep. After graduating he became the first black student to attend Simpson College in Iowa. Then he transferred to Iowa Agricultural College and worked as the school janitor to help pay for classes.

George Washington Carver received his degree in 1894 and two years later received his master's degree. He was the first African American to serve on that school's faculty. It was not long before his fame spread, and Booker T. Washington offered him a teaching job at the Tuskegee Institute.

George was very busy at the Tuskegee Institute. His interest in agriculture helped him to discover many things that helped people. These are still used today. He developed a method of crop rotation, which really helped the farmers. Most farmers were growing either cotton or tobacco. They would grow these same plants year after year, and their plants were doing worse and worse. They did not know that the plants were taking nutrients out of the soil so that each year there were fewer nutrients for the new plants.

George understood what was happening. He knew of plants that would help make the soil rich again. If the farmers planted these other plants one year and cotton the next year, the crop would be much better. Farmers started growing peanuts, peas, soybeans, sweet potatoes and pecans. Before long their farms were doing much better.
When farmers began producing too many peanuts, George looked for new ways to use them. Have you ever heard of peanut oil and peanut butter? He found 325 different ways to use peanuts. When he was done with peanuts, he found almost 20 uses for sweet potatoes and pecans. Then he learned how to make 500 different shades of dye from soybeans. Those dyes could be used in cosmetics, paints and stains.

George Washington Carver did not patent most of his inventions or discoveries. He thought that since he had been given a brain to think of these things, he should give them to others. Many people honored him for his work, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who dedicated a national monument to his work on July 14, 1943. The area where he grew up is also preserved as a park and national monument.

George Washington Carver was about 79 when he died at the Tuskegee Institute on January 5, 1943. On his tombstone are these words. "He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world."
### George Washington Carver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What happened to George when he was a baby?</td>
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<td>2. What did people call George because of his love for plants?</td>
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<td>3. What did farmers grow to improve the soil?</td>
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<td>4. How many uses did George find for peanuts?</td>
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<td>5. If you invented things like George Washington Carver, would you have sold them or given them away?</td>
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<td>6. If George invented three hundred thirty-six uses for peanuts, twenty-five uses for sweet potatoes and four hundred ninety-two uses for soybeans, how many things did he invent?</td>
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George Washington Carver

7. If George sold forty-one inventions for $174.00 each, how much money would he have earned?

8. Name five uses for peanuts.

K.C.’s Dream (a one-act play)
By Brenda B. Covert

**Cast**
*(in order of appearance)*

**K.C.** - boy or girl in pajamas
**Harriet Tubman** - old-fashioned clothing with bandanna around her head
**George Washington Carver** - shirt and dress pants, carrying a bag marked "Peanuts"
**Madam C.J. Walker** - stylish hair and blouse with floor-length skirt
**Nat King Cole** - shirt and button-down sweater or sweater vest, old style
**Martin Luther King Jr.** - business suit
**Oprah Winfrey** - classy outfit, big hair, and microphone
**Michael Jordan** - basketball uniform (Chicago Bulls or similar) and basketball
**Chorus** - two or more children dressed in matching robes or jeans and t-shirts
Setting: a child's bedroom at night. Bed sits center stage with head upstage and foot downstage. A large pillow allows K.C.'s head to be seen even when reclining. A chair sits on each side of the bed.

K.C.: (enters and sits on edge of bed, facing audience) I'm glad this day is over. Some kids were mean to me just because I'm black. (Shakes head) I don't know why they think they're better than me. My teacher says we're all created equal. I don't know what to think. What if they're right? (Gets into bed, pulls covers up to chin, lies head on pillow, and quickly falls asleep)

[CHORUS of children quietly walks single file to the head of the bed and lines up behind it.]

HARRIET TUBMAN: (entering stage right to stand beside bed, facing audience. Speaks firmly) K.C., you and I need to have a talk.

K.C.: (jerks up, rubbing eyes) What? Who's there?

HARRIET TUBMAN: It's me, child, Harriet Tubman.

K.C.: (staring) The Harriet Tubman? The runaway slave? In my bedroom? (Puts hands over eyes) I must be dreaming!

HARRIET TUBMAN: (sitting in chair) Listen to me. (K.C. puts hands down to look at TUBMAN) I was born into slavery. I saw a lot of injustice in my life, but I didn't let it hold me down. I escaped! I found freedom!

K.C.: I know! And you helped a lot of other slaves escape to freedom too! If you had been caught, you could have been killed. You
were so brave!

HARRIET TUBMAN: (proudly) I was the conductor of the Underground Railroad for eight years, and I can say what most conductors can't say. I never ran my train off the track, and I never lost a passenger.

K.C.: Why are you in my bedroom?

HARRIET TUBMAN: (patting K.C. on the shoulder) Our people had to be strong and brave to survive slavery. I'm here to tell you to be brave. Believe in yourself!

CHORUS: Believe in yourself!

HARRIET TUBMAN: Don't listen to people who want to put you down. Choose to do the right thing, and you can't go wrong.

[GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER enters from stage left]

CARVER: (smiling as if at an old friend) Hello, Harriet. I thought I might find you here.

HARRIET TUBMAN: (motioning him closer with her arm) Come on over here, George.

CARVER: (moving to stand on the stage left side of the bed) Hello, K.C. Let me introduce myself. I'm George Washington Carver. (He offers his hand)
K.C.: *(stunned and delighted, rising to knees to shake hands)* The peanut butter guy?

CARVER: *(chuckles)* You could say that. I was born free near the end of the Civil War. I grew up to become a chemist and teacher. I did a lot of work with peanuts, pecans, soy beans, and sweet potatoes.

HARRIET TUBMAN: George had a strong mind and a big heart. He refused to profit from most of his discoveries. His goal was to make life better for southern farmers.

CARVER: *(sitting in the chair)* Now, Harriet, don't go bragging on me. Who else but farmers feed America? Helping farmers was my way of helping everyone. I couldn't put a price tag on that.

K.C.: *(sitting cross-legged on bed)* So why are you in my bedroom?

CARVER: I'm here to remind you of the importance of education. *(Rising and speaking to the audience)* Our people have been inventors and scientists. We have helped change the world. Believe in yourself.

CHORUS: Believe in yourself!

CARVER: Ninety-nine percent of the failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses. *(Looking back to K.C.)* Don't be like them. Work hard, get a good education, and you'll find success.

*[MADAM C.J. WALKER enters from stage left and walks toward the bed]*
K.C.: Who are you?

MADAM WALKER: (facing audience) I am Madam C.J. Walker, the daughter of former slaves. I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. From there I was promoted to the washtub. From there I was promoted to the cook kitchen. And from there I promoted myself (points to her heart) into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations. I have built my own factory on my own ground.

K.C.: Nice to meet you! (Holds out hand, which WALKER shakes)

[CARVER gives up his seat to her and stands beside it.]

MADAM WALKER: Listen! Don't you think it would be difficult for an uneducated black woman in the early 1900's to become a successful business owner?

K.C.: Well, yes. How did you do it?

MADAM WALKER: (sitting forward on edge of chair) I worked at it, and I didn't give up! I knew I had a good product. I believed in myself. I knocked on doors until other people believed in me too!

CHORUS: Believe in yourself!

MADAM WALKER: (pointing in K.C.’s face) You want to know why I'm here tonight? (K.C. nods) I'm here to tell you that you can make it. Look at me! (Spreads arms wide) I made it at a time when our people didn't have the right to vote! I made it at a time when women didn't have a say in government! You (points at K.C.)
have a lot more freedom than I had. Ignore those people who badmouth you. Let them be failures. They can't hold you back. Believe in yourself!

CHORUS, TUBMAN, CARVER:

Believe in yourself!

[NAT KING COLE enters from stage right]

HARRIET TUBMAN: Well, look who's here!

CARVER: Nat King Cole, come on over here and join the party!

K.C.: (looking up at CARVER, speaking in a low voice) Who's Nat King Cole?

NAT KING COLE: (smiling) My daddy was a preacher, and Mama was a piano teacher. I grew up to become a jazz pianist and singer!

[COLE moves to sit on the edge of the bed. K.C. moves forward to listen.]

NAT KING COLE: They say that New Orleans was the birthplace of jazz. Lots of our people became famous for playing or singing jazz. Maybe you've heard of Louis [pronounced Louie] Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, or Ray Charles.

MADAM WALKER: Tell him what's unforgettable about you, Nat!
"Unforgettable" was the name of one of my most popular songs. I guess what Madam C.J. wants me to tell you is that I was the first African-American performer to have my own radio show. I was also the first to have a TV show!

K.C.: Really? Wow!

I was a worldwide success, and part of that may have been because I showed a real interest in other cultures and languages. Of course I sang songs in English, but I also recorded songs in Spanish, Italian, French, German, and Japanese.

K.C.: So are you here to tell me to believe in myself?

CHORUS: Believe in yourself!

I couldn't have succeeded in music if I hadn't believed in myself. It's one thing to have talent, but it's another to recognize it and believe in it. (Moving to stand beside HARRIET TUBMAN)

[MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. enters from stage left]

(grandly, facing audience, arms spread as if to hug the whole room) I had a dream!

K.C.: I'm pretty sure I'm having a dream. Are you Martin Luther King, Jr.?
**MLK JR.:** Yes, I am. I grew up during the time of segregation. Our people had to sit in the back of the bus, drink from fountains for colored people, and go to separate schools. We were treated like second class citizens. It was time for a change. I got involved in politics and I became a leader in the Civil Rights movement. I organized peaceful protests. I was arrested 30 times for participating in civil rights activities, but I didn't let that keep me from my goal. My goal was equal rights regardless of skin color.

