

***Vision of Beauty: The Story of Sarah Breedlove Walker*** by Kathryn Lasky  
(Cambridge, Massachusetts: Candlewick Press, 2000) ISBN: 0-7636-1834-9

**Literature Annotation:** This book tells the inspiring story of Sarah Breedlove Walker's (better known as Madam C.J. Walker, also spelled Madame C.J. Walker) rise from poverty in Delta, Louisiana to her successful career as an entrepreneur and philanthropist.

**Grade Level:** 3-4

**Duration:** 45-60 minutes

### **Maryland State Curriculum**

***Economics Standard:*** Students will develop economic reasoning to understand the historical development and current status of economic principles, institutions, and processes needed to be effective citizens, consumers, and workers participating in local communities, the nation, and the world.

4.B.1 Describe different types of markets.

4.B.2.a Classify goods and services according to who produces them, such as the government, business or both.

***Personal Financial Literacy Standard 1:*** Students will apply financial literacy reasoning in order to make informed, financially responsible decisions.

1.5.D Describe different types of retail markets.

***Personal Financial Literacy Standard 2:*** Students will relate choices regarding their education and career paths to earning potential.

2.5.A Compare the relationship among education, skills, career choices, economic conditions, and income.

2.5.A.4 Describe how personal characteristics and interests affect career decisions.

***Personal Financial Literacy Standard 6:*** Students will develop financial planning skills to minimize financial setbacks.

6.5.C Investigate the effects of business practices, including sales techniques.

***Reading Standard:*** Students will use a variety of strategies to understand what they read (construct meaning).

1.E.2 Use strategies to prepare for reading (before reading)

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

- describe the life and accomplishments of Madam C.J. Walker.
- identify the goods and services provided by Madam C. J. Walker and her agents.
- examine the marketing practices of Madam C. J. Walker.

### **Vocabulary**

**entrepreneur:** an individual or group who takes the risk to start a new business or introduce a new good or service into the marketplace in the hope of earning a profit.

**goods:** physically tangible objects that can be used to satisfy economic wants, including but not limited to food, shoes, cars, houses, books and furniture.

**services:** physically intangible actions that can be performed to satisfy economic wants, including but not limited to medical care, dental care, haircuts, education, police protection, fire protection, and national defense.

**market:** An arrangement wherein buyers and sellers can exchange resources, goods, and services. A market may be a physical place, such as a store or an auction gallery, or it may occur through other arrangements, such as telephone and Internet transactions.

### Teacher Materials

A copy of *Vision of Beauty* by Kathryn Lasky

Sentence strip with term “goods” written on it

Sentence strip with term “services” written on it

Sentence strip with term “entrepreneur” written on it

Resource Sheet #1: *Information Cards* (1 set for Motivation)

Resource Sheet #1A: *Information Cards – ANSWER KEY*

### Student Materials

Resource Sheet #1: *Information Cards* (1 set per group of 3-4 students for Closure)

Resource Sheet #2: *Vision of Beauty History Frame*

### Additional Resources

- <http://www.madamcwalker.com/index.html> The Official Madam C.J. Walker Website
- Hudson, W., *Five Notable Inventors*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1995. (Lesson plan available at [www.econed.org](http://www.econed.org))

### Motivation

Distribute the cards from Teacher Resource Sheet #1: *Information Cards* to selected students. Have them read their cards to the class. (Cards can be read in any order.) After all of the cards have been read, ask students to make predictions about the story.

### Development

1. Show students the book *Vision of Beauty* by Kathryn Lasky. Tell them that the information cards they read told them something about the life of Sarah Breedlove Walker, also known as Madam C. J. Walker. Madam C.J. Walker was one of the first successful African American businesswomen.
2. Distribute Resource Sheet #1: *Vision of Beauty History Frame*. Instruct students to complete the graphic organizer as you read *A Vision of Beauty* by Kathryn Lasky. After reading the entire book, discuss the History Frame.
3. Place the sentence strips labeled **goods** and **services** on the board as the headings for a 2-column chart. (You may need to review the definitions of these terms. See vocabulary section of lesson for definitions.)
4. Ask students to revisit *Vision of Beauty* and identify the various goods and services found in the book. As goods or services are mentioned, have student volunteers take turns writing the good or service under in the appropriate heading on the board. Note that these kinds of services and goods were provided by Madam C. J. Walker’s business, and differ from government services, which would be paid for by taxes. (**Services-** *laundress, cook (non-restaurant), teacher, nursemaid, hairdresser*)

