Activity: Duty and Dignity: Black Americans and the 92nd Infantry Division Buffalo Soldiers

Guiding question:
Which liberties and freedoms did African Americans hope to secure in the United States by fighting in World War II?

DEVELOPED BY RAYMOND BROOKTER
Grade Level(s): 9-12
Subject(s): Social Studies, Language Arts
Cemetery Connection: Florence American Cemetery
Fallen Hero Connection: Captain Bernard Yolles
Overview
The students will explore documents to understand the realities of segregation in the World War II era. They will explore Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms and understand why so many men and women volunteered for service in the war. They will learn the story of the 92nd Infantry Division, one of only two African American infantry divisions to serve in combat. Finally, they will design and construct a textbook feature page to explain the contributions of the 92nd Infantry Division to the war effort in Italy.

Historical Context
African American men had served in all American wars. After the Civil War, the 92nd Infantry Division was an African American unit sent west to fight Native Americans. Known as the Buffalo Soldiers, their emblem was a black buffalo on olive drab. They served in World War I, and the unit was reactivated during World War II. In a segregated military where white officers held rank over black soldiers, the 92nd Infantry Division went to great lengths to illustrate the bravery of African Americans in the time of greatest need for the United States.

Objectives
At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Analyze social differences experienced between white and black Americans in the U.S. prior to World War II;
- Recall the Four Freedoms and discuss the limitations on these freedoms for African Americans;
- Research the 92nd Infantry Division and its role in the Mediterranean Theater; and
- Synthesize relevant facts to write an informational text.
Standards Connections

Connections to Common Core

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures, or technical processes.

Connections to C3 Framework

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.


Documents Used ★ indicates an ABMC source

Primary Sources

Buffalo Soldiers: The 92nd in Italy
Veterans History Project, Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-buffalosoldiers.html

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Message to Congress, January 6, 1941 (excerpt)
Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library
https://fdrlibrary.org/documents/356632/390886/ww_f.pdf/1b98878f-5f9b-49e0-bcfc-aa6fe2786e7a

Map, Nonwhite Households, By Blocks, For Birmingham, Ala., 1940
Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940
Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/08/0815001r.jpg

Photograph, Company F, 365th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Infantry Division Buffalo Soldiers, Fort Huachuca, Arizona, August 1944
Courtesy of Nina Sugamori

Photograph, John Vachon, Segregated Facilities
Manchester, Georgia, 1938
Farm Security Administration
Library of Congress (LC-USF33-001172-M4)  
https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/08/0804001r.jpg

Photograph, Marion Post Wolcott, *Negro Man Entering Movie Theatre by "Colored" Entrance*  
Belzoni, Mississippi, October 1939  
Farm Security Administration  
Library of Congress (LC-DIG-ppmsca-12888)  
https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/08/0803001r.jpg

Photograph Collection, “Buffalo Soldiers in Combat”  
U.S. Army Center of Military History  

Photograph Collection, “Pictures of African Americans During World War II, U.S. Army”  
National Archives and Records Administration  
https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2-pictures/#army

Poster, “Why Should We March?,” 1941  
A. Philip Randolph Institute  
Library of Congress (mssmisc ody0808)  
https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mssmisc/ody/ody0808/0808001v.jpg

**Secondary Sources**

Bernard Yolles Fallen Hero Profile ★  
American Battle Monuments Commission  
http://abmceducation.org/understandingsacrifice/soldier/bernard-yolles

Clarence Taylor, “Patriotism Crosses the Color Line: African Americans in World War II.”  
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History  

*Deeds Not Words: The Buffalo Soldiers in World War II*  
The Pentagon Channel, February 2011  
92nd Infantry Division  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZildUeisGqQ

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “What Was Black America’s Double War?”  
The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross, PBS  
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-was-black-americas-double-war/
Interview, Colin Powell, “The Buffalo Soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division”
92nd Infantry Division
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgSr_bweSsA

John R. Fox
World War II Medal of Honor Recipients, U.S. Army Center of Military History
http://www.history.army.mil/moh/wwII-a-f.html#FOX

Michael Lynch, “Bring on the Buffalo”
U.S. Army Military History Institute, October 15, 2010
https://www.army.mil/article/46649/Bring_on_the_Buffalo

Robert Hodges, Jr., “African American 92nd Infantry Division Fought in Italy During World War II.”
HistoryNet

Vernon Baker
World War II Medal of Honor Recipients, U.S. Army Center of Military History
http://www.history.army.mil/moh/wwII-a-f.html#BAKERV

Materials

- Documents Packet: Segregation in the United States (1938-1941)
- Creating a Textbook Feature Page Handout
- Creating a Textbook Feature Page Rubric
- Student computer access
- U.S. History textbook

