

Name _____

Date _____

Benjamin Banneker - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. In 1731, Benjamin Banneker was born in Maryland. At the time, Maryland was still a slave state—a state where it was legal to own slaves—but Banneker was born to free parents. He grew up on a farm near Baltimore, where he showed an interest in science from an early age. Banneker attended a Quaker school occasionally, but was mostly self-educated. He was constantly reading any book he could find. He was also an intensely curious child. When a friend gifted him a pocket watch, Banneker took it apart to learn how it worked. In his adult life, Banneker became a respected scientist and surveyor. He is widely considered one of the first well known Black American scientists.

Which of the following character traits does NOT describe Benjamin Banneker?

A. Intelligent

B. Self-motivated



C. Thoughtless

D. Ambitious

Details like Banneker being "mostly self-educated" and the story about him taking apart his watch show that Banneker is intelligent and self-motivated. His ambitious nature is shown in his willingness to learn as much as he could from books.

2. Banneker had a keen passion for astronomy. He read everything he could find on the subject, and began using his knowledge to predict weather patterns. He published these predictions, alongside other astronomical calculations, in a farmer's almanac—a yearly guide to help farmers plan their harvests. Beyond farmers' almanacs, Banneker published many essays and pamphlets on the subject of civil rights. Pamphlets were small books published on single topics, usually politics and social issues. In this format, Banneker argued passionately for civil rights and the end of slavery. He began exchanging letters with Thomas Jefferson. In his letters, he respectfully challenged the idea that slavery could exist in a country that says all people are created equal.

Which of these is the main idea of the passage?

A. Banneker was primarily interested in science and had little interest in politics.

B. Pamphlets were a popular and effective way of spreading information in the 1700s.



C. Banneker was passionate about many subjects and unafraid of sharing his opinions.

D. Weather almanacs provide essential information to farmers in planning their harvests.

Banneker published writing on a number of subjects, from science to politics, and was passionate about abolishing slavery. He showed he was unafraid of sharing his opinions by challenging the existence of slavery, especially in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, the author of the words “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence.

3. Benjamin Banneker once wrote, "The color of the skin is in no way connected with strength of the mind or intellectual powers." He lived in a time when slavery was still legal in the United States. But he had a hope for a future where Black scientists like himself could contribute to research and innovation. Many of Banneker's unpublished manuscripts were lost in a house fire shortly after he died. Some of his surviving personal belongings and manuscripts have been preserved in US history museums, including the Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum in Maryland. Over a century after his death, Banneker's legacy was honored on a US postage stamp.

Based on the passage, which of the following is NOT true?

A. The US Post Office has released a stamp with Banneker's face on it.



B.

Banneker believed a person's race could affect their mental strength.

According to the passage, "Benjamin Banneker once wrote, 'The color of the skin is in no way connected with strength of the mind or intellectual powers.'"

C. Banneker lived at a time when slavery was legal in the US.

D. Some of Banneker's work has been preserved in museums.