

INTO THE GREAT UNKNOWN



**INTO THE
GREAT
UNKNOWN**
African American
Adventurers &
Explorers

*Recommended for Ages 6 to 12
Grades 1 to 6*

A Reproducible Learning Guide for Educators

This guide is designed to help educators prepare for, enjoy, and discuss INTO THE GREAT UNKNOWN. It contains background, discussion questions, and activities appropriate for Ages 6 to 12.

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Smithsonian Associates

Discovery Theater • P.O. Box 23293, Washington, DC • www.discoverytheater.org
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ABOUT THE SHOW

Courage and adventure take center stage in Discovery Theater’s “Into the Great Unknown.” The African American explorers featured in this show have stories of inspiring leadership. They are pioneers who have gone to the edge – taking dangerous journeys where other people had not yet dared to go. “Into the Great Unknown” honors these heroes and encourages students to dream big – to dream of visiting places far beyond their own neighborhoods and dream of achieving challenging goals. In this learning guide are more ideas for how students can make plans for their goals and envision success. Below, you can also read more about the explorers in “Into the Great Unknown,” whose histories and heroism show that true grit and personal power can push us toward greatness.

WHO’S WHO



Matthew Henson

Co-discoverer of the North Pole with Robert Edwin Peary in 1909. He was born to a family of sharecroppers, worked as a cabin boy on a ship and traveled the world, then moved to Washington, DC and worked in a hat shop. He met Peary there and began traveling with him as a valet. Together, they went to Nicaragua and Greenland. Then they made multiple attempts to get to the North Pole, finally succeeding in reaching it in 1909. He wrote about his expeditions in a book he published in 1912.



Stagecoach Mary

The first African American woman to carry mail, and the second woman in the U.S. to carry mail. She was born a slave, freed after the Civil War, and then joined a convent — first in Ohio, then in Montana. She was eventually kicked out for “subversive” behavior (drinking, fighting, and shooting guns). She got a contract from the USPS in 1895 to be a mail carrier, and rode in a stagecoach protecting the mail from thieves and bandits. She intimidated thieves but was beloved by children and communities everywhere she went.



Nat Love (“Deadwood Dick”)

Born a slave in Tennessee, Nat Love became a cowboy after the Civil War. He partook in the legendary cattle drives up the Chisholm Trail from Texas to Montana. After winning a rodeo competition in Deadwood, South Dakota in 1876, he was given the nickname “Deadwood Dick.” Later in his life, he worked as a porter for the Pullman railroads. He told his own story in an autobiography published in 1907.



Ron McNair

Among the first African Americans selected to be astronauts, along with Guion Bluford and Frederick Gregory, in 1978. His first spaceflight was aboard the space shuttle *Challenger*, on the STS-41B mission, which marked the first use of the Canadian arm – a robotic arm used move a platform on which astronauts could stand (operated by McNair). In 1986, he died in the tragic explosion of the *Challenger* shortly after its launch from Kennedy Space Center. Before his death, he was a fifth-degree black belt Karate instructor and also played jazz saxophone.



Barbara Hillary

The first African American woman to reach both the North and the South Pole. She survived breast and lung cancer and spent much of her life focused on a career in nursing. After photographing polar bears in Manitoba, Canada, she became interested in more travel in the Arctic. She first stepped foot on the North Pole at age 76 (in April 2007). She went to the South Pole when she was 79 (in January 2011).



Mae Jemison

The first African American woman in space. She received two degrees from Stanford University in Chemical Engineering and African American studies, as well as a doctorate from Cornell University in Medicine. Her first spaceflight was aboard the *Endeavour* in 1992. She co-investigated bone cell research experiments during mission STS-47. Jemison has also been a physician, a Peace Corps volunteer, a professor, and founded of two technology companies.

ACTIVITY: Make a Vision Board

What would be your greatest adventure! Dream BIG!

Materials:

- Paper
- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- Old magazines or newspapers
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- poster board



....instructions on next page

Instructions:

1. Think about your goals and dreams. What do you hope to do after graduating from high school? What job do you dream of working someday? What classes do you want to perform better in at school? Where do you dream of traveling?
2. Make a list of your goals and dreams or choose one goal to focus on for your vision board.
3. Using old magazines and newspapers, look for images and words that relate to your dreams and cut them out. Find pictures and words that help you visualize the result of your goal, as well as the process of working towards that goal.
4. If you can't find many of the kind of pictures you're looking for, not to worry! Ask your parents for permission to search online for pictures related to your goals and print them. You can also draw some pictures yourself to put on your vision board!
5. Write down some phrases that will motivate you to reach your goal. You can use inspiring quotations by famous people, or write down your own sentences that remind you of what you hope to achieve.
6. On a poster board, lay out these pieces of paper with words and pictures. Then glue them onto the poster.
7. Place the vision board in a place where you will see it every day.
8. Look at your vision board every day

QUIZ: How Will You Change the World?

In *Into the Great Unknown*, you learned about explorers and adventurers whose dedication and courage left a huge impact on the world. Take this quiz to find out some ways you might be able to do the same!

**Question 1**

You are bored at home on a Sunday afternoon. You...

- A. Make a fort.
- B. Read a book.
- C. Sketch a picture of your dog.

Question 2

Your mom asks you to make your bed, but you really don't want to. You...

- A. Draw up plans for a robot that will make your bed for you
- B. Write up a list of reasons why you should not have to make your bed
- C. Pretend to burst into tears so she leaves you alone



Question 3

You're at the grocery store and there are no more baskets. You...

- A. Find a bag at the store and use it to carry all your items.
- B. Petition the grocery store to get more baskets.
- C. Build a basket out of objects you find in the trash.

