

Davidson Nicol 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?

Davidson Nicol

1924 – 1993

Davidson Nicol was born on September 14th 1924 in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Africa. His father was a pharmacist who worked in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. His father's science books fascinated Davidson Nicol. He became interested in science at school and after he left school he became a science and maths teacher. He then became a technician in a science laboratory.



In 1943 Nicol came to England and went to Cambridge University to study Science. He got a first class honours degree. He wanted to become a doctor and a scientist. He applied to London Hospital Medical College to learn to become a cardiologist (a heart specialist). Due to racism, Nicol was not able to do that. Because of his name, the college thought he was white man who had an excellent degree. When they realised he was African and black they refused to allow him into college.

Later, another professor at a different university said that Davidson Nicol could come and study with him. He went on to get the highest results in his group and became a doctor.

Nicol's greatest achievement was discovering how to make human insulin. This was much cheaper than getting insulin from animals. Insulin is a hormone in your blood, which controls how much sugar there is in your blood. If there is too much or not enough sugar in your blood you can become very ill with a disease called diabetes.

Before Nicol's discovery, people had to give themselves daily injections of insulin made from pigs or cows. This insulin, although it helped people feel better, had nasty side effects.

Nicol has also done important work on finding better ways to treat arthritis and malnutrition in children.

Davidson Nicol has five children, two daughters and three sons. He teaches at universities all over the world. Nicol has written many books and articles about his work and has received many prizes, awards and honours.