



Read Aloud Lesson based on the book

The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read

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*Mark Walker was born into slavery, freed at the age of fifteen, and then went onto work and support her family for many years. Her entire life, she dreamt of learning to read, and finally did so at the age of 116, earning herself the title “the oldest student.” **The Oldest Student** is an illustrated book that tells the story of Mary Walker’s life and her quest to learn to read. After reading or listening to **The Oldest Student** (check YouTube for a read aloud), answer and reflect on the questions below.*

1. Take a moment to think about your day, from the morning you wake up to when you go to bed. How many times a day do you rely on your ability to read? Do you think it would be hard to go through your day without the ability to do so?
2. The story tells us that when Mary was a child, slaves were not allowed to learn how to read or write. Imagine if you weren’t allowed to come to school or learn. Now laws exist to make sure every child has access to education. Why is this important? What challenges would you face later in life if you weren’t taught to read or write?
3. Think back to all the tough jobs Mary had to have during her lifetime, a sharecropper, housecleaner, a cook. She worked long days and raised three sons at the same time. What kept Mary going when she was tired? Mary was very hardworking and resilient. Do you think you possess these same qualities?
4. Ever since she was a little girl, Mary knew she wanted to learn how to read. Even when obstacles stood in the way, she never gave up. Do you have a dream or goal? What is it? Would you be willing to work towards that goal for over 100 years?
5. Mary was still learning new skills after the age of 100. Why is it important to keep learning after you are done with school? What are three things you hope to learn about?