

LONGWOOD
GARDENS

VOICES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Teacher Guide

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Welcome to Voices in the Landscape: Deeply Rooted with Storyteller Charlotte Blake Alston. During this exhibition, we invite you to explore and reflect on the strength, resilience, and contributions of the African American community through the lens of horticulture and the power of story. Voices in the Landscape consists of 10 stops throughout the Gardens experienced with your phone via QR code at each stop, or virtually via our website.

Welcome from Charlotte Blake Alston

The original idea of the audio installation was to explore and reflect on the experiences of and historical relationships between African Americans and American soil through the lens of horticulture. It is a unique and unexplored perspective that created wonderful opportunities for storytelling. Since Voices in the Landscape launched in 2021, we have added six companion narratives for children at these stops: The Power of Story, To Speak of Water, A Walk with Frederick Douglass, Safety and Solace in the Woods, Making a Connection, and Beauty and Brilliance of Nature. Each is three minutes or less and designed to be enjoyed by children between the ages of 5 and 10 years old. I encourage you to listen to those segments as well as the original audio and encourage conversation with your students about the stories they will hear and the surrounding environment where the story has been placed. Two story segments are framed within the historical context of American slavery: A Walk with Frederick Douglass and Safety and Solace in the Woods. However, they speak of resilience and the ways people sought and found comfort in nature. The texts are crafted in language children can easily understand. As a former elementary school teacher, I know that when children and adults engage with each other, both come away with a deeper and richer experience. It is my desire that each story segment will inspire and serve to validate the beauty and variety of nature and the strength of the human spirit.

—Charlotte Blake Alston



About the Storyteller

Charlotte Blake Alston is a nationally acclaimed storyteller, narrator, singer, and librettist who performs in venues throughout North America and abroad. A highly sought after storyteller, she is committed to perpetuating the African and African American oral storytelling traditions.

She has made multiple appearances in such venues as the Smithsonian Institution, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the National Museum for Women in the Arts, the National Storytelling Festival, and the National Festival of Black Storytelling. She was one of two storytellers selected to present at the historic weekend opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC.

Alston has appeared as host and narrator of The Philadelphia Orchestra's school and family concerts since 1991. She was the featured host, storyteller, and narrator of the Carnegie Hall Family and School Concert series from 1995 to 2016. Her narrative voice can be heard on documentaries aired on PBS and on Fels Planetarium shows. She is the narrative voice of maternal and newborn care health training videos for UNICEF and Global Health Media.

Alston has been a featured storyteller at both presidential and gubernatorial inaugural festivities. She has received numerous honors and awards including a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, the Commonwealth of PA Artist of the Year Award, the National Storytelling Network's Circle of Excellence Award, and the Zora Neale Hurston Award, the highest award conferred by the National Association of Black Storytellers. In 2021 she was named The Philadelphia Orchestra's official storyteller, narrator, and host.



Gardens Map



Families and Kids Audio Version Available

(designed for ages 5–10)

Link to Mobile Map – <https://longwoodgardens.org/maps/voiceslandscape>



Resources and Academic Standards

Grade Level: Designed for grades 1-5

Objective: Students will better understand the strength, resilience, and contributions of the African American community through the lens of horticulture and power of storytelling.

Resources:

Accessible Exhibition Guide:

- <https://longwoodgardens.org/voices-landscape/accessible-exhibition-guide>

How to talk to children about hard history:

- Learning for Justice – Teaching Hard History: Grades K-5 Introduction - <https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/teaching-hard-history/american-slavery/k-5-framework/introduction>
- Learning for Justice – Teaching Hard History Elementary Framework - <https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/teaching-hard-history/american-slavery/k-5-framework>
- Washington Parent – How to Talk to Kids About Slavery and Freedom - <https://washingtonparent.com/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-slavery-freedom/>

PA Academic Standards:

- <https://www.pdesas.org/Standard/View>

PA State History Standards

Grade 1:

- **Standard - 8.2.1.A**
- Identify groups of people who contribute to a community.
- **Standard - 8.3.1.A**
- Identify Americans who played a significant role in American history.

Grade 2:

- **Standard - 8.4.2.A**
- Explain why cultures have commemorations and remembrances.
- **Standard - 8.4.2.C**
- Identify how cultures have commemorations and remembrances.



Grade 3:

- **Standard - 8.4.3.B**
- Identify the importance of **artifacts** and sites to different **cultures** and **ethnicities**.

Grade 4:

- **Standard - 8.3.4.C**
- Explain how continuity and change in U.S. history have influenced personal development and identity.

Grade 5:

- **Standard - 8.3.5.D**
- Examine patterns of conflict and cooperation among groups and organizations that impacted the history and development of the United States.

PA State Civics Standards

Grade 3:

- **Standard - 5.2.3.A**
- Identify **personal rights** and responsibilities.

