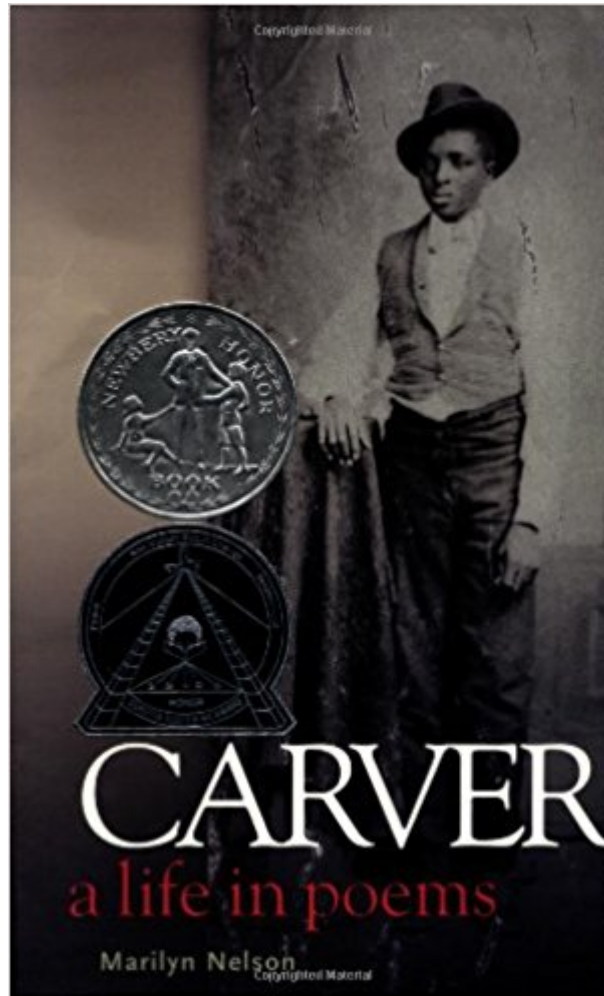




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# Carver: A Life In Poems



## Synopsis

George Washington Carver was born a slave in Missouri about 1864 and was raised by the childless white couple who had owned his mother. In 1877 he left home in search of an education, eventually earning a master's degree. In 1896, Booker T. Washington invited Carver to start the agricultural department at the all-black-staffed Tuskegee Institute, where he spent the rest of his life seeking solutions to the poverty among landless black farmers by developing new uses for soil-replenishing crops such as peanuts, cowpeas, and sweet potatoes. Carver's achievements as a botanist and inventor were balanced by his gifts as a painter, musician, and teacher. This Newbery Honor Book and Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book by Marilyn Nelson provides a compelling and revealing portrait of Carver's complex, richly interior, profoundly devout life.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 890L (What's this?)

Series: Coretta Scott King Author Honor Books

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Science & Technology #26 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Poetry

Age Range: 12 - 14 years

Grade Level: 6 - 9

## Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up-By offering glimpses into George Washington Carver's life story through a series of lyrical poems, the structure of Nelson's book is as inspired as its occasional use of black-and-white photographs as illustrations. The poems are simple, sincere, and sometimes so beautiful they seem not works of artifice, but honest statements of pure, natural truths ("The Prayer of Miss Budd" and "Lovingly Sons," in particular). Ironically, the book's greatest strength, its writing, is also occasionally

its weakness. In a few of the poems the language and the structure seem haphazard and these selections come across as underwritten ("Odalisque," "1905") or as little better than notes for selections yet to come ("Driving Dr. Carver," "Letter to Mrs. Hardwick"). Still, students will find much to glean from this volume and many of the poems will be perfect for reading aloud and make good monologues. A final grace note: the book will undoubtedly encourage some young people to learn more about this remarkable man. Herman Sutter, Saint Agnes Academy, Houston, TX Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

