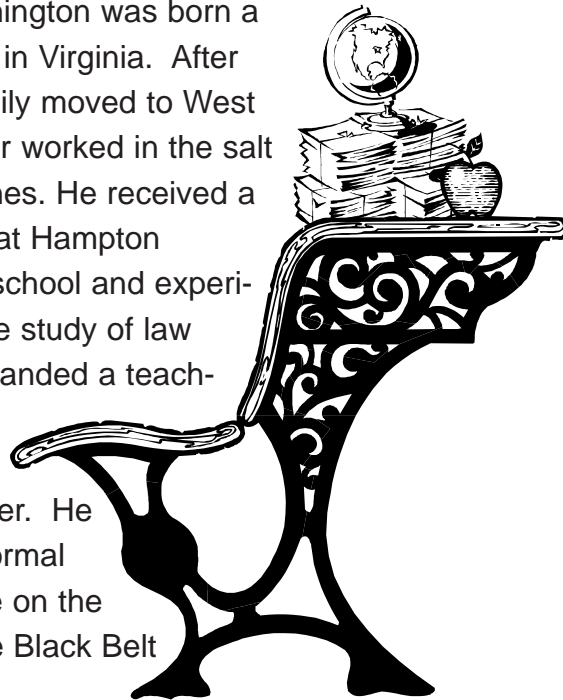


BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

by Lenny Geller

Booker T. Washington was the foremost black educator of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Additionally, he influenced southern race relations and was an important figure in black public affairs from 1895 until his death in 1915. Booker T. Washington was born a slave on a small farm in Virginia. After emancipation, his family moved to West Virginia, where Booker worked in the salt furnaces and coal mines. He received a secondary education at Hampton Institute, then taught school and experimented briefly with the study of law and the ministry. He landed a teaching position at Hampton that would decide his future career. He founded Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute on the Hampton model in the Black Belt of Alabama in 1881.



Presented with a contemporary energy, Theatre IV's stirring dramatization of Booker T. Washington's life is enacted in the context of a modern-day discussion of this American hero's legacy. As a group of four young adults attempt to understand the life and times of this former Virginia slave, the audience learns of Washington's childhood, his abject poverty, his growing understanding of personal responsibility, his commitment to education, his founding of Tuskegee Institute, and his ultimate role as the foremost voice in black public affairs at the turn of the 20th Century.



Booker T. Washington is presented in support of the following Virginia Standards of Learning: English: 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 7.1, 7.2, 7.5, 7.6, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 10.1, 10.3, 10.6, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 12.1, 12.2, 12.3 History: USI.1, USI.9, USI.10, USII.1, USII.3, USII.5, USII.8, VS.2, VS.4, VS.8, CE.3, CE.4, CE.8

Reconstruction

Reconstruction was the process of rebuilding that followed the American Civil War (1861-1865). The end of the war left Americans with a set of pressing questions about what to do with the South. Among those questions were those relating to former slaves:

- 1) What should be the position of the newly-freed slaves? What responsibility did the government have to extend basic rights to them? Which rights?
- 2) How should Southern business be converted from one based on slave labor to one based on paid labor?

Adapted from "Reconstruction (U.S. history)," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2003 <http://encarta.msn.com> © 1997-2003 Microsoft Corporation. All Rights Reserved.

Using Primary Resources

Primary sources are records of events as they are first described, without any interpretation or commentary. They are materials on a topic upon which subsequent interpretations or studies are based, anything from first-hand documents such as poems, diaries, court records, and interviews.

Read the following excerpts from Booker T. Washington's famous **Atlanta Compromise Speech** and answer the questions that follow.

"A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, water; send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River. To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: "Cast down your bucket where you are"— cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man's chance in the commercial world.."



Booker T. Washington

1. Why do you think Washington's ideas about blacks integrating themselves into a white world were seen as a **compromise**?
2. Do you agree or disagree with Washington's ideas as they are portrayed above?
3. W.E.B. DuBois was a harsh critic of Booker T. Washington. Research W.E.B. DuBois and compare the two influential black leaders.

A Long Road Ahead

After the Civil War, the South faced the daunting task of Reconstruction. Freed slaves faced great challenges than ever before. They were largely uneducated and needed to make a place for themselves in society. Schools such as the Normal School for Negroes in Tuskegee, Alabama, became instrumental in African Americans' quest for knowledge and skills. Dr. Washington, through "education and industry," directed a

class of newly emancipated Blacks toward economic and social independence.



Tuskegee rose to national prominence under the leadership of its founder, Dr. Washington, who headed the institution from 1881 until his death at age 59 in 1915. He maintained a lifelong devotion to his institution and to his home – the South. Dr. Washington is

buried on the campus of Tuskegee University near the University Chapel.

Tuskegee: Then and Now

*Log on to Tuskegee University's website at www.tusk.edu/.
Compare the institution in 1881 and today.
How has it evolved to meet the needs of its students?*

1881

Now

Did you know?

The Jim Crow Laws

The following were just a few of the discriminatory laws that were in place in various states during Booker T. Washington's life:

Buses

All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races. *Alabama*

Textbooks

Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them. *North Carolina*

Libraries

The state librarian is directed to fit up and maintain a separate place for the use of the colored people who may come to the library for the purpose of reading books or periodicals. *North Carolina*

Education

The schools for white children and the schools for negro children shall be conducted separately. *Florida*

Branch Out!

If you liked the play *Booker T. Washington*, you may want to check out the following books at your local library:

Easier

Booker T. Washington, Ambitious Boy
by Augusta Stevenson

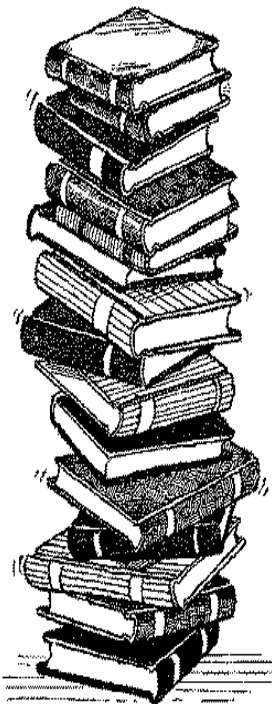
Booker T. Washington, Educator of Hand, Head, and Heart
by Shirley Graham Du Bois

Challenging

Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century
by John Hope Franklin

Up From Slavery
by Booker T. Washington

For more books about Booker T. Washington, check the biography section at your local library.



Extend the Experience!

The Booker T. Washington Monument at Tuskegee is called "Lifting the Veil." The inscription reads, "He lifted the veil of ignorance from his people and pointed the way to progress through education and industry." What do you think this means? What "veils" have been lifted in your lifetime? What "veils" still exist in today's world?

Visit the Booker T. Washington Memorial Website at www.nps.gov/bowa/index.htm

