**With Books and Bricks: How Booker T. Washington Built a School**

**AUTHOR:** Suzanne Slade  
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**SUMMARY:**  
Booker T. Washington’s life encompassed slavery. He taught himself to read, worked as a coal miner, and learned the trade of bricklaying. He used this last skill to build a school for everyone to attend. His perseverance on behalf of the school and his students was legendary and included tales of his teaching in the rain with a student holding an umbrella over his head and his selling his watch to buy a fourth kiln to bake the bricks to build the school after the first three didn’t work.

**BOOKTALK:**  
What would you do if you really wanted something? Maybe a Playstation 4? Or a trip to Florida? What if your parents said, “Ok, if you do enough chores, you can earn that trip to Florida, or that Playstation?”  
What if you really wanted to build a school?  
Booker T. Washington really wanted to go to school as a boy, but he couldn’t because he was black and a slave, and it was illegal to teach slaves. When slavery was made illegal, he found a school he could go to in Virginia, and he walked and begged for rides to make the 500-mile trip to that school.  
Then he wanted to teach in Tuskegee, Alabama but couldn’t find any building to use except an old shack with holes in the ceiling, no windows, and no doors.  
He really wanted to build a school and was willing to do almost anything to accomplish that. Read *With Books and Bricks: How Booker T. Washington Built a School* by Suzanne Slade to find out what he had to do. (Warning: Your hands may hurt after reading about it. Your back may be sore.)

**AUTHOR’S NAME:** Suzanne Slade

**Author’s Website:** [http://www.suzanneslade.com/suzanneslade/Welcome.html](http://www.suzanneslade.com/suzanneslade/Welcome.html)

**Other books written by the author:**  
*What’s New at the Zoo*  
*A Monarch Butterfly’s Journey*  
*Friends for Freedom*  
*The Inventor’s Secret*
CHALLENGING WORDS
slave: (p. 1) a person who is owned by another person, and who has to work without being paid.

echoed: (p. 6) a sound that copies another sound and occurs when sound waves bounce off of a surface (like a wall). In the context of page six, it means words were repeated from person to person.

valuable: (p. 8) worth a lot of money.
deserted: (p. 13) abandoned; no one living there.
brickyard: (p. 13) a place in which bricks are made.
molded: (p. 16) formed into a particular shape.
kiln: (p. 19) an oven that is used to dry or harden something such as pottery.
mortar: (p. 22) a soft building material that hardens.
chapel: (p. 25) a small church.

obstacles: (p. 27) something that makes it difficult to do something.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. What obstacles did Booker T. Washington overcome to get his education? Which one do you think was the hardest to overcome? Why?
2. Would you be able to learn if it were raining on you while you were listening to the teacher? Why or why not? What else might make it harder for you to learn?
3. When Mr. Washington couldn’t buy bricks, he decided to make them, and he started reading about clay and bricks. Have you ever wanted to make something, and read about how to do it? Was that a hard way to learn how to make something or an easy way?
4. The author gives a hint on page 19 about how Mr. Washington can solve his problem with having no money. This is called foreshadowing. What’s the hint she gives?
5. Why do you think Mr. Washington wanted to build a school?

ACTIVITIES WITH STANDARDS:

Language Arts:

- You have travelled back in the past, and met Booker T. Washington! Now you are describing him in an email to a friend. Choose three words that you think describe Mr. Washington. Write a paragraph for each word, giving evidence from the text (your “meeting”) to explain why you chose that word. How does his character trait lead to this school being built? (Even though it is an email, make sure that you spell correctly, and don’t use slang - your friend might forward your email on to someone else!)

Language Arts 4.RL.2.3 Describe a character, setting, or event in a story or play, drawing on specific details in the text, and how that impacts the plot.

- What is the theme of this book? Write five paragraphs, discussing the theme and
giving three reasons why you picked this.

**Language Arts 5.RL.2.2** Determine a theme of a story, play, or poem from details in the text, including how characters respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

**Social Studies:**

- Education was obviously of enormous importance to Booker T. Washington throughout his life. Why does the author say he couldn’t go to school before the Civil War ended? Why couldn’t he go afterwards? Use a T-chart to compare and contrast his situation before and after the 13th Amendment abolished slavery. How did he finally get his education?

**Social Studies 6.1.23** Identify issues related to an historical event in Europe or the Americas and give basic arguments for and against that issue utilizing the perspectives, interests and values of those involved.

Examples: The role of women in different time periods, decline of ancient civilizations, and attitudes toward human rights

**RELATED INTERNET SITES:**

[http://www.suzanneslade.com/suzanneslade/Books.html](http://www.suzanneslade.com/suzanneslade/Books.html) This site has a link to a teacher’s guide about the book. Includes additional activities and links.


[https://kidskonnect.com/people/booker-t-washington/](https://kidskonnect.com/people/booker-t-washington/) One page summation of his life.


[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07cispyOhWQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07cispyOhWQ) 3½ minute video about his life - the story is a little different than in this book.

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