Lesson Preparation

- Activity One
  - Divide students into groups of six students each.
  - Make one copy of the Documents Packet: Segregation in the United States (1938-1941) and Franklin Roosevelt’s Message to Congress for each group.
- Activity Two
  - Secure computer access for students to research and create the final product.
Procedure

Activity One: Segregated America (30 Minutes)

- Divide students into groups of six students each.
- Distribute (or make available digitally) the Documents Packet: Segregation in the United States (1938-1941) (one copy for each group).
- Direct students to review and analyze the documents.
- Once students have a chance to review the documents, ask them:
  - How were African Americans segregated socially?
  - How were African Americans segregated economically?
  - How were African Americans segregated legally?
- Distribute the excerpt from Franklin D. Roosevelt’s January 6, 1941 Message to Congress (one per group). Read the excerpt with students and ask the students to discuss the prompt in their groups and complete the chart.
  - Teacher Tip: If desired, audio or video clips of this speech could be used.
- Ask students:
  - Based on the documents you reviewed, how would an African American man or woman view the Four Freedoms?
  - How would these reflect their experiences in the United States prior to World War II?
  - What promises might an African American infer from the Four Freedoms?

Activity Two: Creating a Textbook Feature Page / Research Phase (60 minutes)

- Display a copy of a feature page from a history textbook.
- Explain to students the following common elements of a feature page:
  - The page will often tell a story of a group traditionally left out of the narrative.
  - The page is brief and connects to the larger picture of U.S. history.
  - The page often includes an image or photograph.
  - The page is designed to engage the reader and encourage curiosity to learn more.
- Divide students into groups of six students each. At teacher discretion, these can be the same students from the previous activity or the groups can be re-shuffled.
  - Teacher Tip: If a smaller group is desired, a teacher can eliminate some of the roles or allow students to choose their roles from the assignments given.
- Distribute a copy of Creating a Textbook Feature Page Handout to each student group.
- Explain and review the roles with the students.
• Allow each student to choose a role and begin research.
• Circulate among students and monitor research.

Assessment

• Review Creating a Textbook Feature Page Rubric with students.
• Encourage students to work collectively to build their textbook feature page.
• Circulate and assist students as needed.
• Collect and display student work.

Methods for Extension

• Students can explore the stories of other members of the 92nd Infantry Division by using the oral histories and collections digitized through the Library of Congress’ Veterans History Project.
• Students can contrast the experiences of African Americans with those of Japanese Americans.
• Students can construct a comparative timeline of the 92nd Infantry Division development from the many training facilities around the U.S. to their deployment from Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in 1944.
• Teachers can enhance students’ interest in African American soldiers during World War II by exploring these related lesson plans on ABMCEducation.org:
  ◦ Riding Along the Red Ball Express
  ◦ Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice in World War II
  ◦ 20,000 Miles a Month - To Ensure Victory
• The American Battle Monuments Commission maintains U.S. military cemeteries overseas. These cemeteries are permanent memorials to the fallen, but it is important that students know the stories of those who rest here. To learn more about the stories of some of the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice, visit www.abmceducation.org/understandingsacrifice/abmc-sites.

Adaptations

• Teachers can adapt the lesson for students by projecting documents and student responses on a Smartboard.
• Teachers can provide students with transcripts of the Veterans History Project audio narratives for students to read along as they listen.
Reflect: Explain how this photograph shows the political, economic, and social factors that influenced segregation.
Photograph, John Vachon, *Segregated Facilities*
Manchester, Georgia, 1938
Farm Security Administration
Library of Congress (LC-USF33-001172-M4)

Reflect: Explain how this photograph shows the political, economic, and social factors that influenced segregation.
Map, *Nonwhite Households, By Blocks, For Birmingham, Ala., 1940*

Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940

Library of Congress

**Reflect:** What does this map show us about segregation in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1940?
Poster, "Why Should We March?," 1941
A. Philip Randolph Institute
Library of Congress (mssmisc ody0808)

What Are Our Immediate Goals?

1. To mobilize five million Negroes into one militant mass for pressure.
2. To assemble in Chicago the last week in May, 1943, for the celebration of

"WE ARE AMERICANS – TOO" WEEK
And to ponder the question of Non-Violent Civil Disobedience and Non-Cooperation, and a Mass March On Washington.

WHY SHOULD WE MARCH?

15,000 Negroes Assembled at St. Louis, Missouri
20,000 Negroes Assembled at Chicago, Illinois
23,500 Negroes Assembled at New York City
Millions of Negro Americans all Over This Great Land Claim the Right to be Free!

