



Chicago Historical Society



AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS

Grade level: Middle school through high school

Estimated time: Four to five class periods

Specific Topic: African American involvement in the Civil War; contributions and hardships; government policy and propaganda

Subtopic: American Civil War

Teacher background information

Educator note: This lesson is best used after or in conjunction with a unit on the American Civil War and is meant to follow the lesson, “Who was Contraband?”

Roughly 180,000 African American soldiers fought in the Civil War. By the end of the conflict, these men made up 10 percent of the Union army. Studying the issues surrounding and events leading to their involvement illustrates the United States’ ambiguity and lack of commitment to the rights of African Americans.

The United States was fighting the largest, longest, and bloodiest war in its short history, and many African Americans were eager to fight to assert their freedom. A broad question throughout this lesson is, “Who or what freed enslaved African Americans?” The answer is complex, but as these lessons demonstrate, it is important to convey to students that many African Americans freed themselves by running away to Union lines. Their reasons for fighting, as well as their military experiences, often differed from their white counterparts. President Abraham Lincoln and the Northern government were not committed to

emancipation at the start of the war and the thought of using African Americans in battle seemed unnecessary and even made many whites uncomfortable.

From the start of the war, however, the issue surfaced of what to do with slaves who escaped to Union lines. Thousands of runaway slaves began to assert their freedom and forced this issue into prominence.

General Butler dubbed the fugitive slaves “contrabands,” literally “enemy property rightfully seized as an act of war.” In the spring of 1861, he gave asylum to many runaways, and when their owners came to claim their “property,” he refused to hand them over. His deed was not purely noble, as he maintained that the African Americans were property seized out of military necessity. Butler quickly put the fugitive slaves to work constructing military forts and hauling supplies. He understood the connection between depriving the enemy of their workforce and winning the war.

Lincoln did not initially agree and said that Butler’s actions, and those who acted similarly, were not sanctioned by the government. As the war continued, however, shifting aims and the unforeseen difficulty of Northern victory changed the necessity of incor-



porating African Americans in the Union army. Eventually, a series of acts and policy changes resulted in the Emancipation Proclamation, which opened the door for African Americans to enlist in the army. This lesson explores these policy changes.

Similar to their white counterparts, African American soldiers faced many hardships, including family separation, harsh camp conditions, disease, and the brutalities of war. These men, however, confronted other distinct challenges while fighting for the Union: unequal pay, the inability to be recognized as commissioned officers, and the often harsh policies of the Confederacy and the Union.

The contributions of these brave Africans Americans undoubtedly had a great impact on the Northern victory. Even Lincoln acknowledged that these men helped turn the tide of the war. African Americans gained a new claim for equality, which began to dispel the racist notions of their capabilities. Also, many African Americans asserted a new claim to participate in the democratic government that had excluded them for many generations.

Key concepts

A complex series of political and military events and government policies led up to the participation of African American's as Union soldiers in the Civil War. African Americans faced a variety of hardships while fighting for their freedom in the Union army.

Key questions

How were African Americans involved in the Civil War? How did U.S. policy shift toward enlisting Africans Americans? What are the reasons African Americans joined the army? How did African Americans experience the war differently than their white counterparts? What contributions did African Americans make to the Union victory?

Goals of this lesson

To examine propoganda and compare idealist images to reality. To consider the impact of U.S. policy on African Americans during the Civil War. To research and understand the contribution of African Americans soldiers to the Union victory of the Civil War.

Objectives

1. Students will learn about African American participation in the Union army through analysis of primary source material, including photographs, broadsides, and letters.
2. Students will synthesize their response to primary source materials and express their creativity through writing exercises, visual arts activities, oral presentations, and during class discussion.
3. Students will place events in chronological order by assembling a timeline.
4. Students will further investigate the subject by choosing a topic for a mini-research project.

Materials

Master copies of all primary sources and student worksheets are provided.

1. "Civil War Timeline" worksheet (one per pair of students)
2. Lincoln's letter to Grant, August 9, 1863, image of actual letter and transcription (one per student)
3. "Come Join Us Brothers," recruitment poster, color lithograph, (CHS, ICHi-22051)
4. "Uncle Sam Wants You!" worksheet (one per student)
5. "Company E," photograph, (CHS, ICHi-07784) (one per student)
6. "Character Cards" student handout (one card per student)
7. "Would You Fight?" worksheet (one per student)
8. "Still They Fought" worksheet (one per student)
9. Basic art supplies: large paper or poster board, scissors, glue sticks, and colored pencils or markers

Procedures

Day 1

Remind students of the discussion of contrabands from the previous lesson. If you did not complete “Who was Contraband?” take a few minutes to define contraband in the context of the Civil War; see the “Teacher Background Information” for a description and definition of contraband.

