

BETWEEN THE PAGES

Philanthropists: People Who Make a Difference

by Sharron L. McElmeel

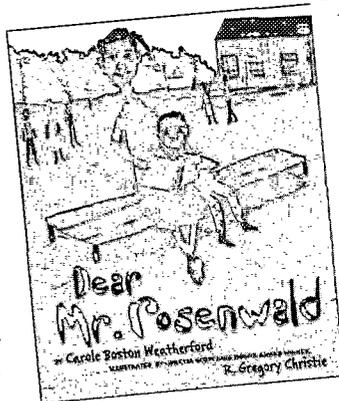
Which one of the following early 20th-century foundation founders was instrumental in establishing over 14,000 libraries in the United States?

- Andrew Carnegie
- John D. Rockefeller
- Julius Rosenwald

If you answered, Andrew Carnegie, you would have been correct if we were talking only about “building” the libraries and if the number of libraries had been 1,689. But the answer to this carefully worded question is Julius Rosenwald who, with his wife Augusta, created a foundation that helped establish over 14,000 libraries in existing Southern schools and also donated carefully selected resource materials. These “libraries” were developed in the 4,977 new schools built by the foundation as well as in other rural schools in fifteen Southern states. Rosenwald, who made his fortune with the Sears Roebuck & Company, was a man inspired by

the work of Booker T. Washington. He was one of our many historical leaders who have positively contributed to our country’s well-being.

Carole Boston Weatherford’s book, *Dear Mr. Rosenwald*, focuses on Rosenwald’s philanthropy and



the building of one particular Rosenwald school.

Southern black children often attended school in dilapidated buildings such as shacks and corncribs.

Ovella was one

of those students but when the professor from the Normal School came to tell about the Rosenwald grant and challenge to the community, her school community was excited. Together they raised a share of the money and worked hard to get the school built. One of the fundraisers they held was a “box party.” A box party, as it is described in *Dear Mr. Rosenwald*, was when members of the com-

munity packaged gifts, often homemade items such as pies and hand carvings, in a box to be sold at an auction. Potential buyers gathered clues about the contents by smell, weight, and sometimes guesses based on their knowledge of the donor. During a social gathering the unopened boxes were auctioned off. When the school was eventually built, it was furnished with hand-me down desks and books from the white school, but it was a brand-new school for the black students.

Weatherford, Carole Boston.

Dear Mr. Rosenwald. Illus. by R. Gregory Christie. Scholastic, 2006.

Become a Philanthropist

Set a goal and raise money to buy books for your school or community library (or another cause). Perhaps your school could even hold a “box party” to raise money. Solicit donations from the adults and children in your school community then hold a “back to school” night and auction off the boxes.

A Variation

In the 1940s, some rural schools held these parties with boxes that contained picnic lunches/dinners. Someone “important” would

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prepare a boxed lunch/dinner and then the successful bidder would sit down to eat lunch/dinner with the person who had prepared the meal. The meal was usually quite festive and unique to the person who had prepared it. Other schools held auctions with thematic baskets of items assembled in honor of a local celebrity, and the celebrity then came to "auction" off the basket. Perhaps you could include such items as the celebrity's favorite book, stationery representing a special interest, or a small figurine.

Money raised can be donated to your school or community library for a special collection of books or another charity of your choice.

About Julius Rosenwald

Julius Rosenwald not only funded schools and libraries but also funded twenty-five YMCAs and three YWCAs for African Americans, established Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, lent support to Jane Addam's Hull House, and supported several Jewish Foundations and causes. He believed that people should use their money while they lived and that future generations should be responsible for determining their own charitable needs.

For background information about Julius Rosenwald's foundation and the Rosenwald schools, visit these resources:

- Sears.com. "Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932)." <http://www.searsarchives.com/people/juliusrosenwald.htm> (accessed October 16, 2006).
- National Trust for Historic Preservation. "Rosenwald School Initiative." <http://www.rosenwaldschools.com/> (accessed October 16, 2006).

Rosenwald's school philanthropy was first inspired by the work of Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee University. Learning more about Washington and the era in which he lived provides some insight into the life and times of African Americans in the early 1900s.

About Booker T. Washington

Amper, Thomas. *Booker T. Wash-*

ington. Illus. by Jeni Reeves. On My Own Biographies. Carolrhoda, 1998.

McKissack, Pat, and Fredrick McKissack.

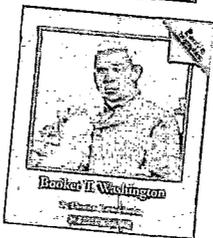
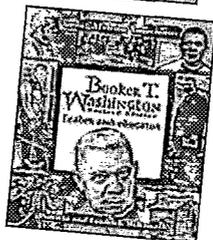
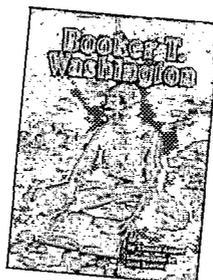
Booker T. Washington: Leader and Educator.

Rev. ed. Great African American series. Enslow, 2001.

Taylor-Butler, Christine.

Booker T. Washington. Rookie Biographies.

Children's Press/Scholastic, 2007.



People Who Made a Difference: Rosenwald and Washington

Julius Rosenwald's charitable foundation ended with his death, so his name is not as well known to us as others philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, who established perpetual foundations. However, that fact does not diminish Rosenwald's immense contribution to the education of children and to society in general.

