Doctor Charles Drew Biography

Ways to use the biographies

Studying the lives and achievements of scientists is part of Sc1 (National Curriculum)-Ideas and evidence in Science - Scientific Enquiry - in the National Curriculum.

All children need to know that Minority Ethnic peoples have contributed to science in the past and present.

Read and discuss the biography of a person relevant to the area of science the children are studying. Many of the biographies have Race Equality issues in them, discuss these with the children and relate to their own experiences of Race Equality Issues.

Comprehension activities could be developed from these biographies.

Collaborative paired or group tasks and discussions could be
- What evidence did the scientists have to identify a problem?
- What did they do?
- How did it make a difference to people's lives?
- What do you think were the main difficulties that faced the scientist?

- To role play the life of the scientist.
- Produce a poster about the scientist and her/his discovery.
- Produce a story-board of their life.
- Write a list of questions they would like to ask the scientist if they could.
- How did this scientist achieve? Ask them to listen and discuss in groups the personal qualities of the person. E.g. persistence.
- Have they heard of this person before? If not, why not? Is there another scientist whom they associate with this discovery?
- Who are scientists? What do scientists do? What tools do they need?

Doctor Charles Drew
1904- 1950

Charles Drew was born in 1904 in Washington D.C. in America. He was the eldest of 5 children. His mum and dad were called Nora and Charles. His family was very poor. Charles Drew was very clever and worked hard at school. He was also good at sports. He especially liked American football, basketball, swimming and athletics. He won many prizes and trophies for playing sports.

After school, he studied at Amherst College, which is a very good college in the USA. He did very well and became a science teacher and a sports coach at another college. In 1928 Charles Drew decided he wanted to become a doctor and went to medical school in Canada. In 1933, he received his Master of Surgery and Doctor of Medicine Degree.

While he was learning to become a doctor, he began to research blood. In 1935 he went to work and study at a university in New York, where he worked on blood research. Charles Drew investigated how to collect and store blood until it was needed for transfusions. He discovered a way of storing blood by separating it, into a product called plasma. This meant blood could be stored for much longer until it was needed. He also set up blood banks, which meant that hospitals always had the blood they needed to save lives.

During World War 2, many British soldiers were dying because

there was no blood to give them when they were injured. The British Government asked Charles Drew to help them set up a blood bank to save the soldiers' lives. He did this so well that he was asked to set up the world's first blood bank.

At the blood bank, Charles Drew spoke out against the racist practice of storing blood donated by black people, separately from the blood donated by white people. He knew that this was wrong because blood from black and white people is the same. He was worried that people might die while waiting for a donation of blood by someone of the same colour.

Charles Drew also believed it was important to help other black people to become doctors. He worked at university teaching people to become surgeons. He received many awards and prizes for his work.

On April 1st 1950 Charles Drew was hurt in a car accident, he was bleeding badly and needed a blood transfusion to save his life. He was taken to the nearest hospital. At this time, due to the racism in America, black and white people were treated at separate hospitals. This hospital was for white people only and the doctors would not look after Charles Drew. They sent him to the hospital for black people. Sadly, Charles Drew died before he got there.