One of the very few black Americans accorded great respect before the 1960s was botanist and educator George Washington Carver (1864?-1943). In a fine biography in poems, Nelson beautifully and movingly revives his reputation, made to seem paltry compared with that of such resuscitated firebrands as Garvey, Robeson, and DuBois. She traces Carver from his recovery after being kidnapped in infancy to his death while the famous Tuskegee airmen fill the campus on which he had worked since 1896 with the droning of aircraft. The life in between is characterized by hard work, intellectual curiosity, personal humility, devotion to the betterment of black Americans, enormous self-possession, and practical Christian piety. Nelson stints none of those characteristics in depicting Carver as good but not self-righteous, dedicated but not monomaniacal, invaluable but not self-important. She also renders Carver's context nontendentiously, in some poems conjuring racism at its worst and in others showing that particular whites helped Carver throughout his life. Historic photos illustrate Nelson's work with modest beauty. Ray Olson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

After reading as much as I can find about George Washington Carver, I found this gem. Marilyn Nelson gives us glimpses into points in time over his life with stunning clarity and brevity. My personal favorite is the poem describing his source of all knowledge, that acquired by attending in a mindful and deeply meditative manner to nature in the early mornings. Four a.m. in the Woods  
Darkness softens, a thin tissue of mist between trees.  
One by one the day  
uncountable voices come out like twilight fireflies, like stars.  
The perceiving self sits with his back against rough bark,  
Casting ten thousand questions into the future.  
As shadows take shape, the curtains part  
for the length of time it takes to gasp, and behold, the purpose of his life dawns on him.

Having studied George Washington Carver as an icon in Black History, I had not been exactly privy to Carver, the man behind the academic, professional prowess or the pictures that have been used

to illustrate his pioneering life's work. Dr. Carver was a creative, agricultural genius, but he was also a pure, gentle, spirit and soul whose faith was the driving force in his life. This is the true value of Nelson's wonderfully penned collection yielding his life in poems. Each poem presents a day, time, or revelation in the life of a man we don't really know enough about. It was renewing and refreshing to read about the intricacies of his life, how he thought, felt, and reacted to nature all around him, even the people and the very challenging time periods through which he lived. He was a pioneer for sure and very inspiring. Nelson has gone to great lengths and research to bring a superb book of poems to us, and I appreciate this work. I recommend this for poets, writers, educators, and students. I recommend it for my own three sons. This is biography at its poetic best! You can't read just one poem. You'll have to read them all. Together, they display and illustrate an amazing tapestry of a beautiful life. You will appreciate Dr. Carver in so many other ways after reading this book. He was so much more than an agricultural expert.

A librarian recommended this book to me after I mentioned my love for Carver (it is a deep devotion). After thumbing through her copy I bought my own. I have read other biographies of Carver, and though not someone who is drawn naturally to reading poetry, I find the poems lovely ways to capture ideas and themes about the sensitive and inspiring Carver. In short, for a man who loved to paint, it seems very fitting indeed for him to have inspired such lovely poems--lyrical pictures of him that are enhanced by pithy footnotes at the bottom. In short, I love this book. I will recommend this book to the teachers of a school where I am on the board. And, I have just gone shopping to see what else this writer has written--and I bought one of them.

I liked every poem in this book. The photos and brief timelines added so much to the pleasure of enjoying the poetry. I used the Kindle dictionary to learn even more about plants, and surfed the web for more information and photos. A terrific experience! I especially liked the poem about the author's father, who was a Tuskegee Airman when Carver was still at the institute. I believe this is a work of love that would be appreciated by poetry fans, scientists, and history enthusiasts alike.

I was moved by this highly evocative series of poems presenting the life of G.W. Carver....

This is a real find. George Washington Carver was such an incredible man, so many ways in which he helped those around him. This book of poetry is a wonderful way to embrace the man and know of his gift to the world. You will enjoy it as a book of poetry and as a way to understand the man.

I Loved it. I got an incite into Carvers journey and was able to see what a beautifully admirable creature he truly was and I cried. amazing. Thank you

The insight given through the poems about this historical figure, whom every Social Studies school book mentions, made me say to myself, why hadn't I know any of this before.

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