

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**Up From Slavery**

by Booker T. Washington

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# Up from Slavery

## Notes

*Up from Slavery* is the autobiography of Booker T. Washington, a former slave who founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. Although Washington's political and social ideas were generally accepted at the time, they are controversial today. He advocated an industrial education for freed slaves and emphasized the necessity of manual labor. Washington stressed the importance of learning those skills that would help blacks become economically self-reliant, and he believed that through those skills, blacks would earn the respect of the white race over time, thus eliminating racial prejudice.

At the time his autobiography was written, the word "Negro" was politically correct, and students should be aware that the term is used frequently in both the book and Teaching Unit. No disrespect is intended by the use of this word, as it is part of the era being studied.

It might be interesting to compare the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* with this book, particularly in the following areas: education, equal rights for both races, attitude of the author toward Southern whites, future vision for the races, and the slave experience each man recounts.

All references come from the Dover Thrift Edition of *Up from Slavery*, copyright 1995.

## Objectives

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

1. relate details from the autobiography regarding Booker T. Washington's early life as a slave.
2. discuss Washington's forgiving attitude toward Southern whites before, during and after the Civil War, and comment on why Washington, at least publicly, expressed benevolence toward those who oppressed his race.
3. discuss the extent to which the autobiography is an accurate and reliable measure of the feelings and concerns of freed slaves in this era. Consider Washington's philosophy on how to improve race relations in the South.
4. identify what political and social conditions existed at the time the book was written, and how these conditions influenced Washington's views on how to best educate former slaves to be productive, respected citizens in their communities.
5. cite incidents from the autobiography to trace how Washington achieved an education, and discuss how these incidents shaped his beliefs in the following areas:
  - the power of an industrial education to lift up his race
  - his interest in night school
  - his belief in the beauty of manual labor
  - his insistence on order and cleanliness at his school.
6. discuss why names are important to former slaves and how Washington selected his own name.
7. cite incidents from the story to illustrate the life lessons Washington learned from both Mr. Ruffner and General Armstrong.
9. discuss the following generalizations about life, and cite incidents from the autobiography illustrating how Washington applied these generalizations to his life:
  - In the long run, merit is recognized and rewarded regardless of the color of a person's skin.
  - The best education a person can receive is to be in contact with great men and women.
  - People who are the happiest in life are those who do the most for others.
  - Great men encourage love while little men hold onto hatred.
  - Anything worth having comes from hard work.

### Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Would you rate the difficulties Washington faced as a slave as easy or hard? Cite incidents from the story to support your evaluation.
2. To what extent do you think Washington's experiences as a slave impacted his later philosophy on education and opinions about race relations? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.
3. How did Booker T. Washington get his name? How did he obtain an education?
4. What life lessons did Washington learn from his contact with Mrs. Ruffner and General Armstrong?
5. How did Washington define success? What advice might Washington give to a young student who wants to know the secret of his success?
6. Cite incidents from the story to support the following statement: Booker T. Washington's autobiography is a vehicle he used to educate people about the quality of education the Tuskegee school provided for people of his race.
7. Describe Washington's relationship with his family, including his mother, father and siblings.
8. Briefly identify the ways each of the following people influenced Washington's life: Miss Lord, Miss Mackie, Miss Margaret James Murray, Sir Henry M. Stanley, Miss Olivia A. Davidson.
9. While in Washington D.C., Booker T. Washington observed the lives of the former slaves who had relocated to the nation's capital. List two ways he believed life in Washington D.C. was beneficial for former slaves and two ways he believed life in Washington was not good for members of his race.
10. Summarize Mr. Washington's educational philosophy. How did he believe his race could best be educated so that it could arise from the oppression of slavery?
11. There is an implied accuracy in the information contained in autobiographies, because the facts are coming directly from the person involved. To what extent do you think this autobiography is believable and accurate? For example, Mr. Washington stated that former slaves did not hold bitter feelings towards former slave owners. Do you believe this statement? If not, why do you think he might have included it? Cite additional examples of your own.

4. How did the slaves living in the South before and during the Civil War manage to keep informed concerning the progress of the anti-slavery movement?

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5. What was the usual diet for a slave? Why did Washington believe that the slaves felt the deprivation of the war less than the white people did?

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6. What was the most “trying ordeal” Washington endured as a slave? What generous act did his brother John do for him?

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7. Washington stated that the slaves did not have bitter feelings toward white people during the Civil War. Cite two instances he related to support this statement.

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8. Autobiographical stories are generally assumed to be fairly reliable and accurate. Consider Washington’s views about the feelings of slaves for their masters as they have been discussed in the previous question. To what extent do you think Washington’s statements are an accurate and reliable measure of the feelings of the slaves at the time? If you do not agree with Washington, why do you suppose he expressed this viewpoint in his autobiography?

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## Chapter V – The Reconstruction Period

### VOCABULARY

**carpetbagger**—any of the Northern politicians or adventurers who went South to take advantage of unsettled conditions after the Civil War  
**exhort**—to urge earnestly by advice or warning; to admonish strongly  
**franchise**—any special right, privilege, or exemption granted to a person or group by the government  
**heathen**—a person regarded as irreligious, uncivilized, or unenlightened  
**superficial**—concerned with the obvious or surface aspects of a thing; shallow

1. The Reconstruction period was from 1867 – 1878. Washington discussed the thoughts of the freed slaves during this time of change and growth. What two ambitions or aspirations did many of the freed slaves have that they believed would somehow lift them up from slavery and help them be superior human beings? How did Washington feel about these ambitions?

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2. Washington, a practiced public speaker, often used humor to illustrate an idea. Find an example of humor in this chapter. What idea was the humorous incident intended to illustrate?

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3. Washington wrote about life in Washington D.C. after the Civil War. List three ways he believed life in Washington D.C. was beneficial for former slaves and three ways he believed life in Washington was not good for members of his race.

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4. Cite incidents or excerpts from the story to support the following statement:

Washington believed his ideas of an industrial education for his race would improve race relations in the South.

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5. For what reasons did Washington consider his address at the opening of the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition to be significant?

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