

Investing in Human Capital

Introduction: This book tells the story of Mary Walker who was born into slavery in Alabama in 1848. When she was 15, she was emancipated. By age 20, she was married and had her first child. By age 68, she had worked numerous jobs, including cooking, cleaning, babysitting, and selling sandwiches to raise money for her church. At 114, she was the last remaining member of her family. And at 116, she learned to read. She died in 1969 at age 121.

Time Allocation: 15-20 minutes.

Suggested Grade Level: K-3

Materials:

- Book- *The Oldest Student: How Mary Learned to Read*
- Activity Sheet- What Human Capital Do You Have?
- Writing tools

Objectives:

- The student will listen to a story and determine the human capital of the main character.
- The student will define and understand the meaning of human capital.
- The student will make decisions and choices concerning an evaluation of personal skills and abilities.

Procedure:

1. Introduce the lesson by telling the students that they will be listening to a story about a strong woman who continued to invest in her skills.
2. Read *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read* the students. This takes about 11 minutes. There is also a YouTube read aloud found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4FbgX2-Uck>
3. Upon completion of the story ask the students what Mary Walker's goals were. [*Possible answers: She wanted to provide for her family. She wanted to be free. She wanted to learn to read.*]
4. Discuss the fact that Mary Walker had to find the right time to learn how to read. She had to invest in her own human capital. Define **human capital** as: the health, education, experience, training, skills, and values of people.
5. Ask the students if they remember what kinds of jobs Mary Walker had. [*Possible answers: She picked cotton, cleaned houses, watched children, cooked, sold sandwiches.*]

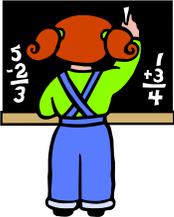
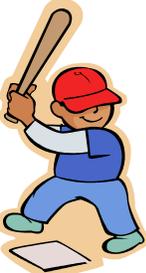
Hot off the Presses

The Oldest Student

6. Ask the students if they have a goal of their own; if they want to do something special. Suggest to them that they are already learning skills to achieve a future goal.
7. Inform the students that they will be doing an activity that will demonstrate that they have already invested in their own human capital.
8. Distribute the activity sheets and writing tools. Read the directions to the students. Allow the students to interpret the illustrations anyway they wish. For example, the first picture could illustrate shoe-tying or curling one's tongue. The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate that the students have accumulated many more skills and abilities than they are aware of. Note: by allowing the students to choose only three skills that they can improve on, they have to make thoughtful choices.
9. Conclude the activity by discussing the students' views on their own human capital.

What Skills do You Have?

Directions: Look at each picture and decide if you have that skill. Put a check in each correct box. Put a circle around the skills you don't have now, but would like to. Put a square around **three skills** you would like to get better at doing.

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Extra Credit: On the back of this paper draw some other skills that you have.