



## Activity: Freddie Stowers: Remembering African-American Contributions to World War I



### Guiding question:

How do we memorialize the extraordinary efforts and ultimate sacrifices of African-American soldiers in World War I?

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**Grade Level(s):** 9-12

**Subject(s):** Social Studies, Art

## Overview

Corporal Freddie Stowers is an African-American soldier buried in Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery who received the U.S. Medal of Honor for his service and sacrifice in World War I. Using the details of Stowers' actions during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and the experiences of African-American soldiers, students will memorialize Stowers by creating a monument in his honor for the American Battle Monuments Commission's Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.

## Historical Context

Stowers was a man of humble origins who gave his life for the cause of freedom and democracy in World War I. Stowers and his company began an attack of Hill 188 despite heavy resistance during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Shortly after Stowers' company finally cut through German defenses, German soldiers faked surrender, leaving Stowers' company vulnerable to renewed German fire. Stowers took command of the men after his superiors in rank were either badly wounded or dead. He courageously led the remaining men forward to take out a German machine gun nest. Even after being mortally wounded, Stowers continued to lead his men through two lines of German trenches. The taking of Hill 188 helped break the famed Hindenburg Line and paved the way for Allied victory in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

## Objectives

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

- Identify the key characteristics of the life and experiences of Stowers;
- Analyze the social, cultural, and political factors that shaped the African-American experience during World War I; and
- Explain how architectural design, landscaping, and art can memorialize sacrifice.

## Standards Connections

*“As a Black man from South Carolina, I am proud to learn and teach others about the courageous World War I military actions of fellow South Carolinian, Corporal Freddie Stowers. A role model and hero for all Americans, Stowers has been a hidden figure in the historical narrative of the United States’ participation in World War I. It is time for U. S. history curricula and textbooks to not just reflect our nation’s collective memory, but also our collective intentional amnesia. With that in mind, Corporal Freddie Stowers deserves to be commemorated with both a physical monument and a monumental place in the narrative of World War I.”*

—Jamie L. Lathan

## Connections to Common Core

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

## Connections to C3 Framework

**D2.His.7.9-12.** Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

## Documents Used ★ indicates an ABMC source

### Primary Sources

[Freddie Stowers Medal of Honor Citation](#)

U.S. Army

### Secondary Sources

[“The Buffalo Soldier in WWI”](#)

National Park Service

[Panoramic Tour of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery](#) ★

American Battle Monuments Commission

## Materials

- Freddie Stowers Medal of Honor Citation
- “The Buffalo Soldier in WWI”
- Memorial Analysis Handout
- Memorializing African-American Sacrifice Activity
- Memorializing African-American Sacrifice Rubric
- Computers with internet access
- Poster paper and design instruments (crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.)

## Lesson Preparation

- Make one copy of the following for each student:

- Freddie Stowers Medal of Honor Citation
- “The Buffalo Soldier in WWI”
- Memorial Analysis Handout
- Memorializing African-American Sacrifice Activity
- Test computers and internet for functionality

## Procedure

### Activity One: Corporal Freddie Stowers (30 minutes)

- Distribute the Freddie Stowers Medal of Honor Citation and “The Buffalo Soldier in WWI” to students.
- Ask students:
  - *What sacrifice did Stowers make? What effect did his sacrifice have on his unit?*
  - *When was Stowers awarded the Medal of Honor? Why might there have been such a delay?*
  - *How does this delay translate to an overall statement about African-Americans fighting in World War I?*

### Activity Two: Touring the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery (60 minutes)

- Pass out the Memorial Analysis Handout to each student.
- Direct students to the American Battle Monument Commission’s [Panoramic Tour of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery](#).
- Explain to students that they will take a virtual tour of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, which was built for the American war dead of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.
  - **Teacher Tip:** The white figures in the top-right hand corner box indicate locations within the cemetery. Each area allows the user to look 360 degrees and includes icons that indicate areas of interest.
- Direct students to answer the questions on the Memorial Analysis Handout as they take the tour.
- Review student answers as a class.