Grade 5:

- **Standard - 5.2.5.A**
- Identify individual rights and needs and the rights and needs of others in the classroom, school, community, state, and nation.



VOICES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Stops



Stop 1 – The Power of Story

Location: Rose Arbor

Description: Begin your Voices in the Landscape experience with a vision of what's to come.

Listen: The length of The Power of Story audio clip for students is 2:14. Have students listen carefully while taking in their surroundings.

Transcript of Spoken Word:

Hello and welcome to Longwood Gardens. I am Charlotte Blake Alston and I am a storyteller and your guide for Voices In The Landscape: Deeply Rooted. You will hear my voice today as you walk through the Gardens and the Conservatory building with your family. Stories help us to remember. Stories help us to learn things we didn't know before. Stories open doors of understanding. Today's stories remember and honor African Americans who were brought to America a long time ago to work the land. They had a special relationship with nature: with America's soil, its seeds, its plants, the food it gives, its waters, and even the woods. In the hardest of times, they kept their love of nature alive and passed it on to the next generation. You will hear about plants like the bird-of-paradise. You will hear about places like the woods at night. You will hear about special people like the great freedom fighter Frederick Douglass who found peace among the flowers of his beautiful gardens. The grownups you are with will be listening to stories too. You can talk with them about the stories you hear. You can share the stories with family and friends. As you walk, listen, observe and enjoy, remember: every person—including you—is as unique and as beautiful as every plant, tree, and flower in these Gardens.

Stop 4 – To Speak of Water

Location: Large Lake

Description: Recognize the importance of water and learn how it is sacred to many people.



Listen: The length of the To Speak of Water audio clip for students is 2:33. Have students listen carefully while taking in their surroundings.

Reflect: How has what our storyteller, Charlotte Blake Alston, had to say about water changed the way you view water? What are the special things that you and your family do to remember and honor people who are important to you?

Experience: Have students quietly observe the lake for two to five minutes. Prompt them to take notice of the reflections in the water and the plants in the surrounding area. Have students share what interesting things they observed or what their observations reminded them of with the group or a partner.

Transcript of Spoken Word:

There are many amazing things about this planet called Earth. Perhaps the most amazing of all is water. Water is everywhere. It's even in the air we breathe in and the air we breathe out. It makes up our oceans, rivers, lakes, ponds, streams, and creeks. It provides a home for the Earth's sea creatures. Mighty ships can sail on it and you and I can swim in it. Have you ever noticed how even babies love to splash in it? When we drink it, it helps to keep our hearts pumping and blood flowing through our bodies. You can freeze it to make ice to cool your summer drinks. You can boil it when you cook your food or make a cup of tea. When there is a fire, we use water to put it out. Vegetable plants, fruit trees, and flowers, even grass would die if they didn't get water every now and then. It is water that cleans our clothes and washes dirt away from our bodies.

Our bodies can't stay alive very long without water. Because of that, many people believe that water is sacred because it represents life. Many Americans have great-grandparents who came to this country on water. Some came free on ships from Europe. Others were brought on ships from the African continent. Those were my ancestors. Many times, we remember them by pouring water in a special ceremony called libation. We remember them and we honor them by pouring water and saying their names out loud. Do you have an ancestor, a grandparent, a great-grandparent, an aunt, a friend whose name you want to be remembered? If you want, you can say their names softly as you look out over this lake of precious, life-giving water.



Stop 5 – A Walk with Frederick Douglass

Location: Meadow Boardwalk

Description: Enjoy nature and celebrate its beauty much like one of America's most famous freedom fighters, Frederick Douglass, would take the time to do.

Listen: The length of the A Walk with Frederick Douglass audio clip for students is 2:54. Have students listen carefully while taking in their surroundings.

Reflect: How do you feel when you spend time outside in nature? Where is one of your favorite places to spend time outside? Why is this one of your favorite places?

Experience: Have students stand silently for two minutes. Encourage students to use their senses during this moment of reflection, taking in what they see, hear, smell, and feel. Have students share their sensory observations with a partner.

Transcript of Spoken Word:

Frederick Douglass loved spending time in nature. Frederick Douglass was one of America's most famous freedom fighters. Frederick was born into slavery. It was not a happy life and when he was 20 years old, he escaped from Maryland to New York where he could live free. Once free, he began to speak out against slavery. Many people's hearts and minds were touched—and changed—when Frederick shared the story of his life. He spoke with powerful words and powerful emotions. Even President Abraham Lincoln asked for Fred's help in ending slavery.

Frederick received many invitations to speak all over America and in the countries of England, Ireland, and Scotland, sharing his message that every human being should be treated with respect and dignity.