Explain to students that they will learn how the U.S. government came to the decision of formally enlisting African Americans in the Union army. Ask: Why do you think the government did not allow African Americans to enlist from the start of the war? Make a list on the blackboard or overhead projector. Be sure to touch on racism; the pervasive belief that African Americans were not capable; the worry of arming African Americans; the war aims did not include fighting slavery in the early stages; and that many on both sides (North and South) thought the war would be a quick victory.

Divide students into pairs and distribute the “Civil War Timeline” worksheet. Have students cut the events out and make their best attempt at placing them in order. This will answer the question: What was the progression of policy that led to enlisting African American troops? Students should not use other resources (books, websites, etc.) to complete the task. Call students’ attention to the fact that none of the event descriptions contain dates. They will, therefore, need to carefully read and place events in order as best they can from the written context. If appropriate, offer a small incentive to pairs who are able to place the events in the proper order.

Civil War Timeline Teacher’s Key

Educator note: The student worksheet contains more description but omits the dates.

1. The first shots of the war are fired at Fort Sumter (April 12, 1861).
2. Union General Benjamin F. Butler dubs fugitive slaves as “contraband of war” (spring 1861).
3. The U.S. Congress passes the Confiscation Act, which makes it legal to confiscate any property (including slaves) used to aid the rebels (August 1861).

4. White officers, including Generals David Hunter and Rufus Saxton, recruit several black regiments without presidential or Congressional authorization (early 1862).
5. The U.S. Congress passes the Militia Act, which authorizes the president to use black troops in combat (July 1862).
6. The Emancipation Proclamation becomes official, freeing all slaves in Confederate territory. The proclamation states that black men will “be received into the armed service of the United States” (January 1, 1863).
7. The War Department creates the “American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission” (March 1863).
8. General Order No. 143 establishes the Bureau of Colored Troops (May 22, 1863).
9. Lincoln sends a letter to General Grant favorably regarding the use of African American troops (August 9, 1863).
10. Confederate General Robert E Lee surrenders to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Court House in Virginia (April 9, 1865).

Allow students enough time to work and then reveal the correct order. Using the answer key above, supply students with the dates of each event and instruct them to add the dates to each box and then glue the events on the timeline worksheet in the correct order.

Distribute the reproduction of the letter written from President Lincoln to General Grant. Ask students to read the letter silently and write down their observations, questions, and any words they do not understand. Afterward, ask for volunteers to read the letter aloud. Change readers with each new paragraph.

Hold a class discussion using students’ notes from their silent reading of the letter. Point out that this letter was written in the middle of the war. The discussion should include the following:

1. How long had the country been at war?
2. How does the letter begin?
3. What surprised you about the letter?
4. What does Lincoln say in paragraph two about raising black troops?

5. What is Lincoln’s opinion on the subject of raising black troops? How is this different from Lincoln’s earlier views?
6. What does Lincoln mean by a “resource”?
7. Ask students to underline the sentence, “It works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us.” Ask students to explain this sentence in light of what they learned in the lesson, “Who was Contraband?”
8. Tell students that Grant was initially known for being against the use of African American troops. Does this change how we read the letter? Perhaps Lincoln was trying to appease Grant, who was one of his strongest generals? Ask students: Do you express your own ideas and opinions differently depending on who you are talking to?

Close discussion by asking students to write a short response to the question: What do you think was President Lincoln’s true opinion of African American troops? Remind students that they must use evidence from the letter to back up their opinions. Collect the timelines and written responses. You may instruct students to study the timeline and give a short quiz on it later.

Day 2

Distribute the “Come Join Us Brothers” recruitment poster and “Uncle Sam Wants You!” student worksheet. Instruct students to use the poster to answer the questions for part A of the worksheet. After students have completed part A, briefly review their answers.

Define the word propaganda (material disseminated by the advocates or opponents of a doctrine or cause). Have students record the definition in their own words and discuss or ask for a volunteer to look up the word in the dictionary and read it aloud to the class. When you have settled on an accurate and agreed upon definition as a class, ask students to write down the definition or post it in a place where all can see.

