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George Washington Carver

Today we're going to talk about George Washington Carver...in just a minute.

One of the most influential agricultural scientists of all time, George Washington Carver's life is just as fascinating as the work for which he is known. Born enslaved during the Civil War and orphaned as an infant, Carver became fascinated with plants as a child. He became known as a young man for his knowledge of gardening and botany.

Carver became the first African American student to ever enroll at the Iowa State Agricultural College, where he earned top marks. His thorough research caught the eye of Booker T. Washington, a famous Black educator. Washington offered Carver a position as the head of the Agricultural Department at Tuskegee, one of the first Black colleges in the country.

Caring deeply about the plight of poor farmers, Carver innovated the process of crop rotation, which kept soil healthy and fertile by rotating which crops farmers would plant each season. One crop he discovered that helped keep soil healthy was peanuts. Carver became known for developing over 300 uses for peanuts, from peanut butter and chili sauce to shampoo and shaving cream.

Carver gave away knowledge freely to farmers, traveling the country in the Jesup Wagon, a mobile laboratory from which he could share his botanical knowledge with anyone he met.

What traits do you think helped Carver become successful?