But traveling and fighting for freedom can make you tired and weary sometimes. Frederick Douglass wanted to come home to a place that fed his mind and his heart. He bought a house on land that was surrounded by cedar trees. He named it Cedar Hill. He planted seeds and grew as many different kinds of flowers as he could. He planted fruit trees and had vegetable gardens and plants with creeping vines that climbed up fences and the sides of his house. When people would visit him from all over the world, he took them for walks in his beautiful gardens and through his woods. He loved sharing that



beauty with others. Can you imagine walking with the great Frederick Douglass in his beautiful gardens of purple, lavender, red, pink, blue, white, orange, and yellow flowers?

If you close your eyes, breathe in through your nose, and use your imagination, you may even be able to smell the wonderful aromas of his flowers.

Gardens with flowers of all kinds and colors remind us of all the beauty the earth has to offer. At any time, you can celebrate that beauty in its flowers and its people—just like Frederick Douglass.

Stop 6 – Safety and Solace in the Woods

Location: Lookout Loft Treehouse

Description: Explore the idea of walking in the woods at night and why this was so important in helping people free themselves from slavery.

Listen: The length of the Safety and Solace in the Woods audio clip for students is 2:46. Have students listen carefully while taking in their surroundings.

Reflect: What would you see if you walked in the woods at night? What would it feel like to walk in the woods at night? Do you think you could walk in the woods at night?

Experience: Have students pair up with a partner and observe the surrounding area together from the Lookout Loft Treehouse. Students should share with their partner what they notice and how it would look and feel to walk through that wooded area at night.

Transcript of Spoken Word:

Welcome to the treehouse. Have you heard this song?

“If you go out in the woods tonight

You’d better not go alone!”

If you look out over the railing on the backside of this treehouse, you will see some woods and a path below. Do you see it? If you’d like, you can climb down the steps and walk down that path with your mom or dad as you listen—or you can stay right where you are. The woods can feel like a scary place especially at night and especially if you



are lost, alone, and not sure which way to go. But for many people who were held in slavery, the woods was a welcoming place, even at night.

How can that be? Woods are full of trees, plants, leaves, flowers, and roots. People learned how to use some of those plants to make medicines. The woods were also pathways to freedom. When people made an escape from slavery, they would travel through the woods at night. It would be morning before anyone knew they were gone. When it's darkest, you can see all the stars. People looked to the sky for the constellation called the Big Dipper. Some called it the Drinking Gourd, because it looked like the pumpkin-like gourds they used for dipping and drinking water. As they walked through the dark woods, the Big Dipper showed them the way to freedom.

Do you think you could walk through woods at night? I don't know if I could. But if I lived during the time of slavery and I really wanted to be free—maybe, just maybe—I would.

Song: Follow the Drinking Gourd

Follow the drinkin' gourd

Follow the drinkin' gourd

For the old man is waiting to carry you to freedom

If you follow the drinkin' gourd

Stop 7 – Making a Connection

Location: Wood's cycad plant in the East Conservatory

Description: Consider how the story of the cycad can be a reminder of how many people have overcome hardships and continue to thrive.

Listen: The length of the Making a Connection audio clip for students is 1:58. Have students listen carefully while taking in their surroundings.

Reflect: How can connecting with nature help us with difficult situations in our lives? If you could travel somewhere and bring a plant back with you where would you travel and what plant would you want to bring with you to share with others? Why?



Experience: Have students observe the plants around them and decide which plant they see that they like the best. Students can share which plant they chose and why they chose that plant with the group or with a partner.

Transcript of Spoken Word:

Welcome into the presence of the oldest plant on Earth. Scientists tell us the Wood's cycad has been on the Earth for—are you ready—280 million years. How long do you think it would take to count from one to 280 million? This plant was around before the dinosaurs walked the Earth and it continued to thrive long after the dinosaurs were all gone. It has even survived earthquakes and floods. A plant lover named John Medley Wood found the plant when he was walking in a forest in South Africa. So how did this one get here to Longwood Gardens? About 50 years ago, Longwood Gardens' plant expert traveled to South Africa to see the ancient plant Mr. Wood found. Very carefully, they cut a piece and brought it back to Longwood Gardens where it received very special care before it was put on display for all to enjoy. When people learn this plant's story, they feel inspired because it has survived so many hardships. Just like this plant, people have come to America from many different parts of the world and sometimes they faced hardships too. But this cycad's story reminds us that even with the hardships, if we stay strong, we can overcome them and continue to thrive—just like this beautiful, ancient plant.



Stop 8 – Beauty and Brilliance of Nature

Location: Bird-of-paradise plant in the Orangery

Description: Feel freedom and beauty bursting from the bird-of-paradise flower.

Listen: The length of the Beauty and Brilliance of Nature audio clip for students is 2:27. Have students listen carefully while taking in their surroundings.

Reflect: How does looking at the bird-of-paradise flower make you feel? What plants or landscapes have you seen that you think are especially beautiful or unique?