Hold a class discussion about propaganda. Instruct students to refer to the definition and the “Come Join Us Brothers” recruitment poster. The following questions can frame the discussion: Why is propaganda used? How is it different than other forms of advertising? When is propaganda most often used? Why? How is this poster an example of propaganda? Do you think this poster was effective? Why?

Distribute photograph “Company E” of African American soldiers. Instruct students to use the photograph to complete the questions found on part B of the “Uncle Sam Wants You!” worksheet. After students have completed part B, briefly review their answers.

Hold a class discussion to contrast the photograph with the recruitment poster. The following differences should appear on the list, in addition to any others identified by students:

1. The photograph shows black men of rank: two stripes on upper arm denotes a corporal and three a sergeant. (Keep this in mind for the next activity.)
2. There is no white commander shown in the photograph.
3. The uniforms worn by the soldiers in the photograph are not as formal (no overcoats) as those depicted in the recruitment poster.

Be sure to point out to students that the photograph is a posed portrait and does not show many hardships. You may want to supplement the discussion by instructing students to complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the recruitment poster and the photograph. The Venn diagram will help students visualize the similarities and differences between the two primary sources.

Ask students to discuss or write about what they have learned from studying these two images. Potential topics for writing and discussion include: How does propaganda influence what we believe about information presented to us? Is propaganda still used today? (See Extension Activities.) What do these two images leave out about the reality of war and why? What expectations did the poster encourage? What was the reality?

The following activity may be completed in class or as homework. In small groups or as individuals, ask students to design a recruitment poster to attract African Americans to join the Union army. Posters must use propaganda methods and include both text and images. Posters can be made on 8.5 x 11-sized paper with colored pencils or markers. If necessary, instruct students to start with a practice design and check it with the teacher before beginning the final copy. Educator note: Grade this assignment on creativity, slogan, picture, and authenticity.

Day 3

Educator note: Advance preparation is necessary for Day 3 activities. Before class, photocopy and cut out the character cards. Although there are four different cards, each student will only receive one. Try to distribute the characters evenly among your students.

Tell students that they will be learning how joining and fighting in the Union forces was different for African Americans than it was for their white counterparts. Write this heading on the board: Reality of life in the army—would you fight?

Distribute one character card to each student. Announce to students: It is 1862, and you are now one of the following:

1. Josiah, a free African American living in Massachusetts
2. John, a slave on a plantation in South Carolina
3. Eldridge, an escaped slave from Virginia
4. Frederick, a leading African American abolitionist

Explain to students that the cards they received are composite characters, not the names of real people. However, the cards describe actual situations and events taken from primary source accounts. Give students a few minutes to read the personal details about their character.

Distribute the “Would You Fight?” worksheets. Explain to students that for the next few minutes they are going to try walking in shoes of their characters. It is their job to assume the identity of their characters and make choices true to that person. As their character, they will complete a matrix to decide whether or not they will join the Union army. They will have several opportunities to change their mind along the way, as they learn new information.

Based solely on the information on their card, ask students to decide whether or not they believe their character would join the Union army. Students should complete Box 1 with their first decision.

For Boxes 2 to 5, read the following pieces of information to the students. After reading each piece of new information, give students a few minutes to make their decision and record the reasoning behind it.

Box 2: The issue of commissioned officers

The U.S. government did not recognize African American generals or corporals or give them commissions. The belief that African Americans were not equal and could not serve in this capacity still pervaded the Northern culture. Instruct students to complete Box 2 with their second decision.

Box 3: Union use of black regiments

After the enlistment of African Americans, many people doubted their ability to fight. Racist belief maintained that these men were suited for hard labor rather than combat. Therefore, African American regiments were often used for physical work, such as building or rebuilding forts. (Remind students of Lincoln’s letter from day 1, “relieve white troops.”) This angered many African Americans, as well as their white commanders, as the labor work was often called “Negro work.” Many saw it as little better than slavery. African American soldiers faced unequal treatment from both the Confederacy and the Union. Instruct students to complete Box 3 with their third decision.

Box 4: The issue of pay

African American men enlisted in the Union army believing that they would be in segregated units but would receive the same pay as white troops. This was not the case. African American soldiers were paid ten dollars a month, minus the cost of their clothing, while white troops were paid thirteen dollars a month, plus the cost of their clothing. This discrepancy often made the difference between surviving and poverty for the soldiers’ families. After much objection to this policy by the soldiers themselves, some of their white commanders, and abolitionists, equal retroactive pay was granted in June 1864. Instruct students to complete Box 4 with their fourth decision.

