

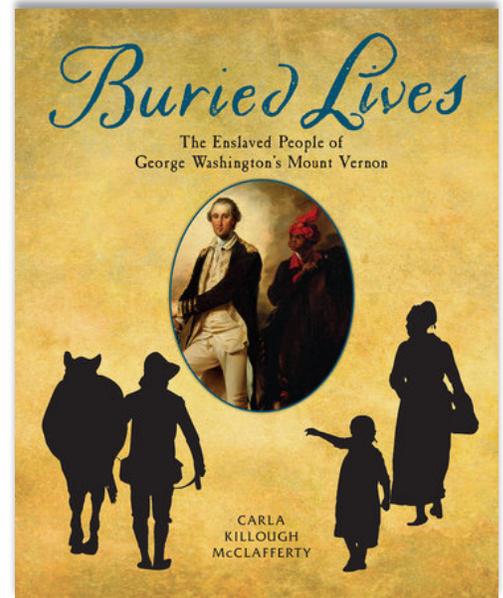
Holiday House EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Buried Lives

The Enslaved People of George Washington's Mount Vernon

Carla Killough McClafferty

An illuminating look at the complex relationships between George Washington and the enslaved people of Mount Vernon, and the history still being uncovered there.



9780823436972 • Ages 10 up • E-book available

Language Arts

Questions for Writing and Discussion

CCSS 5-8.RI.1; 5-8.SL.1; 5-8.W.1

- At the end of the Foreword, the writer and descendent of one of the slaves profiled in *Buried Lives*, ZSun-nee Miller-Matema states, “we must always find a way to push through and flower wherever we are planted.” What does this phrase mean to you?
- Note the writing style of this book. The author has created her stories based on many of hours of research and reading of primary source materials, but there were no available first-hand accounts from the six slaves themselves. Therefore, there was the need to include such phrases as “It seems that . . .” or “It may never be known if . . .” or “It is impossible to know what they really thought.” Have students keep a record of these or similar phrases they find in other nonfiction books to make them more aware of the difference between factual vs. surmised events, actions, or conversations in these works. **CCSS 6-7.RI.5; 5-8.RI.8**
- *Buried Lives* describes the lives of six people who were slaves at George Washington's Mount Vernon estate. What is your reaction to the idea of people being enslaved and treated as property rather than human beings?
- After reading the stories of the six featured slaves, what main qualities of each one stood out for you? How do you think these qualities helped them to endure their lives as slaves? **CCSS 5-8.RI.1**
- If you had been in William Lee's place at George Washington's side during the Revolutionary War, would you have been as loyal to Washington as Lee was, or would you have tried to escape? Explain why or why not?
- By 1786, George Washington appears to have changed his mind about owning slaves and separating families by selling individuals, and by 1783 he expressed a desire for legislation that would gradually abolish slavery. What do you think led to such a change regarding his opinion of slavery?
- On page 52 the author states, “Slavery operated in large part on fear: the fear of physical punishment, fear of being sold away from your family, and fear of being sent to work in the fields.” Discuss/describe how you have ever acted in a certain way or done anything because of fear. What were the consequences? What did you learn from the experience?



- George Washington, our first U.S. president, has been lauded as “The Father of Our Country” for more than 200 years. Describe why you think he is called this. After reading *Buried Lives* has your opinion of Washington changed? If so, how did you originally feel about him and how do you feel about him now? Write an article about your feelings; you can write this as an op-ed piece. **CCSS 5-8.W.1**

Parts of a Book

Note the difference between fiction and nonfiction books—and that an informational book includes many parts. This book’s features are a Foreword, Introduction, Author’s Note, text, Source Notes, Selected Bibliography, Picture Credits, Acknowledgments, and Index. Have students explore other informational books to find and identify these various parts. Discuss with students the purpose/need for each of these parts of a book, and how each helps the reader to have a richer reading experience.

Writing

Ask students to choose one of the six slaves whose stories are told in the book and rewrite their story in the first person, including the thoughts and feelings they think that particular person might have had during their experiences. **CCSS 3-8.W.3**

Geography

As students read the book, have them keep an ongoing list of cities, states, monuments, and historical buildings mentioned. Then, using a map of the Eastern United States, have them locate and label each site.

Art

The author describes in considerable detail the clothing worn by the slaves. Have students draw pictures of the slaves wearing these clothes, using the author’s descriptions and the photos in the book.

Online Sources

CCSS 5-8.RI.7

Virtual Tour of Mount Vernon

mountvernon.org

This is the official Mount Vernon site, an interactive website that provides both visual and textual pages. Readers can see the different rooms, including the slave quarters; read about the clothes; and find a wealth of further information to enhance their understanding of the subject matter of the book.

Archaeology

The end of the narrative describes the years of archaeological work that has been done at Mount Vernon to uncover more information about the graves of the slaves who labored there. Teachers and students may wish to explore <https://civilwar.mrdonn.org/slavelife.html> for more information on the lives of slaves.

Guide written by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carla Killough McClafferty, author of many nonfiction books for young readers, lives in Arkansas. A popular speaker, Carla presents to students and educators across the country. For more about her, visit Carla online at Carlamcclafferty.com.

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