

1 **Booker T. Washington.** (2015). The Biography.com website. [http://www.biography.com/people/bookert-](http://www.biography.com/people/bookert-washington9524663)
2 [washington9524663](http://www.biography.com/people/bookert-washington9524663).

4 Educator Booker T. Washington was one of the foremost African American leaders of the late 19th and early
5 20th centuries, founding the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, now known as Tuskegee University.

6 **Early Life**

7 Born to a slave on April 5, 1856, Booker Taliaferro Washington's life had little promise early on. In Franklin
8 County, Virginia, as in most states prior to the Civil War, the child of a slave became a slave. Booker's mother,
9 Jane, worked as a cook for plantation owner James Burroughs. His father was an unknown white man, most
10 likely from a nearby plantation. Booker and his mother lived in a one room log cabin with a large fireplace, which
11 also served as the plantation's kitchen. At an early age, Booker went to work carrying sacks of grain to the
12 plantation's mill. Toting 100 pound sacks was hard work for a small boy, and he was beaten on occasion for not
13 performing his duties satisfactorily. Booker's first exposure to education was from the outside of school house
14 near the plantation; looking inside, he saw children his age sitting at desks and reading books. He wanted to do
15 what those children were doing, but he was a slave, and it was illegal to teach slaves to read and write. After the
16 Civil War, Booker and his mother moved to Malden, West Virginia, where she married freedman Washington
17 Ferguson. The family was very poor, and 9 year old Booker went to work in the nearby salt furnaces with his
18 stepfather instead of going to school. Booker's mother noticed his interest in learning and got him a book from
19 which he learned the alphabet and how to read and write basic words. Because he was still working, he got up
20 nearly every morning at 4 a.m. to practice and study. At about this time, Booker took the first name of his
21 stepfather as his last name, Washington. In 1866, Booker T. Washington got a job as a houseboy for Viola
22 Ruffner, the wife of coal mine owner Lewis Ruffner. Mrs. Ruffner was known for being very strict with her
23 servants, especially boys. But she saw something in Booker—his maturity, intelligence and integrity—and soon
24 warmed up to him. Over the two years he worked for her, she understood his desire for an education and
25 allowed him to go to school for an hour a day during the winter months.

26 **Education**

27 In 1872, Booker T. Washington left home and walked 500 miles to Hampton Normal Agricultural Institute in
28 Virginia. Along the way he took odd jobs to support himself. He convinced administrators to let him attend the
29 school and took a job as a janitor to help pay his tuition. The school's founder and headmaster, General Samuel
30 C. Armstrong, soon discovered the hardworking boy and offered him a scholarship, sponsored by a white man.
31 Armstrong had been a commander of a Union African American regiment during the Civil War and was a strong
32 supporter of providing newly freed slaves with a practical education. Armstrong became Washington's mentor,
33 strengthening his values of hard work and strong moral character.

34 Booker T. Washington graduated from Hampton in 1875 with high marks. For a time, he taught at his old grade
35 school in Malden, Virginia, and attended Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C. In 1879, he was chosen to
36 speak at Hampton's graduation ceremonies, where afterward General Armstrong offered Washington a job
37 teaching at Hampton. In 1881, the Alabama legislature approved \$2,000 for a "colored" school, the Tuskegee
38 Normal and Industrial Institute (now known as Tuskegee University). General Armstrong was asked to
39 recommend a white man to run the school, but instead recommended Booker T. Washington. Classes were first
40 held in an old church, while Washington traveled all over the countryside promoting the school and raising
41 money. He reassured whites that nothing in the Tuskegee program would threaten white supremacy or pose
42 any economic competition to whites.

43 **Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute**

44 Under Booker T. Washington's leadership, Tuskegee became a leading school in the country. At his death, it had
45 more than 100 well equipped buildings, 1,500 students, a 200member faculty teaching 38 trades and
46 professions, and a nearly \$2 million endowment. Washington put much of himself into the school's curriculum,
47 stressing the virtues of patience, enterprise, and thrift. He taught that economic success for African Americans
48 would take time, and that subordination to whites was a necessary evil until African Americans could prove they
49 were worthy of full economic and political rights. He believed that if African Americans worked hard and
50 obtained financial independence and cultural advancement, they would eventually win acceptance and respect
51 from the white community. In 1895, Booker T. Washington publicly put forth his philosophy on race relations in
52 a speech at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia, known as the "Atlanta
53 Compromise." In his speech, Washington stated that African Americans should accept disenfranchisement and
54 social segregation as long as whites allow them economic progress, educational opportunity and justice in the
55 courts. This started a firestorm in parts of the African American community, especially in the North. Activists like
56 W.E.B. Du Bois (who was working as a professor at Atlanta University at the time) deplored Washington's
57 conciliatory philosophy and his belief that African Americans were only suited to vocational training. Du Bois
58 criticized Washington for not demanding equality for African Americans, as granted by the 14th Amendment,
59 and subsequently became an advocate for full and equal rights in every realm of a person's life. Though
60 Washington had done much to help advance many African Americans, there was some truth in the criticism.

61 During Washington's rise as a national spokesperson for African Americans, they were systematically excluded
62 from the vote and political participation through black codes and Jim Crow laws as rigid patterns of segregation
63 and discrimination became institutionalized throughout the South and much of the country. In 1901, President
64 Theodore Roosevelt invited Booker T. Washington to the White House, making him the first African American to
65 be so honored. Both President Roosevelt and his successor, President William Howard Taft, used Washington as
66 an adviser on racial matters, partly because he accepted racial subservience. His White House visit and the
67 publication of his autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, brought him both acclaim and indignation from many
68 Americans. While some African Americans looked upon Washington as a hero, others, like Du Bois, saw him as a
69 traitor. Many Southern whites, including some prominent members of Congress, saw Washington's success as
70 an affront and called for action to put African Americans "in their place."

71 **Death and Legacy**

72 Booker T. Washington was a complex individual, who lived during a precarious time in advancing racial equality.
73 On one hand, he was openly supportive of African Americans taking a "back seat" to whites, while on the other
74 he secretly financed several court cases challenging segregation. By 1913, Washington had lost much of his
75 influence. The newly inaugurated Wilson administration was cool to the idea of racial integration and African
76 American equality. Booker T. Washington remained the head of Tuskegee Institute until his death on November
77 14, 1915, at the age of 59, of congestive heart failure.

Create a summary of the biography of Booker T. Washington by writing the number **five** statements from the list in **chronological order** into the table titled “Summary.” Note that not all statements will be used.

	Text Evidence Statements
A	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	
G	
H	
I	

	Summary – Chronological Order (not all statements will be used)
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

According to the article “The Biography of Booker T. Washington,” which events had the most significant impact on Washington’s life? From the list, create a summary placing the letter of the **four** most significant events in **chronological order** into the table.

	Text Evidence Statements
A	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	
G	

	Most Important Events – Chronological Order (not all statements will be used)
1	
2	
3	
4	