Box 5: Confederate States of America policies

African American troops served in the Union army at great personal risk. Black soldiers captured by the Confederacy were not treated, according to the rules of war, as POWs. They were often executed on the spot, as in the Fort Pillow Massacre on April 12, 1864, when Confederate forces commanded by Nathan Bedford Forrest executed all the captured soldiers, most of whom who were black, by shooting them in the head after they had surrendered. Many captured African American soldiers were also sent

back into slavery. Instruct students to complete Box 5 with their fifth decision.

Ask students to discuss and explain their decisions with a partner. Conclude class by asking for each student to share his/her partner's reasoning using the matrix (use for assessment).

Hold a class discussion about the decision matrix. How difficult was it to make choices along the way? What factors might influence decisions other than official government policy? Despite the unfair treatment and the great personal risk, why did so many African American men join the Union army? Give students time to write an answer to the last question on the worksheet: If they themselves were alive during the Civil War, would they join the Union army?

As a homework assignment, instruct students to write a persuasive letter to Abraham Lincoln protesting one discriminatory or unfair practice of the Union army's treatment of African American soldiers. Students should use a formal letter format with three paragraphs. The first paragraph is the greeting, the second paragraph is the body, in which students should state their argument and reasoning, and the third paragraph should restate the action the writer is asking the president to take. Remind students to end the letter with a closing.

Day 4

Start class with a recap of the final discussion from Day 3. Ask students to briefly share whether or not they would join the Union army during the Civil War and the reasoning behind their choice.

Distribute the "Still They Fought" worksheet and allow students time to complete. Use the students' responses to spur discussion about the intangible reasons for choosing to fight despite the racism, unequal treatment, personal risk, etc. Be sure to point out that the actions of the men who fought in the Civil War eventually contributed to the civil rights movement (connect to other history), the desire of African Americans to participate in government, and the deconstruction of stereotypes. Ask students what America would be like if these men chose not to fight? Collect worksheets.

Tell students that they are now going to become historians and research various topics relating to African Americans in the Civil War. Allow students to choose a topic for research. Suggested topics, include:

1. **Events/Battles:** Port Hudson, Louisiana; Miliken's Bend, Louisiana; Fort Wagner, South Carolina
2. **People:** Sergeant Lewis H. Douglass and Private Charles R. Douglass (Frederick Douglass's sons), General Butler, David Hunter, General Robert Gould Shaw, and Colonel James C. Beecher
3. **Regiments:** 54th Massachusetts (*Glory*), 55th Massachusetts, 3rd U.S. Colored Infantry
4. **Policy:** Emancipation Proclamation, Confiscation Act, 13th Amendment
5. **Other:** Disease, camp life, weapons, etc.

Decide on the length of the research assignment and allow students ample time to complete it. Encourage students to use the internet (citing the website), books, educational magazines, and journals. Decide on a rubric ahead of time and distribute to students when assigning the project.

Day 5

Ask students to present their completed research assignments to the class in a speech, presentation, or other format. After the presentations, display projects in the school or at a local library.

Suggestions for student assessment

Student assessment can be done in many ways. Participation in classroom discussion and input to group activities can be monitored. Completed worksheets can be collected and checked for accuracy and thoughtfulness. The creative assignments, such as the propaganda poster and the letter to Lincoln, should be graded using a rubric of essential components and writing conventions. The research project can be graded in various ways depending on the format (speech, paper, or poster).

Extension activities

1. To understand how soldiers protested their unfair treatment read, "We Feel as Though Our Country Spurned Us': Soldier James Henry Gooding Protests Unequal Pay for Black Soldiers, 1863." This beautifully written letter illustrates the powerful argument and assertion for equality made by African Americans. Analyze this letter and discuss the various persuasive components as a class. (See Additional Resources to locate a copy of the letter.)