## Assessment

- Distribute one Memorializing African-American Sacrifice Activity to each student.
- Ask students to decide how they would like to memorialize the sacrifice of African-American service members during World War I, particularly that of Stowers, using architectural design, landscaping, and art.

- The Memorializing African-American Sacrifice Rubric may be used to assess student work.

## Methods for Extension

- Students with more interest in memorials or the African-American experience can find other American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries that would be suitable for memorials to African-Americans who fought and died during World War I.

## Adaptations

- Teachers can group their students based on ability.
- Students can create their design using web-based programs or computer software.

# Memorial Analysis Handout

**Directions:** As you explore the Panoramic Tour of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, answer the following questions.

## Architectural Design

1. What human-made structures are in the cemetery?
2. What materials are used to construct the buildings?
3. What types of buildings are there?
4. What colors do you see within the buildings? What geometric shapes are used? Do you notice a theme or trend with these buildings?
5. Do the buildings mention or represent any specific groups or people?

6. Evaluate the use of buildings/structures in this memorial. What mood(s) does the architectural design evoke? What do you think was the intent of the designer? What do you think was the purpose behind the use of particular shapes or the use of particular carved images? How does the architectural design memorialize sacrifice?

## Landscape

1. What kind of habitat or surroundings does the cemetery have? What types of trees can you see?
2. What color plants can you see? Do you notice a theme with the colors?
3. How is the natural landscape maintained? What message do you think this is intended to convey?
4. What do you notice about the contours of the land? Is it flat or hilly? Does it have walkways? Is the landscape of the memorial connected to the human-made objects in the cemetery? If so, how?

5. What parts of the environment just outside the cemetery are visible from the cemetery? Can you see other buildings or objects?
6. Evaluate the use of plants and trees in the cemetery. What mood(s) do you feel from looking at the landscape design? What do you think was the intent of the designer? How does the use of landscaping memorialize sacrifice?

## Art

1. What examples of artwork are visible? Are they two-dimensional or three-dimensional?
2. What kinds of images or iconography are used in the artwork? What or whom do these images possibly represent? Who might be excluded?
3. Evaluate the use of art in this memorial. What mood(s) do you feel from the art? What do you think was the intent of the artists? How does the art memorialize sacrifice?



# Memorializing African-American Sacrifice Activity

**Directions:** After analyzing the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and its attempts to memorialize sacrifice, decide how you would include the sacrifice of African-American service members, especially that of Stowers. Design an element of architecture, feature of the landscape, or a work of art that could be added to the cemetery and display it on a poster. Then answer the following questions below about your design.

1. Explain why you chose your particular design element.
2. Explain the meaning and messages of your design.
3. How does this design aspect memorialize African-American service members in general and Stowers in particular?

# Memorializing African-American Sacrifice Rubric

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Emerging
<b>Explanation of design</b>	Explanation of the design element is consistent with how the design element is used in the cemetery.	Explanation of the design element is mostly consistent with how the design element is used in the cemetery.	Explanation of the design element is somewhat consistent with how the design element is used in the cemetery.	Explanation of the design element is entirely inconsistent with how the design element is used in the cemetery.
<b>Justification for the design</b>	Describes why the design is worthy and how it represents African-Americans' sacrifice. Explanation is detailed and shows original thought.	Describes why the design is worthy and how it represents African-Americans' sacrifice.	Description includes a partial explanation of why the design is worthy.	Description does not include an explanation of why the design is worthy.
<b>Design quality</b>	Design is drawn neatly and clearly with appropriate labels and texts, or the explanations is clearly written and understandable. Plan reflects either advanced artistic ability, critical thinking, or both.	Design is drawn neatly and clearly with appropriate labels and texts, or the explanations is clearly written and understandable.	Design or written material is not neat, is difficult to understand, or is incomplete.	Design has no discernable connection to the themes of the activity in submitted materials.