TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
Lesson Plan: African Americans in Military Service

Grades: 9-12
Subjects: English/Language Arts, African American History
Time required: 1-2 class periods
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OVERVIEW
During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, African Americans made significant sacrifices by volunteering to fight for the United States in the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II.

UNDERSTANDING GOAL
Using primary sources, students will identify how African Americans achieved recognition in the military service during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

OBJECTIVES
- Student will analyze photographs and stereographs.
- Students will categorize primary sources chronologically by identifying context clues.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION
How did African Americans contribute to the war effort during the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II?

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
Primary Sources: Library of Congress
- True sons of freedom [1918]
- Colored Troops Disembarking in 1898 [1898]
- Ninth U.S. Cavalry--famous Colored Regiment--Draw Sabers! [ca. 1898]
- World War I soldier with American flag in background [between 1914 and 1918]
- Medal of honor men Have received medals of honor in United States Army and Navy. [ca. 1900]
- 24th Infantry Leaving Salt Lake City, Utah for Chattanooga, Tennessee, April 24th, 1898 [1898]

Primary Sources: Trials and Triumphs
- Nancy Harvey Searcy [ca. 1940s]
- Group of African Americans being transferred to jail in Nashville [1946]
- Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant wood shop workers [ca. 1940s]
- Company 1, 20 Regiment, Third W.A.C. Training Center, Fort Oglethorpe, BA [1945]

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

English/Language Arts
- 9-10.RI.1.K.7 Evaluate the topic or subject in two diverse formats or media.
- 9-10.RI.1.K.8 Evaluate how reasoning and evidence affects the argument and specific claims in a text.

African American History
- AAH.28 Describe the impact of African American regiments on the western campaigns, the Spanish-American War, and World War I.
- AAH.36 Identify the contributions of African Americans who served in the military, and compare their experiences to other Americans who served in World War II.
Step 1 For each primary source listed in Materials and Resources, click on the image to view a larger, higher resolution version of the photograph. Download these nine larger images. Save these images to show your students on a projector and print copies to distribute.

Step 2 Show your students this video clip of Colored Troops Disembarking in 1898. What do students notice about this film? Which war was this video taken from? Introduce this lesson plan by letting your students know that the Spanish-American War was the first war that was filmed. Encourage your students to think about the wars that followed, mainly World War I and World War II. Using a computer lab or printing the material ahead of time, instruct your students to read the “Embracing Citizenship: Military Service” on the Trials and Triumphs Web site. Give your students time to look through the images on the Trials and Triumphs Web site as well as the images distributed.

Step 3 Divide your students into small groups or pairs. Distribute a set of all eight primary sources (found under Materials) to each group. Explain that each image has to do with either the Spanish-American War, World War I, or World War II. As a class, complete a KWL Chart, prompting students to discuss what they know about each of the wars and specifically about African American roles in the military during these wars. Do not provide your students with the titles or dates of each primary source.

Step 4 Using context clues and prior knowledge of these wars, challenge your students to divide the eight primary sources into three categories: the Spanish-American War, World War I, or World War II. Students should be prepared to explain the rationale for their choices with the class.

Step 5 In small groups, students should present their findings to the rest of the class. Are there any images that all groups agree belong in a particular category? Why? Were any of the images difficult to place in one of the three categories? Prompt students to explain why.

Step 6 Correctly sort the images on the wall or whiteboard by taping them in groups and labeling each of the three wars. Provide dates for each of the images. Answer any questions from students regarding context clues.

Step 7 Instruct students to each choose one of the people from the photographs distributed to the groups. For homework, each student should write one page on lined paper from the point of view of the person they have chosen. What does this person see? What is he or she doing? What do you imagine his or her role is in the war? What was his or her life like before the war? What is his or her plan for life after the war? How has being in the military affected his or her thoughts on what it means to be an American citizen? Students should find at least two other primary sources (from Step 2) to help them answer these questions, and at least one must be something other than a photograph.

Additional Resources
- Embracing Citizenship: Military Service
- Trials and Triumphs Web site

Ninth U.S. Cavalry--famous Colored Regiment--Draw Sabers! [ca. 1898] World War I soldier with American flag in background [between 1914 and 1918]
Medal of honor men Have received medals of honor in United States Army and Navy. [ca. 1900]


EVALUATION

1) The level of insight and effort in the small group activity (20%),
2) Participation and presenting to the class (20%), and
3) The writing assignment on a figure from the war photographs (60%).

EXTENSION

- Students can explore the Trials and Triumphs Web site to learn more about Tennessee’s history between the end of the American Civil War and the end of World War II.
- Prompt your students to discuss how African Americans also fought during the Civil War. How was this a different situation for the African Americans than volunteering for the other three wars discussed?
- Learn more about the Veterans History Project.