2. To further investigate propaganda, ask students to research propaganda during another historical period. Propaganda from World War I or World War II is easily accessible and rich in content. Take the assignment a step further and challenge the students to find examples of propaganda today, either in print or on television.
3. In 1948, Executive Order 9981 finally desegregated military regiments in the United States. Discuss the irony of African American men fighting overseas for democracy in segregated units. Allow students to research the contributions of African American soldiers in other wars and present their findings to the class. Students can choose their topic: American Revolution, World War I, World War II Korea, Vietnam, etc.
4. Watch the movie *Glory*. Discuss the elements of truth and fiction in the movie. Ask students to choose one character and write a diary entry from that person's perspective. Afterward, as a class, ask students to create a memorial and tribute to the men of the 54th Massachusetts. Students can present individual or small group ideas. The final method should be chosen by a class vote. Have the class create the memorial within the school or at a local library and dedicate their work with a ceremony.
5. Analyze the song, "Colored Volunteer: Give Us a Flag." This song was written from an African American perspective and touches on the desire of some men to fight for freedom. A broadside containing the lyrics to the song can be found in the book *Freedom's Soldiers* (see Additional Resources) and a recording of the song can be found on the compact disc, titled, "Songs of the Civil War." Discuss the meaning of the song and how it conveys the sentiments of African American soldiers.

Additional resources

Berlin, Ira, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds. *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Franklin, John Hope, and Alfred A. Moss Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*. 8th ed. New York: A. A. Knopf, 2000.

Web resources

History Matters

www.historymatters.gmu.edu

Primary source: "We Feel as Though Our Country Spurned Us," Soldier James Henry Gooding Protests Unequal Pay for Black Soldiers, 1863. (This is an excellent example of a soldier's protest of unequal pay through a letter written directly to President Lincoln.)

Library of Congress: American Memory

<http://memory.loc.gov>

Search for "Negro soldier"

Long Island University

www.cwpost.liu.net.edu

Click on "C. W. Post Campus" link, the "Library" link, and then the "Information/Publications" link or search for "African American Freedom Fighters."

U.S. National Archives & Records Administration

www.archives.gov

Search site for African American soldiers, recruitment poster, etc.

This lesson fulfills the following Illinois Learning Standards:

English Language Arts

State Goal 1: Read with understanding and fluency.

State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

State Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

Social Science

State Goal 14: Understand political systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

State Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

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CIVIL WAR TIMELINE

Name _____ Date _____

What happened first? What happened last? Cut out the boxes below and arrange the events in chronological order on the number line. Since no dates are provided, you will need to read each description carefully to determine the best order to place them in. Do not glue down the boxes until the teacher has instructed you to do so.

Vocabulary

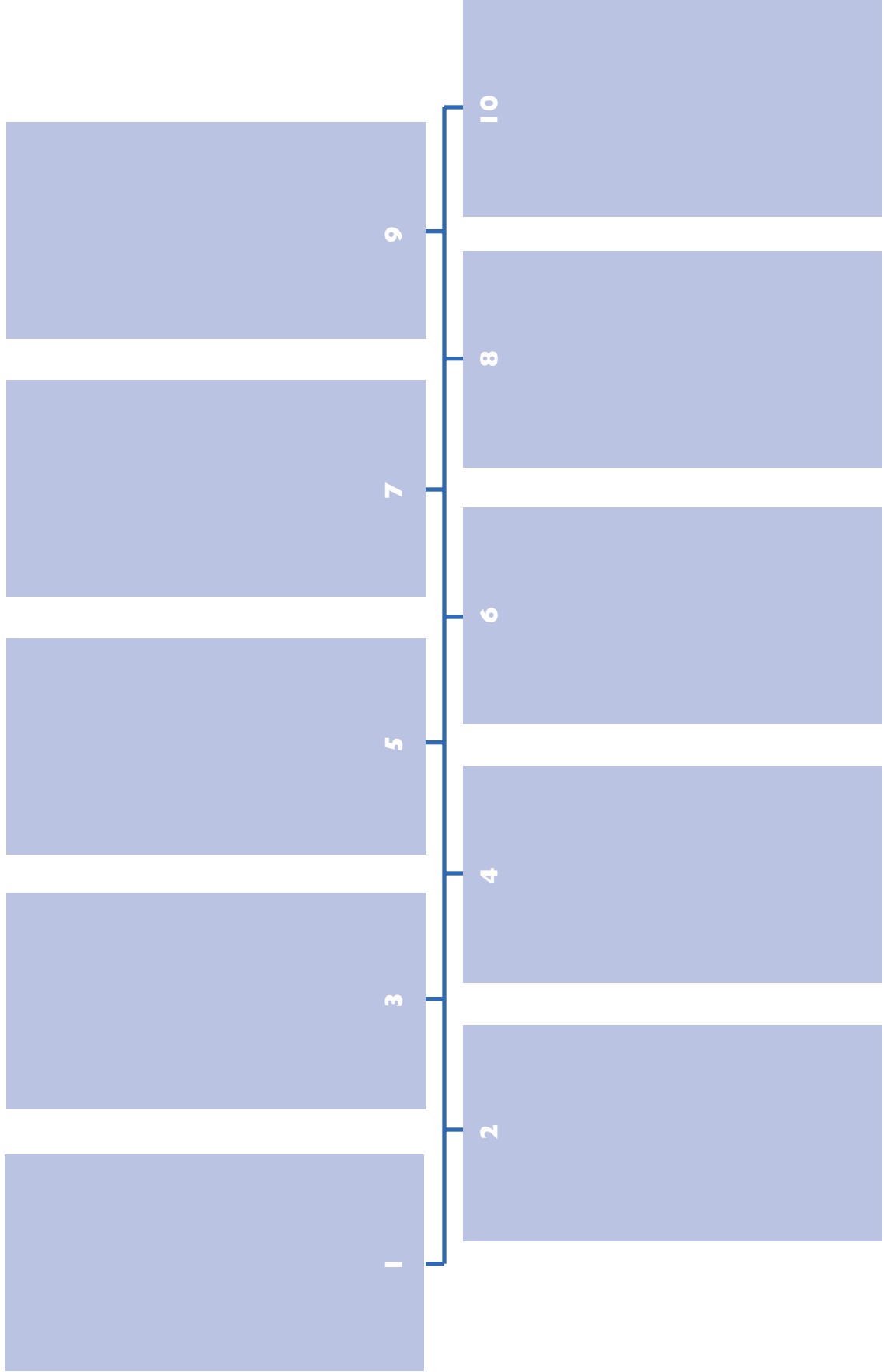
- employed:* to put to use or service
- recruit:* to strengthen or raise (an armed force) by enlistment.
- confiscate:* to seize, to take quick and forcible possession of
- secede:* to withdraw from