**Question 4**

You're on a hike with your family and you come across a plant you've never seen before. You...

- A. Take a sample of it home with you to examine later.
- B. Write down all of its characteristics so you can talk to your teacher about it.
- C. Photograph it so you can share it with your class.

**Question 5**

You're walking to school, and it starts pouring. You...

- A. Calculate the amount of time it will take you to run to your house and get an umbrella.
- B. Enjoy the rain! It is a natural process that people have been experiencing since the beginning of time.
- C. Tie some tree branches together and use them as an umbrella.

RESULTS:

If you chose mostly...

(A) Math and Science

Watch out, world! One way you can make a difference is by using mathematical and scientific skills to solve real world problems. Whether it be through new technology, medicine, lab work, research, or a number of other fields, you can use science and math to innovate.

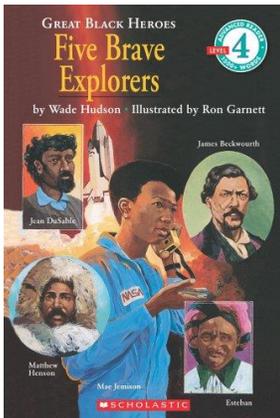
(B) History and Language Arts

Your interests in history and writing will help you leave your mark! By studying events of the past, you can build a better tomorrow through political activism, working in your community, and giving back to people in need. Your love of writing will allow you to speak to people around the world and share important messages.

(C) Art

You love using your creative brain to get things done. By coming up with crafty solutions to the problems around you, you can change the way people see the world. Careers in fine art, performance art, and museums will let your skills blossom.

READ...



Great Black Heroes: Five Brave Explorers written by Wade Hudson, illustrated by Ron Garnett

This book follows five explorers: Mae Jemison, space traveler; Esteban, who discovered Arizona and New Mexico; James Beckwourth, who developed the American West; Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable, founder of the city of Chicago; and Matthew Henson, the first African American to reach the North Pole. Part of Scholastic's Hello Reader series, this book includes punch-out flash cards plus six additional pages of skill-building activities.

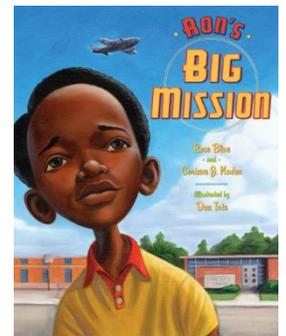
Recommended for Preschool – 3rd grade

Ron's Big Mission

written by Rose Blue and Corinne Naden, illustrated by Don Tate

This book is based on a real incident from the childhood of astronaut Ron McNair. When nine-year-old Ron loves wants to check out books about airplanes and flight from his local public library, obtaining his own library card is not just a rite of passage – in segregated South Carolina in the 1950s, it is a young man's first courageous mission.

Recommended for 1st – 4th grade



WATCH...

"Mae Jemison: I Wanted To Go Into Space" NOVA video, 2:25

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BovGDfuWhfl

"Guy Bluford Reflects on the 35th Anniversary of His First Space Flight" NASA video, 1:16

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BHQWGw8QNY

"Who Was the First Person to Reach the North Pole?" National Geographic video, 2:49

www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNJCl3EtTtE

"Ronald McNair | SC Hall of Fame," South Carolina ETV video, 10:03

www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuMiQPELOts

"Eyes on the Stars," StoryCorps animated video about Ron McNair, 3:16

www.youtube.com/watch?v=okF5UGpivR8

VISIT...

The Smithsonian Museum of African American History



Located on Constitution Avenue on the National Mall, the National Museum of African American History and Culture is the only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, history, and culture. The Museum opened to the public on September 24, 2016, as the 19th and newest museum of the Smithsonian Institution.

Hours: Open daily from 10am to 5:30pm
www.nmaahc.si.edu

VOCABULARY

Aerospace: the technology of aviation and space flight.

Engineer: a person who designs, builds, or maintains engines or machines.

Frontier: the edge of a settled part of a country.

Mountaineering: the sport or activity of climbing mountains.

Summit: to reach the highest point of a mountain or hill.

Pioneer: a person who is among the first to explore or settle a new country or area.

RESOURCES

www.barbarahillary.com/

www.legendsofamerica.com/we-natlove/

www.biography.com/people/matthew-henson-9335648

www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/jemison_mae.pdf

www.history.com/news/meet-stagecoach-mary-the-daring-black-pioneer-who-protected-wild-west-stagecoaches

Check out the Smithsonian Learning Lab for *Into the Great Unknown* here:
www.learninglab.si.edu/q/II-c/0kTkMxxa0qr7zRFN



Smithsonian Institution

OUR MISSION: "THE INCREASE AND DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE"

Smithsonian Associates advances the Institution's mission through life-enriching educational and cultural experiences inspired by the Smithsonian's research and collections for DC-region students, families, and adults, and for learning communities nationwide.

Discovery Theater has been presenting DC-area children with live educational performances for almost 40 years. With programs that enrich the Smithsonian experience for nearly 50,000 children annually, Discovery Theater is a gateway to the exhibits, collections, and themes contained in the museums and galleries on the National Mall and beyond. We explore American history and cultures, folk tales from around the world, and exciting, accessible science and math programs in the company of puppeteers, storytellers, dancers, actors, and musicians. Discovery Theater performances unite ideologies, enact themes that reflect the diversity of its audiences, open avenues of self-reflection, and offer an enjoyable means for parents and teachers to demonstrate life's lessons. There's so much to do and explore at the Smithsonian — and Discovery Theater is the ideal place to begin!



Our Location

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