Experience: Have students search for colors, shapes, or plant species either from where they are standing or by walking around a small area of the Conservatory. See how many different colors, shapes, or species students can find in the plants in the Conservatory in three to five minutes.

Transcript of Spoken Word:

The beautiful bird-of-paradise flower is different from nearly every other flower in the world! Have you been looking at the flowers along the pathways and inside of this building? Have you noticed their stems, their petals, and their shapes? Many flowers have petals that are a single color like all blue or all pink. Some have petals with two colors like purple and white or red with a splash of yellow. Some have rounded shapes. Some, like tulips, are shaped like a bell.

The bird-of-paradise has its own unique shape and mix of colors. Do you know how the caterpillar spins a cocoon or chrysalis and stays inside of it while his body changes? When it is time, he begins to emerge from the cocoon, but he is no longer a caterpillar. He has transformed into a beautiful butterfly. The petals of the flower rest inside a type of cocoon called a spathe. Inside, three baby orange petals and three baby blue petals join together into a single flower bud. And when it's just the right time, that bud bursts through, opens up, and forms a beautiful, colorful crown of petals. Some say the petals look like the wings of the bird, ready to take flight.

The bird-of-paradise flower got its name from the actual bird of paradise whose tail feathers are long with brilliant, bright, bold colors.



LONGWOOD GARDENS

The flower reminds us of the brilliance of nature. Some say the flower makes them feel free because it reminds them that we are each special, unique, and beautiful on the inside. And if you spread your wings and show the beauty inside of you, you'll see just how high you and your dreams can fly.





VOICES IN THE LANDSCAPE

***After listening to the audio recordings at each stop,
complete the activities below:***

Stop 1: The Power of Story

Location: Rose Arbor

Listen to the audio recording and get ready for the journey ahead.

Stop 4: To Speak of Water

Location: Large Lake Look at the lake.

Draw what you see below.

Stop 5: A Walk with Frederick Douglass

Location: Meadow Boardwalk

Use your senses and think about what you see, hear, smell, and feel. Write what you notice below.

My observations:

See: _____

Hear: _____

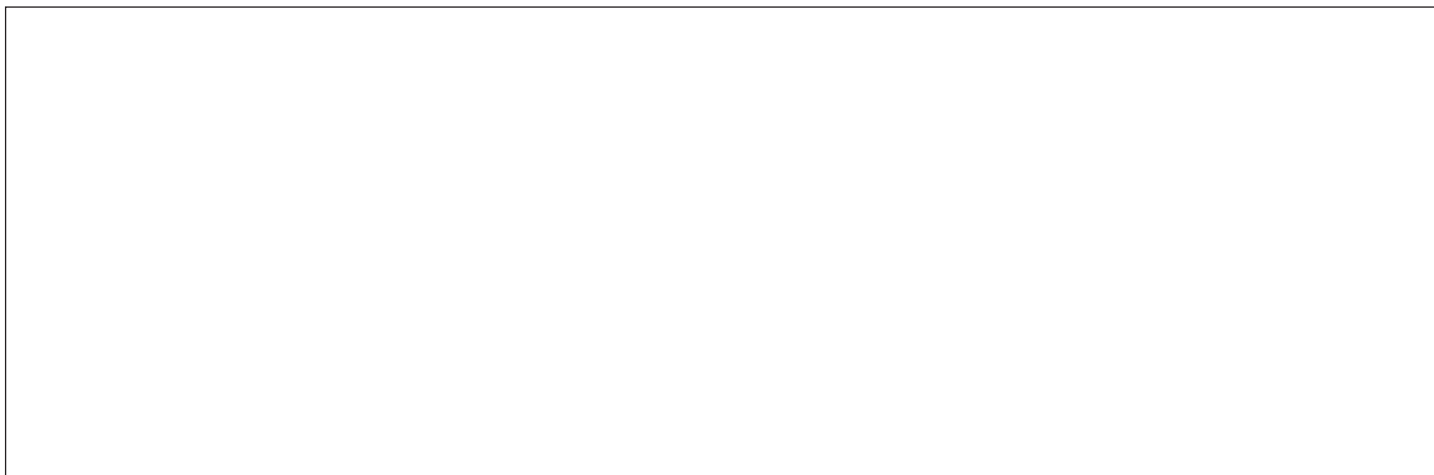
Smell: _____

Feel: _____

Stop 6 – Safety and Solace in the Woods

Location: Lookout Loft Treehouse

Look out from the Lookout Loft Treehouse. Draw what you see below.



Stop 7 - Making a Connection

Location: Wood's cycad plant in the East Conservatory

Look at the plants around you. Draw a plant you like below. Look for a tag with the name of the plant and write the plant name below.



Stop 8 - Beauty and Brilliance of Nature

Location: Bird-of-paradise plant in the Orangery

Look at the colors, shapes, or plant species around the conservatory. Write what you see below.
