

## Booker T. Washington

Booker T. Washington was born in 1856 to a white father and black slave mother in Virginia. He was a slave for the first nine years of his life. Then one day in 1865, all of the slaves were called to the master's house and told that they were free. Slavery had ended. Booker's stepfather, who was already in West Virginia, sent for Booker and his family. They rode by wagon to West Virginia, a trip that took ten days. In West Virginia, Booker and his brother John worked in coalmines and salt mines. A man named William Davis opened a school for the children of freed slaves, and Booker was allowed to attend as long as he worked before and after school to bring in money for his family. He worked in the mines from 4 o'clock in the morning until school started at 9 o'clock. Then, after a half day of school, he went back to the mines.

Booker loved school. He said that his first day of school was the happiest day of his life. He had to drop out to work full time in the coalmines because his family needed the money. Booker's mother later found him a better job as the houseboy for the family of a general. The general's wife, Mrs. Ruffner, was very strict, but Booker considered her one of his best friends. She had never been satisfied with her other houseboys, but Booker's dedication and attention to detail impressed her. He worked for Mrs. Ruffner for four years, and she sent him to school. Booker was always very honest with Mrs. Ruffner, believing that honesty would always pay off. He sold fruits and vegetables to miners and kept track of every penny he received.

When Booker was sixteen, he learned about a school for black students called the Hampton Institute. He was accepted there and worked as a janitor to pay for room and board. He learned public speaking at Hampton, which turned out to be very important for his future. He later returned to teach there. While teaching at Hampton, he was recommended for a job as principal of a new school in Tuskegee, Alabama. A white man there wanted to start a school for black students. The school, called Tuskegee Institute, grew under the leadership of Booker T. Washington. Today, it is known as Tuskegee University.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Booker T. Washington (cont'd)

Booker T. Washington's hard work and dedication to education gained him many supporters. He inspired many wealthy people to give money to help build schools for black children throughout the south. Eventually, more than 5,000 schools were built. Graduates from Hampton and Tuskegee taught in many of these schools. Washington also did a lot to help improve relationships between black and white people, especially in the south. He wrote his life story, a book called *Up From Slavery*, which was first published in 1901. The book quickly became a best seller. The same year, President Theodore Roosevelt invited Booker T. Washington to the White House. It was the first time that a Black American was invited to the president's home.

Because of his influence on race relations and education, many middle schools and high schools throughout the country have been named after Booker T. Washington. In 1940, he became the first African American to be pictured on a postage stamp. The house in Virginia where he was born is now called the Booker T. Washington Memorial. There is also a state park and a bridge named after him.

## Booker T. Washington Questions

1. Booker T. Washington
  - a. was born a slave.
  - b. was a runaway slave.
  - c. was always a slave.
  - d. was the first slave invited to the White House.
  
2. In 1865, Booker and his family
  - a. escaped slavery and fled to West Virginia.
  - b. went to West Virginia after slavery ended.
  - c. moved to West Virginia with their new owners.
  - d. were separated because his stepfather was sold to another owner.
  
3. Where did Booker and his brother John work in West Virginia?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Mrs. Ruffner was Booker T. Washington's
  - a. teacher.
  - b. owner.
  - c. aunt.
  - d. boss.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Mrs. Ruffner
  - a. was very strict.
  - b. was one of Booker's best friends.
  - c. sent Booker to school.
  - d. All of the above



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Booker T. Washington Answers

1. a
2. b
3. in coal mines and salt mines
4. d
5. d
6. a
7. a
8. Tuskegee Institute or Tuskegee University
9. *Up From Slavery*
10. c