**The Secret Garden of George Washington Carver**

**By Gene Barretta**

Lesson Plan by Gene Barretta

**Common Core State Standards-English Language Arts-Literacy, Reading Informational Text Grade 3**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/1/) Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/2/) Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/3/) Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.7](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/7/) Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.8](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/8/) Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).

**Focus**

Critical thinkers actively and skillfully interpret, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information

**Activation**

Introduce author Gene Barretta to students and share information about his website [www.genebarretta.com](http://www.genebarretta.com/). Explain we will be reading a book written by Gene and talk about a very scientist/agriculturalist that you may have read about before.

**Pre Reading Conversation:**

* Who has heard of George Washington Carver?
* Where and when did he live?
* What else made him famous?
* Do you know what the civil rights era was about?

**Post Reading Conversation:**

* What do you think was George Washington Carver’s attitude about growing up during that period in American history? What helped him survive the racism around him?
* Do you need to have an attitude like this to be a sports competitor, why or why not?
* What made him persevere?
* What tells you that he was passionate about nature?

**Mini-Lesson**

* This unit can be as elaborate or simple as you want, incorporate information literacy skills in throughout the lesson: note-taking, fact vs. fiction exploration, online searching, script writing, performing. Use this idea as a starting point.
* Begin the unit explaining that students (working in pairs) will be creating an interview with George Washington Carver.
* One person will ask questions as an interviewer the other will be George Washington Carver.
* Read the book again and find five facts that you want to turn into an interview question. Students may use other resources to find facts on George Washington Carver, such as PebbleGo, WorldBookOnline.
* Once they find five facts they like, they must turn those facts into a question and answer, for example:
  + Fact-George Washington Carver was born at the end of the Civil War, but never knew his exact birthdate - turned into a question and answer could look like this:
    - Interviewer: George Washington Carver, thank you for joining me, tell me when were you born?
    - MA: I was born at a time when birth records were not always kept for enslaved people.
* Once the five questions and introduction have been created, video the students conducting the interview. Remind them about voice-inflection, animation, excitement. Merge videos together to create a movie to share with whole class.

**Extended Lesson**

For students who finish quickly, have them find another person to research, Gene has other books that discuss the lives of Thomas Edison (*Timeless Thomas: How Thomas Edison Changed Our Lives)*, Leonardo da Vinci (*Neo Leo: the Ageless Ideas of Leonardo da Vinci)*, Ben Franklin (*Now & Ben: the Modern Inventions of Benjamin Franklin), Muhammad Ali (Muhammad Ali: A Champion is Born), Steven Spielberg (Starring Steven Spielberg: The Making of a Young Filmmaker), Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy (Lincoln and Kennedy: A Pair to Compare).*