Research/Writing Connections

- Julius Rosenwald's story can serve as a model for the theme of generosity. Research the life of Rosenwald and make a list of ten generous actions that were part of his life.

- Booker T. Washington is better known than Rosenwald, but Washington's story can serve as a model for goal-setting and perseverance. Read about Washington and make a list of ten actions that show he was reaching for a goal and that he used perseverance to obtain or get closer to that goal.

More Stories of People Who Made a Difference

Other relatively unknown individuals have made significant contributions and their stories can provide inspiration and models for positive character traits.

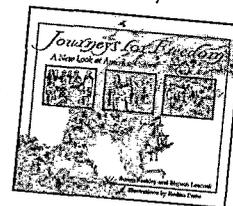
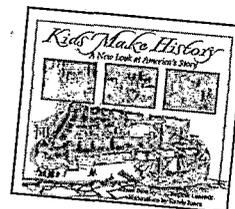
Buckely, Susan, and Elspeth Leacock.

Journeys for Freedom: A

New Look at America's Story. Illus. by Rodica Prato. Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Deborah Sampson was a courageous soldier in the Revolutionary War, and Frank McWhorter's perseverance earned him money to buy his freedom and the freedom of fifteen other family members. Read Sampson and McWhorter's story as well as eighteen more true stories of Americans who contributed to journeys of freedom to help make the United States the country it is today.

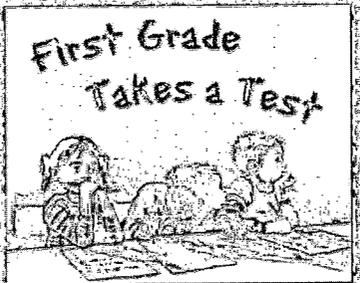
Buckely, Susan, and Elspeth Leacock. *Kids Make History: A New Look at America's Story*. Illus. by Randy Jones. Houghton Mifflin, 2006.



In this companion book, the authors have included a story about the Rankin brothers whose courage and caring had them helping escaped slaves move through Ohio on the Underground Railroad to freedom in Canada. The story of Nick Wilson who rode as a Pony Express rider and of eighteen other young men and women who contributed to our history are also included.

Making More Connections to Character Traits

Read one of the stories in Su-



First Grade Takes a Test
By Miriam Cohen
Illustrated by Ronald Himler

This timely book gets right to the heart of the school-testing issue. When the teacher gives a test to the first grade class, the children have trouble when they find that none of the proffered answers are exactly right. Fortunately, their teacher knows the things that are really important can't be graded. This is a great book to show children that being the smartest on a test is not the only thing that matters in the classroom.

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san Buckely and Elspeth Leacock's books (each story is two pages) and discuss what character trait is exhibited by the chief protagonist. The following are common character traits exhibited in the stories:

- Caring
- Confidence
- Courage
- Curiosity
- Flexibility
- Friendship
- Goal Setting
- Humility
- Humor
- Initiative
- Integrity
- Patience
- Perseverance
- Positive Attitude
- Problem Solving
- Self-Discipline
- Teamwork

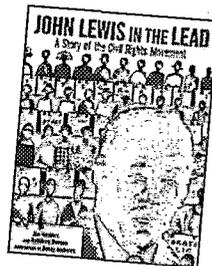
For more books focusing on character traits, refer to *Character Education: A Book Guide for Teachers, Librarians, and Parents* by Sharron L. McElmeel (Libraries Unlimited, 2002).

Making a Difference in War and Peace

Sometimes people step up to do what is right and in the process become reluctant heroes. Many of those deeds go undocumented and few people may know of the heroism. Some, however, are documented, and the participants receive recognition for their heroic deeds. Haskins, Jim, and Kathleen Benson.

John Lewis in the Lead: A Story of the Civil Rights Movement. Illus. by Benny Andrews. Lee & Low, 2006.

Jim Lewis, a young colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., became an important person in the Salem to Montgomery (Alabama) March that virtually secured the Federal Law guaranteeing voting rights for all Americans. Thirty-one years later in 1986, Jim Lewis was elected to the United States Congress representing Georgia, a position he still holds today.



Nelson, S. D.

Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story. Lee & Low, 2006.

Hayes, a Pima Indian, was raised in Arizona where he attended the Indian School. After leaving this school, he joined the U.S. Marines. He became one of the soldiers who raised the flag on Iwo Jima during World War II. A photograph by Joe Rosenthal immortalized the event.



Culminating the Focus on People Who Make a Difference

- Re-read *Dear Mr. Rosenwald* and review his behavior and actions that made a difference to people in our country.

- Read other stories and books about people who have contributed positively to society.

- Discuss predominant characteristics of those who have made or are making a positive contribution to society.

- Identify additional people both well-known and those less well-known, living or not living, as well as both historic and local contributors.

- Research information about their lives and their contributions.

- Identify the characteristics that contributed to their greatness.

- Write a short biographical sketch emphasizing a selected person's actions that exhibited those positive characteristics.

- Paint, draw, or otherwise create a portrait of the person that is the subject of the biographical sketch.

- Create a *PowerPoint* presentation introducing each of the people who made a difference, or create a poster for a gallery of heroes. 🖱