<p>General Order No. 143 establishes the Bureau of Colored Troops. Between 128,000 and 200,000 ex-slaves, free blacks, and white officers serve under this organization.</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>The Emancipation Proclamation becomes official, freeing all slaves in Confederate territory. The proclamation states that black men will “be received into the armed service of the United States.”</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. Lee’s surrender ends the long war with a Union victory.</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>President Lincoln’s opinions about using African American troops changes over time. In a letter to General Grant, he writes, “I believe it [African American troops] is a resource which, if vigorously applied now, will soon close the contest.”</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>In an attempt to keep the Confederates from using slaves for military labor, the U.S. Congress passes legislation called the Confiscation Act, making it legal to confiscate any property (including slaves) used to aid the rebels.</p> <p>Date _____</p>
<p>The U.S. Congress passes the Militia Act, which authorizes the president to use black troops in combat.</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>Without presidential or Congressional authorization, some white officers recruit several black regiments. The combat actions of the 1st South Carolina, a regiment of ex-slaves raised by Generals David Hunter and Rufus Saxton receive favorable notice in the Northern press.</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>After seven states secede from the Union, the Confederate States of America begin seizing federal forts in the South. The first shots of the Civil War are fired at Fort Sumter.</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>The war department creates the “American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission” to report “what measures would best contribute to their [freedmen’s] protection and also how they can be most usefully employed in the service of the Government for the suppression of the rebellion.” Out of this report, the Freedmen’s Bureau is created.</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>Union General Benjamin F. Butler in Virginia treats fugitive slaves as “contraband of war,” or property of military value subject to confiscation, and begins employing them as laborers for the Union army.</p> <p>Date _____</p>



CIVIL WAR TIMELINE

Directions: Place events on the timeline in order. 1 = the earliest event. 10 = the latest event.
Do not glue down the events until your teacher tells you to do so.



Executive Mansion,

Washington, August 9, 1863.

My dear General Grant:

I see by a despatch of yours that you incline quite strongly towards an expedition against Mobile. This would appear tempting to me also, were it not that in view of recent events in Mexico, I am greatly impressed with the importance of re-establishing the national authority in Western Texas as soon as possible. I am not making an order, however, that I learn, for the present at least, to the General-in-Chief.

