



The TRUE STORY of VANILLA

TEACHER GUIDE



In 1841 **Edmond Albius**, a 12-year-old enslaved boy from Réunion Island, made history when he discovered how to hand-pollinate vanilla plants and created a way to bring vanilla to the world. Edmond's technique is still used to pollinate vanilla plants today.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann Richards is a Jamaican Canadian writer from Brampton, Ontario. She enjoys studying and writing about different cultures and has always wanted to write books about African history. Ann has written for the *London Free Press* and *Tekawennake News*. *The True Story of Vanilla* is Ann's debut book.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter One: Secret Codes

1. How old was Edmond when he was sent to work on Ferréol's plantation?
2. What is a houseboy?
3. What was the Black Code? Why was it used?
4. What insect is needed to produce vanilla? What insect does not like vanilla?



Chapter Two: No More Sugar

1. What type of science did Ferréol teach Edmond?
2. What plant did Edmond first learn to hand-pollinate?
3. What farm product did Réunion stop producing and why?
4. What other languages did Edmond speak?

Chapter Three: A New Treasure

1. The Aztecs used vanilla in what products?
2. What is the name of the stingless bee? What country is the insect from?
3. Why was Ferréol so frustrated?
4. What are three types of vanilla and what are they used for?



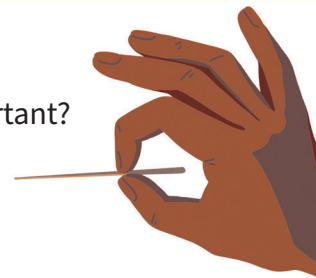
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Chapter Four: Le Geste D'Edmond

1. When is it springtime on Réunion Island?
2. What part of the orchid did Edmond discover? Why was this part of the plant so important?
3. What did Edmond use to make his historical discovery?
4. How much time did Edmond have to make this scientific discovery?



Chapter Five: A Carriage Ride

1. What was the new industry that Edmond created? Why was this new industry so important to Réunion's economy?
2. How long had botanists been trying to solve the mystery of vanilla orchid pollination?
3. How old was Edmond when he made the discovery? Who did Ferréol tell after he realized what Edmond did?
4. Who did Edmond teach his hand-pollination technique to?



Chapter Six: Fèt Kaf Celebration

1. When did slavery end on Réunion and why? Who helped to end slavery?
2. Why was the government reluctant to end slavery?
3. Did the enslaved people of Réunion ever get paid for their work?
4. Who did Ferréol write letters to trying to get compensation for Edmond's scientific discovery?

Chapter Seven: Ships At Sea

1. Where did Edmond dream of working? Can you think of where his dream might have come from?
2. What did Edmond steal? How long did he go to prison for? How did Ferréol try to help Edmond?
3. While Edmond was in prison, who tried to take credit for his discovery?
4. While Edmond was in prison, did Réunion's vanilla industry prosper? Do you think this helped him to get out of prison earlier?

Chapter Eight: The African Botanist

1. Was Edmond given credit for his work? What science publication first recognized him?
2. Who did Edmond marry? Did Edmond have any children?
3. What plant is on Réunion's coat of arms?
4. Did Edmond ever receive any financial or monetary compensation for his discovery that saved Réunion's economy and changed the world?

ACTIVITIES

1. On a world map locate all the places around the world that are discussed in the book: Réunion Island, Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, Comoros, India, French Guiana, Tahiti, Paris, London, Spain, Central America, Jamaica, Haiti, Canada and the United States.
2. Discuss travelling from Réunion to these locations listed in the book. There were slave routes and distribution channels for vanilla that existed between some of those countries, for example, India to Réunion and Africa to Madagascar.
3. List products have vanilla in them. What is your favorite item that has vanilla in it?
4. Plant pumpkin or watermelon seeds and wait until they flower. Try to find the male and female parts of the flower and then hand-pollinate them.