FREE FROM WANT!
FREE FROM FEAR!
FREE FROM JIM CROW!

"Winning Democracy for the Negro is Winning the War for Democracy." — A. Philip Randolph

Reflect: Explain how this poster shows the political, economic, and social factors that influenced segregation.
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Message to Congress, January 6, 1941 (excerpt)

Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library

"In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression — everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way — everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want — which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants — everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear — which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor — anywhere in the world."

For each freedom, list the situations that existed for African Americans in the early 1940’s that threatened these freedoms on a daily basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom</th>
<th>Situation for African Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of speech and expression</td>
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<td>Freedom to worship as one chooses</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Freedom from fear</td>
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</table>
Creating a Textbook Feature Page

Today your group will be responsible for creating a textbook feature page to explain the 92nd Infantry Division's contribution to the war in Italy during World War II. Each student will select a role and all students will work collaboratively to complete the page. Remember, the elements of a feature textbook page include:

- The page will often tell a story of a group traditionally left out of the narrative;
- The page is brief and connects to the larger picture of U.S. history;
- The page often includes an image or photograph; and
- The page is design to engage the reader and encourage curiosity to learn more.

Tasks:

**Audio Editor:** The audio editor will review audio interviews from the Library of Congress’ Veterans History Project. The job of the audio editor is to select two quotations from the interviews that help demonstrate the life of a member of the 92nd Infantry Division. Both quotes should be transcribed properly, placed in quotation marks, and properly credited to the individual who said them.

**Features Editor:** The job of the features editor is to learn about some of the individuals who served in the 92nd Infantry Division. This editor will be responsible for choosing one of the individuals to feature and writing a summary paragraph to be included in the overall narrative.

**Homefront Editor:** The homefront editor will learn about challenges facing African American service members at home. Referred to as the “Double V” Campaign (victory abroad and victory at home), it was a movement to propel civil, political, and economic rights. This editor will be responsible for writing a summary paragraph to be included in the overall narrative.

**Image Editor:** The job of the image editor is to select two images to be included in the textbook page. The image editor will be responsible for making sure that the images selected go with the text created. Each image should include a caption (one to two sentences) that explains the image. In addition, each photograph needs to be properly credited to its original source.

**Military Editor:** The military editor will learn about the action of the 92nd Infantry Division in Italy and summarize their major accomplishments in writing. Be careful not to get bogged down in the details — focus on the major obstacles, and how they were able to overcome these challenges. This editor will be responsible for working with the multimedia editor to write two summary paragraphs to be included in the overall narrative.

**Multimedia Editor:** The multimedia editor will learn about the action of the 92nd Infantry Division in Italy, using a documentary. This editor will be responsible for working with the military editor to write two summary paragraphs to be included in the overall narrative.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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# Creating a Textbook Feature Page Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audio Editor</strong></td>
<td>The editor selects two excellent quotes that demonstrate the experience of the 92&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Infantry Division. Quotes are transcribed properly and attributed correctly.</td>
<td>The editor selects two quotes that demonstrate the experience of the 92&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Infantry Division. Quotes are transcribed with only minor errors and attributed correctly.</td>
<td>The editor selects quotes that do not demonstrate the experience of the 92&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Infantry Division. Quotes may be incorrectly transcribed or lack proper attribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features Editor</strong></td>
<td>The editor features the story of an individual who served in the 92&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Infantry Division. The paragraph contains specific details and engages the reader.</td>
<td>The editor features the story of an individual who served in the 92&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Infantry Division. The paragraph contains some detail.</td>
<td>The editor features the story of an individual who served in the 92&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Infantry Division. The paragraph lacks specific details or does not engage the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homefront Editor</strong></td>
<td>The editor clearly explains the &quot;Double V&quot; Campaign. The paragraph contains specific details and engages the reader.</td>
<td>The editor clearly explains the &quot;Double V&quot; Campaign. The paragraph contains some detail.</td>
<td>The editor explains the &quot;Double V&quot; Campaign. The paragraph lacks specific details or does not engage the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Image Editor</strong></td>
<td>The editor selects two appropriate images. Credits are included and the caption contains specific details to tie to the text on the page.</td>
<td>The editor selects two appropriate images. Credits are included and the caption contains specific details but fails to tie to the text on the page.</td>
<td>The editor selects one appropriate image. Credits and/or captions may be partially complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military Editor</strong></td>
<td>The editor clearly explains the actions of the 92&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Infantry Division in Italy. The paragraphs contain specific details and engage the reader.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>No grammatical, punctuation, or spelling errors.</td>
<td>Almost no grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors.</td>
<td>Some grammatical, punctuation, or spelling errors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>