A word upon another subject. Gen. Thomas has gone again to the Mississippi Valley, with the view of raising colored troops. I have no reason to doubt that you are doing what you personally can upon the same subject. I believe it is a resource which, if vigorously applied now, will soon close the contest. It works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us. We were not fully ripe for it until the river was opened. Now, I think at least a hundred thous. men can, and ought to be rapidly organized along its shores, relieving all the white troops to serve elsewhere.

Mr. Dana understands you as believing that the emancipation proclamation has helped some in your Military operations.

Transcription of a letter from Abraham Lincoln to General Ulysses S. Grant

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Mr. Dana understands you as believing that the emancipation proclamation has helped some in your military operations. I am very glad if this is so. Did you receive a short letter from me, dated the 13th of July? Yours very truly

A. Lincoln

UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU! (page 1)

Name _____ Date _____

Part A: “Come and Join us Brothers” recruitment poster

Carefully read the text and look at the image on the poster to answer the following questions.

1. List three things you see in this picture and describe the image in a few sentences.

What is the focal point of the picture? What is in the background of the picture?

2. Read the text along the bottom of the poster. Why was the poster made? What was its purpose?

3. Who is the intended audience of this poster? How do you know?

4. Do you think this is a realistic picture? Why or why not?

UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU! (page 2)

Name _____ Date _____

Part B: Photograph of Company E

Carefully observe the photograph to answer the following questions.

1. List three things you see in this picture and describe the photograph in a few sentences.
What is the focal point of the photograph? What is in the background?

