

Name _____

Date _____

Biography: Booker T. Washington

Read the following biography. Annotate key words and sentences as you read. Place a question mark by a section you have a question about. Underline the important events in Booker T. Washington's life.

Booker T. Washington was born into slavery on April 5, 1856, in Franklin County, Virginia. At that time, when a child was born to an enslaved person, the child automatically became enslaved as well. Washington's mother worked as a cook for plantation owner James Burroughs. Booker and his mother worked hard and lived in a small shack.

The American Civil War, which was fought between the Northern and Southern states, took place from 1861 to 1865. President Abraham Lincoln and Congress abolished slavery in 1865 through the passing of the 13th Amendment. This meant that enslaved people, like Booker T. Washington and his mother, became free. But life was not easy just because they were free. There were not a lot of jobs available for newly freed people.

Washington got a job in the salt mines of West Virginia when he was nine years old because he needed to help support his poor family.

Even though Booker T. Washington had to work as a child, he found a way to learn to read and write. In 1872, when he heard about a college for black students called Hampton Institute located 500 miles away, he decided to make the long journey on foot to attend. Upon arrival, he convinced the head of the college to let him enroll. He was a student there, but he also worked as a sanitation worker to earn money to pay for school.



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After graduating from Hampton Institute, Washington started teaching and soon became renowned for being a talented teacher. In 1881, Booker T. Washington helped open a new college for African American students, called the Tuskegee Institute, in Tuskegee, Alabama. This school is still open today and is now known as Tuskegee University. Washington remained the head of Tuskegee Institute until his death on November 14, 1915, at the age of 59.

After the Civil War ended and slavery was abolished, several U.S. presidents enlisted Booker T. Washington as an advisor, especially on matters of racial equality. Washington wanted a good education for all African Americans, and he worked his whole life to achieve this goal. He was famous for speaking about education and civil rights.

After reading and annotating Booker T. Washington's biography, answer the following questions, using the text as evidence.

1. What is the main idea of this text?
2. What does the term abolished mean in this sentence: "President Abraham Lincoln and Congress abolished slavery in 1865 through the passing of the 13th Amendment"?
3. Why was life hard for Booker T. Washington even after slavery ended?
4. Choose one of the lines you underlined in the text and explain why it is an important event in Washington's life.
5. Write a question or an "I wonder..." statement about the biography.