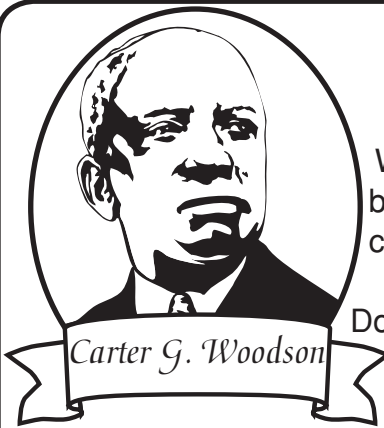


Great Beginnings



Carter G. Woodson

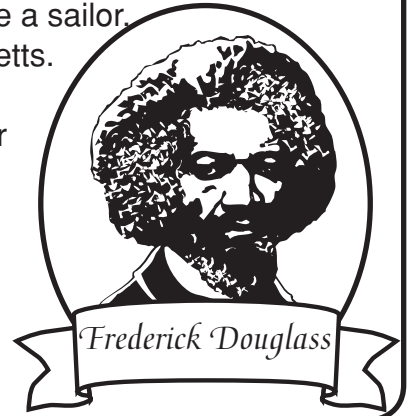
In February 1926, the African-American historian Carter G. Woodson founded *Negro History Week*. During the 1970s his idea became *Black History Week*. In 1976 the week became a monthlong celebration to honor the contributions of African-Americans.

In the beginning, the celebration observed the birthdays of Frederick Douglass (February 14) and Abraham Lincoln (February 12). Douglass was a runaway slave who pretended to be a sailor.

He escaped to New Bedford, Massachusetts.

While a slave, he had been taught to read and write by his master's wife. Douglass became a public speaker who talked in favor of *abolition*, the ending of slavery. Douglass later started an antislavery newspaper while he lived in New York. He also held several government positions in Washington, DC.

Today people can visit one of Douglass's former homes in Washington, DC. It now includes the Museum of African Art and the Frederick Douglass Institute.



Frederick Douglass

A. Answer the following questions on the lines provided.

1. What was the original celebration that now has become Black History Month?

2. How many years later was this celebration lengthened from one week to a month?

3. What helped Frederick Douglass become a public speaker? _____

4. Define *abolition*. _____

5. List two accomplishments of Frederick Douglass. _____

6. Why do you think Black History Month also honored Abraham Lincoln's birthday?

B. Pretend that you are Frederick Douglass. On another piece of paper, write a speech that you would give in favor of abolition. Describe your feelings about freedom and why you think slavery should end.

Bonus Box: Draw a picture to illustrate what freedom means to you.

Answer Key for “Great Beginnings”

1. Negro History Week
2. 50 years
3. While a slave, he had been taught to read and write by his master’s wife.
4. the ending of slavery
5. Answers will vary. He started an antislavery newspaper. He held government positions in Washington, DC. He was a public speaker.
6. Answers will vary. On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, a historic document that led to the end of slavery in the United States.