

# **Unit Plan for Calvin Didn't Know**

by Stephen E. Randall

## **Overview:**

**The Story:** The story of Calvin began as a story told to elementary and secondary school students at African-American History Month presentations throughout the greater Atlanta, GA area. Over a series of years, word of the story grew until it was requested at over 40 schools during the 20 (school) day month of February 1990. At that time, discussions turned towards making the Calvin story into a book for wider distribution.

Although the book is designed as a reader for upper elementary and middle school students, once published, Calvin Didn't Know has been read and enjoyed by individuals from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to adulthood. The very engaging, non-combative, and fun manner in which Calvin Didn't Know addresses African-American History causes the reader to become involved in the story, as he discovers interesting facts about day-to-day inventions by persons of African descent.

### Calvin Didn't Know ...

- highlights 24 inventions or firsts by African-Americans in their context of use
- engages the reader in the story as he/she discovers new and interesting facts
- includes:
  - *a glossary for vocabulary development*
  - *biographies of several inventors highlighted in the story*
  - *a patent list identifying dates and patent registration numbers for all inventions highlighted in the story*

**The Author:** Stephen Randall has been an educator for over 15 years. A graduate of Stanford University in 1986, Stephen began his career as an operational consultant for the City of Atlanta, GA. Not long after that, however, Stephen's interests turned to education. He has taught, tutored, and written curriculum at the upper elementary, middle and high school level in Georgia and in Texas where he currently resides.

**The Unit Plan:** The accompanying unit plan incorporates The National Language Arts Standards developed by the National Council for Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (see appendix #1). It includes a classroom implementation plan as well as black line masters for all activities. In addition, the following reading comprehension strategies are addressed by unit (see appendix #2):

1. vocabulary development
2. chronology / sequencing
3. main idea
4. paraphrase / summarize
5. visual organizers
6. connections (text-self, text-text, text-world)
7. consistency
8. story elements
9. cause / effect
10. analyzing text
11. inference
12. predicting
13. character analysis



Step 5

Writing Activities

DAYS 4-5

- Students to complete Writing Activities – choose from following (for earlier grades or for challenged students, activities can be completed in small groups):
  - Dear Diary (BL – 23)
  - Dear Author (BL – 24)
  - Calvin Didn't Know – The Next Day (BL – 25a, 25b)
  - Interview With a Character (BL – 26a, 26b, 26c, 27a, 27b, 27c)
  - Interview With the Author (BL – 28a, 28b, 28c)

Step 6

Presentation Activities

DAY 6

- Students to present documents developed

## ***Standards for the English Language Arts***

**Sponsored by NCTE and IRA**

The vision guiding these standards is that all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society. These standards assume that literacy growth begins before children enter school as they experience and experiment with literacy activities—reading and writing, and associating spoken words with their graphic representations. Recognizing this fact, these standards encourage the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school. Furthermore, the standards provide ample room for the innovation and creativity essential to teaching and learning. They are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction. Although we present these standards as a list, we want to emphasize that they are not distinct and separable; they are, in fact, interrelated and should be considered as a whole.

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

## Appendix #1

**7.** Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

**8.** Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

**9.** Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

**10.** Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

**11.** Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

**12.** Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information)