**Goods-** *cotton, food, hair care products*)

5. Discuss the definition of **market**. Explain that there are different types of markets; some are face-to-face (fruit/vegetable stands, yard sales, grocery stores, etc...) while others are not face-to-face (Internet, telephone, catalogs, etc...) Ask the following questions:
  - What type of market did Madam C.J. Walker use in selling her products? (*face-to-face market*)
  - When she first started her business, to whom did Madam C.J. Walker sell her beauty products? (*She went door-to-door to black women's homes. See the "Denver, Colorado" section of the story.*)
  - What sales strategy did Madam C. J. Walker use to convince the women to buy her products? (*She did demonstrations right in the women's homes, showing how her products worked better than other products.*)
  - How were Madam C.J. Walker's advertisements different from the ads seen by most black women at the time? (*Her advertisements did not use light-skinned, straight-haired models. Her ads emphasized health. She used "before" and "after" pictures of her own hair. Her ads showed other black women that they should feel a sense of self-worth.*)
  - What did the author mean when she said, "All customers were viewed as future agents."? (*Madam C. J. Walker developed a business plan wherein each customer had the opportunity to sell to her friends and neighbors. They were given training in Sarah's successful methods. By using this method, her business grew rapidly.*)
  
7. Share with students the definition of **entrepreneur**. Say, "Madam C. J. Walker was an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is a person who uses their experiences and skills to think of creative ways to start a business or to earn money."

### Closure

Return to the *Information Cards* (Resource Sheet #1) used during the motivational activity. Distribute 1 set of cards per group of 3-4 students. Have each group work together to place the cards in sequential order. As you check for accuracy (see Resource Sheet 1A - Answer Key), have groups correct the order of their cards. Then, discuss the following:

- What experiences in Sarah Breedlove's early life led her in the direction of inventing hair products?
- What character traits enabled young Sarah (and later the adult Madam C. J. Walker) to be a successful entrepreneur?

### Assessment

Have students respond to the following prompt:

The Maryland Council on Economic Education is holding its annual poster contest. Your teacher has asked you to create a poster illustrating the goods and services provided by Madam C.J. Walker. Your poster must:

- Identify at least one good and one service associated with the life of Madam C.J. Walker
- Place the terms Goods and Services at the top of the page in large letters
- Be original and hand-drawn horizontally on an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of white paper

- Be in color—not black and white
- Be outlined in black
- Have no spelling or grammatical errors

Have student volunteers share their posters with the class.

***Note to teacher: Please consider sending posters to the Maryland Council on Economic Education to be entered in the annual “A Picture is Worth A Thousand Words” Contest. See [www.econed.org](http://www.econed.org) for more complete instructions on how to enter.***

**Information Cards**

The Madam C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company always had a woman president.	Agents who sold Madam Walker products were trained to speak to costumers about health, beauty, and self-sufficiency.
Madam used pictures of herself to advertise her products.	Sarah's formula helped her keep her scalp healthy and her hair grow strong.
Sarah saved enough money from her job as a laundress to send her daughter Lelia to Knoxville College.	Sarah Breedlove was born in Louisiana in 1867. Her home was near the Mississippi River.
Sarah's parents were cotton farmers. They died when she was young. After their death, she moved with her sister to Vicksburg, Mississippi.	Years of poor nutrition and hard work had left Sarah's hair brittle and unhealthy. She discovered that she was going bald.
Sarah had a dream about the natural resources found in Africa. She decided to use those resources to create a formula to help her unhealthy hair.	In 1905, Sarah married Charles Walker from St. Louis, Missouri. She chose to call herself Madam C. J. Walker.
Madam C.J. Walker moved her company to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh was an ideal location because there was plenty of steel for her pressing combs and a good transportation system with which to ship her products.	Madam built the Walker Building in Indianapolis. It covered an entire city block, housed office and factory space and a movie theater especially for the city's African Americans.

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***Vision of Beauty History Frame***

**Who:**  
**When:**  
**Where:**

**Problem:**



**Proposed Solution:**



**Key Events:**



**Outcome:**

