

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Gifted Hands

by Ben Carson

written by Amanda Otten

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Gifted Hands

Introduction

Ben Carson's *Gifted Hands* runs the gamut between the heart-wrenching and the heart-warming. The inspirational stories of Carson's patients are matched only by Carson's own triumphant story. Growing up poor in Detroit's inner city, the future looked bleak for Ben Carson. But with determination, faith, and his "gifted hands," Carson overcame all odds to become a world-renowned neurosurgeon. Throughout his journey, Carson's mother, a single parent determined to give her sons a life she never had, pushed Carson to succeed. Indeed, devotion to God and family seemed to be the driving force in Carson's life.

In his autobiography, Carson also stresses the importance of education and self-improvement as the means for today's young people to achieve success. He believes that anyone can achieve his level of success by discovering the God-given talent that we all have within ourselves. As a role model for America's youth, particularly disadvantaged African-Americans, Carson emphasizes the need for practical career education. He criticizes a media that leads children to believe that careers in sports and music are realistic life goals.

Although almost anyone will find points of inspiration in *Gifted Hands*, this is a particularly relevant choice for at-risk students, especially those who fall into the group Carson himself targets. The power of seeing someone with Carson's childhood transform himself into a successful professional, dedicated to a life of service, will motivate weaker students and challenge stronger ones.

All references come from the Zondervan edition of *Gifted Hands*, copyright 1990.

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Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define and use vocabulary words from the book.
2. make inferences.
3. draw conclusions.
4. use evidence from the text to support his or her own responses and interpretations.
5. establish a purpose for reading.
6. draw on prior knowledge/experience to establish a connection with texts.
7. understand the role of faith in a person's life.
8. discuss the external influences that determine a person's success or failure including environment and opportunity.
9. understand the importance of family.
10. see how the effects of poverty can be overcome.
11. recognize the importance of education.
12. analyze the nature of talent as presented in the book.
13. understand intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the importance of each.
14. discuss the following principles as a means to achieving success:
 - talent
 - time
 - hope
 - honesty
 - insight
 - nice
 - knowledge
 - books
 - in-depth learning
 - God.
15. analyze media's role in society.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Why does Carson decide to become a doctor?
2. Discuss the degree to which the following factors influence a person's success or failure:
 - fate
 - chance/luck
 - free-will
3. How crucial do you think family is in determining a person's fate?
4. Why does Ben share the case histories that are found in the novel?
5. Which of the case histories presented in the novel affected Carson the most? Why does it affect him the most?
6. Who has the greatest influence on Carson? What is that influence?
7. How does his father's absence affect Ben?
8. How does experiencing poverty at an early age influence Carson?
9. What is the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation? Which is more important?
10. Discuss the various meanings of the word "faith." What role does faith play in Carson's life?
11. Discuss the relationship between Carson and Candy.
12. Discuss Carson's concept of talent and its role in achieving success.
13. What is Carson's purpose in writing this book? What does he hope to accomplish?

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Chapter 1

Vocabulary

affectionate – loving
assurance – guarantee
contentment – happiness
legitimate – true; real
offhandedly – casually
profound – deep
recollection – memory
reluctantly – hesitantly
resentment – hatred
vaguely – unclearly

1. From what point of view is the story told?

2. How old is Carson when his father leaves?

3. Why is it difficult for Carson to understand why his father has to leave?

Chapter 5

Vocabulary

acutely – intensely
cohorts – partners, as in crime
devout – spiritually devoted
genuinely – truly
ostracized – outcast
persisted – continued
pivotal – crucial
relatively – somewhat
sarcastic – mocking
sophisticated – complex; difficult
subsidy – assistance
sympathetically – with concern
unconventional – unusual
zealous – enthusiastic

1. Explain the ritual of capping.

2. What simile does Ben use in this chapter to describe the size of the home his family moves back to? What does the simile imply about the home?

3. What pressure does Ben feel for the first time in his life?

4. What honor does Carson receive at Johns Hopkins?

5. Why does Carson go ahead with the operation even though he cannot locate the faculty member who is in charge?

6. For what does Carson win the Resident of the Year Award?