**NAT KING COLE:** He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 - the youngest man to ever win it!

**MLK JR.:** Now you have Clarence Thomas, a black man, sitting on the Supreme Court! Our people are involved in politics! My work made a difference! Come here, K.C. (*K.C. hops off bed and stands beside MLK JR.*) I know you've had a hard day. I had hard days too. You've felt the sting of prejudice. I did too. But you can't let it defeat you. You can't let yourself grow bitter and full of hate. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. The time is always right to do what is right. Believe in yourself.

**CHORUS:** Believe in yourself!

**K.C.:** But I don't know how. I'm just a kid! What if I end up being a failure?

**MLK JR.:** Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step. You know right from wrong. You know good from evil. Choose to do right; choose to do good. Choose to develop the talents you were born with. Follow your dreams.
K.C.: (sleepily) Follow my dreams. Believe in myself. (Turns and walks to bed as MLK follows)

CHORUS, TUBMAN, CARVER, COLE, and MLK JR.:

[K.C. lies down in bed, closes eyes, and loudly sighs as ALL look on. K.C. suddenly sits up]

K.C.: Are you all still here?

[OPRAH WINFREY enters from stage left, carrying a microphone]

OPRAH: I'm sorry. I got here as soon as I heard - am I late?

MADAM WALKER: Goodness no, you're right on time! (Looks at child) K.C., do you know who this is?

K.C.: (unsure) I think I've seen her on TV...

OPRAH: (striding toward K.C.) I'm Oprah Winfrey, the actress and TV talk show host, and you're K.C. (shaking hands)

K.C.: (excited) Wow! Am I going to be on TV?

OPRAH: Anything is possible! (Pause) But not tonight. Now, tell me
about your day. *(Sits on edge of bed)*

**K.C.:** *(sighs)* I met some kids that were racist. They said a lot of bad things that made me feel worthless.

**OPRAH:** K.C., do you believe that you are worthless?

**K.C.:** *(shrugging)* I don't guess so.

**OPRAH:** In every aspect of our lives, we are always asking ourselves, how am I of value? What is my worth? Yet I believe that worthiness is our birthright. Listen, K.C., you are built not to shrink down to less but to blossom into more.

**K.C.:** I am?

**OPRAH:** As you become more clear about who you really are, you'll be better able to decide what is best for you the first time around. You just have to believe in yourself.

**CHORUS:** Believe in yourself!

**OPRAH:** I believed in myself, and I went from reading the news on a small radio station to being the first woman in history to own and produce her own TV talk show! I am the first African-American woman billionaire! All of us can improve our lives and the world, even you. Do you believe that?

**K.C.:** *(standing on bed)* Yes! Yes, I believe!
CHORUS:  Believe in yourself!

[Suddenly a dribbling basketball is heard. ALL turn to face stage right. M. JORDAN appears, dribbling the basketball.]

CARVER:  Michael Jordan is in the house!

M. JORDAN:  Hey, K.C.! Think fast! (He shoots the ball to K.C., who catches it.)

K.C.:  I can't believe the greatest basketball player of all time is in my bedroom!

MLK JR.:  Michael Jordan is a former NBA player who also won two gold medals in the Olympics. He also played minor league baseball. He's a very athletic fellow!

M. JORDAN:  Listen up; I don't have a lot of time. (K.C. hops off the bed and carries the ball to JORDAN) Our people have had a lot of success in sports. And many have come face to face with racism. (Takes ball) Take baseball's Hank Aaron. When he broke Babe Ruth's home run record back in 1974, he got tons of hate mail, all because a black man broke a white man's record. He didn't let that beat him. He had courage. In 2002, Hank Aaron received America's highest civilian honor - the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

K.C.:  Is that what you came to tell me?
M. JORDAN: (squatting to eye level, upstage hand on K.C.’s shoulder) K.C., I know what happened to you today. You've got to shake it off. If you accept the expectations of others, especially negative ones, then you never will change the outcome.

K.C.: (sweeping arms around to include ALL) I'm surrounded by stories of successful black people. Now I know that I can be proud of my heritage.

M. JORDAN: (standing tall) I realize that I'm black, but I like to be viewed as a person, and this is everybody's wish.

K.C.: Yes, that's how I feel too.

HARRIET TUBMAN: We all feel that way.

K.C.: Thank you all for coming to see me. You taught me to believe in myself!

CHORUS and ALL: (to audience) Believe in yourself!

K.C.: (looking around at the visitors) My friends are never going to believe this!

MADAM WALKER: Hush, now, and go on to bed. (WALKER and TUBMAN tuck K.C. into bed and slip offstage, followed by the others who murmur among themselves.)
[When ALL other actors are gone, K.C. quickly sits up and looks at audience]

**K.C.:** Wow! I just had the best dream ever! *(Throws back covers and swings legs over the side)* I've got to go tell Mom! *(Runs off stage)*

*THE END*
Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Dr. George Washington Carver.

Rothstein, Arthur, 1915- photographer.

CREATED/PUBLISHED
1942 Mar.

NOTES
Title and other information from caption card.

Actual size of negative is C (approximately 4 x 5 inches).

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