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## Dear Benjamin Banneker

*By Andrea Davis Pinkney*



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## **Dear Benjamin Banneker By Andrea Davis Pinkney Bibliography**

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Banneker, an 18th-century astronomer and mathematician, was a free African American who corresponded with Thomas Jefferson about ending slavery. In a starred review, PW called this illustrated biography "a memorable portrait." Ages 6-10.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 1-3-This look at the life and times of the 18th-century black scientist is accompanied by Brian Pinkney's full-page masterful and luminous scratchboard/ oil paintings. Andrea Pinkney provides a basic outline of her subject's youth and years as a tobacco farmer, his passion for learning and interest in astronomy, and his decision to write an almanac. She focuses the account on an exchange of letters in 1791, when Banneker sent a copy of his newly printed almanac to Thomas Jefferson, then U.S. Secretary of State, and chastised him for keeping slaves. The reply sounds like a polite brush-off, and Jefferson made no acknowledgement of the dichotomy between his Declaration of Independence and his ownership of slaves. The quoting of these letters in the prose of the time forces the inclusion of vocabulary and syntax several levels above that of the audience for which the book seems intended. Although the bare-bones details are here, he does not come alive; while the art is lovely, the text offers just a glimpse at this remarkable man's accomplishments. The author states that the publishing of Banneker's almanac "showed everybody that indeed all men are created equal." Since the almanac reached a limited audience, one wonders how many people at the time even knew who Banneker was, or about his ethnic background. Although the book is more accessible to younger readers than Jeri Ferris's *What Are You Figuring Now?* (Carolrhoda, 1988), it may not hold their attention.

*Martha Rosen, Edgewood School, Scarsdale, NY*

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From [Booklist](#)

Ages 7-9. Born to free black parents in 1731, Benjamin Banneker grew up on their Maryland tobacco farm. He, too, became a farmer until, in his late fifties, he taught himself astronomy and wrote his own almanac, the first by an African American. He sent a copy of the almanac to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, along with a letter taking Jefferson to task for slaveholding. Excerpts from his letter and Jefferson's reply appear in the book. Since the eighteenth-century language requires some interpretation, the author summarizes the general meaning of each quoted passage. The book's conclusion ("But his almanacs and the letter he wrote to Thomas Jefferson showed everybody that all men are indeed created equal") is a rather flabby ending to an otherwise well-thought-out text. The artwork, subtle shades of oil paints over scratchboard pictures, is handsome as well as distinctive. Varied in composition and tone, the illustrations include landscapes, portraits, and scenes from Banneker's life. Sweeping lines and repeated contours give the illustrations a feeling of energy and life. A most attractive introduction to Banneker. *Carolyn Phelan*

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Jake Leslie:**

As people who live in the modest era should be up-date about what going on or details even knowledge to

make these people keep up with the era that is always change and move forward. Some of you maybe may update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know what one you should start with. This Dear Benjamin Banneker is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and need in this era.

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