2. Do you think this photograph was posed or spontaneous? Why?

3. Why do you think the photographer took this picture?

4. After looking at this photograph, how would you characterize life in the Union army for African American soldiers?

5. Write down three adjectives that describe this photograph.

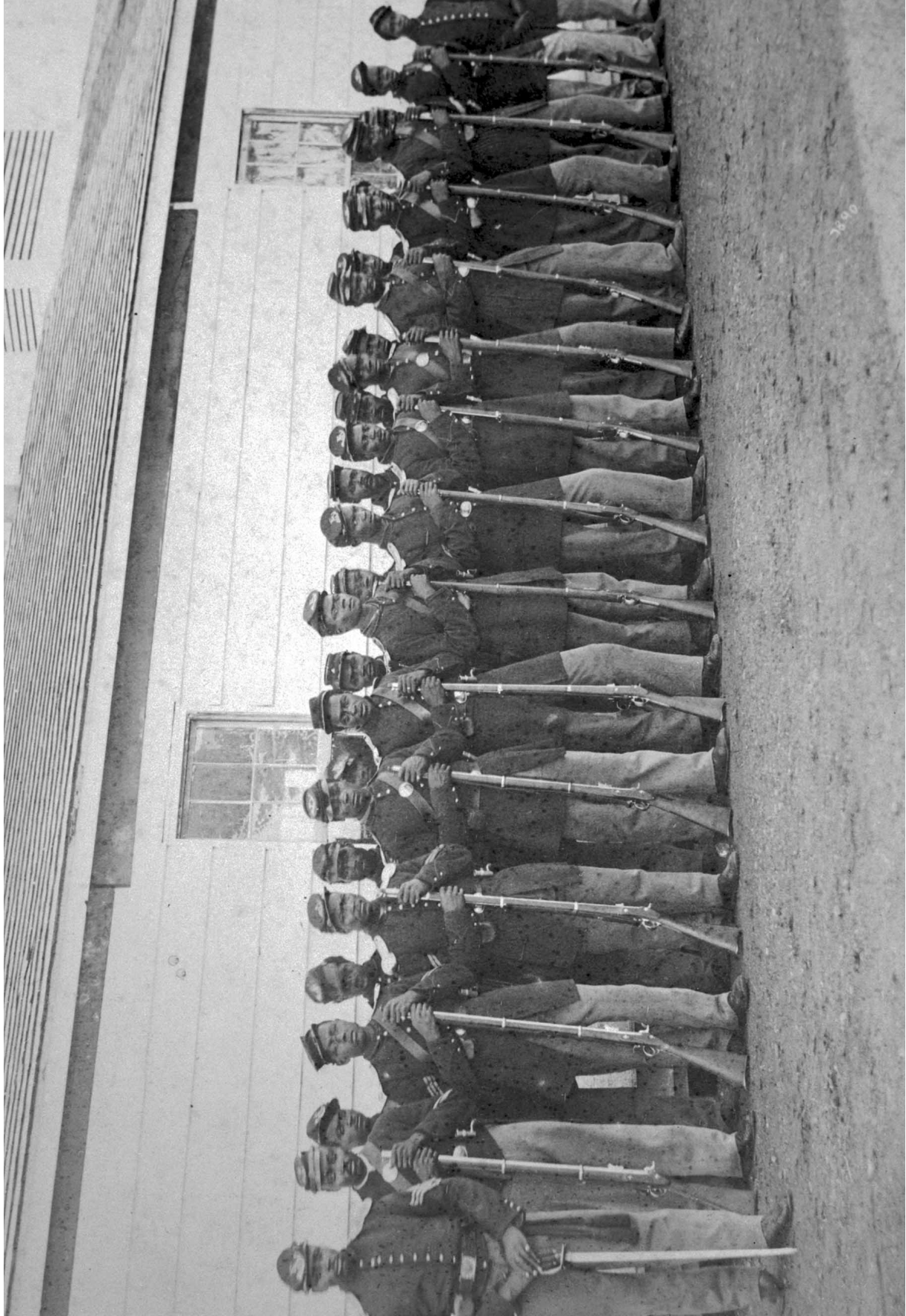


COME AND JOIN US BROTHERS.

PUBLISHED BY THE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE FOR RECRUITING COLORED REGIMENTS
1210 CHESTNUT ST. PHILADELPHIA.

Chicago Historical Society, ICHi-22051

Photograph of Company E



Chicago Historical Society, ICH-07784

CHARACTER CARDS

Teacher instructions: Cut out and distribute one card to each student.
Repeat cards as necessary

1. Eldridge

You are a 32-year-old former slave who escaped from a Virginia plantation. You were on the run for several months traveling through the Underground Railroad until you reached Illinois. You were finally able to evade your master and several slave catchers despite the Fugitive Slave Law and the reward offered for your return. You have found an apprenticeship to learn the trade of iron working.

2. Josiah

You are a 29-year-old African American living in Massachusetts. You are free and have been free your entire life. Your father was born a slave but was allowed to buy his freedom. He married your mother, who is a servant for a rich family in Boston. You married your wife four years ago and have one son. Although you have never been a slave, you hate the institution of slavery and have joined with other black and white abolitionists to pressure the government to end slavery.

3. John

You are a 19-year-old slave living with thirty-two other slaves on a plantation in South Carolina. You have lived your entire life on this plantation. Both of your parents were also enslaved. You grew up with your mother but your father was sold to another owner when you were nine. Your master supported South Carolina's decision to secede and believes this is a war of Northern aggression, which aims to destroy the Southern way of life. He has threatened to sell the family members of any slave who escapes to Union lines.

4. Frederick

You are a 45-year-old African American living in the North. You are currently a leading abolitionist and even publish your own anti-slavery newspaper. You bring personal experience to your writing, because you were once a slave, who had to break the law in order to learn to read. You believed it was worth the risk, because you understood that education was a key to true freedom. Through your newspaper, you urge the United States government to make the freeing and educating of slaves a top priority. Although race relations are very strained, many prominent white people value your opinion and advice.



WOULD YOU FIGHT?

Name _____ Date _____

Complete the matrix below. Use your character card to formulate your answer in Box 1. Wait for your teacher to give you additional information before filling in Boxes 2 to 5. Remember to back up your decisions by explaining why your opinion has changed or remained the same.

Character name _____

Decision to fight for the Union? Yes or no?	Reasoning? Why or why not?
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Final decision

Think about the reality of life in the military for African Americans during the Civil War. If you had lived during the Civil War, would you enlist in the Union army? Why or why not? (Answer the question as you, not your character.)

STILL THEY FOUGHT

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Read the quotation below. Use the quotation and all you have learned during our study to answer the questions. Write your responses in complete sentences.

*Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letter,
U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his
shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth
that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship.*

—Frederick Douglass

1. What does this quote mean? What is Douglass saying about African American soldiers?

2. Summarize three hardships African American soldiers had to endure to serve in the Union army.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

3. Despite all of the hardships why do you think many Africans chose to fight?

4. If you could ask two questions of an African American soldier in the Civil War, what would you ask?

- a. _____
- b. _____

HISTORY LAB | FEEDBACK FORM

Please give us your feedback! After reviewing and using this *History Lab* lesson, please send us your feedback. Your ideas and honest assessment will ensure that these lessons keep improving and will provide us with useful insight for future teacher fellows. To fill out this form online or discover additional *History Lab* activities, visit the educators section of the Chicago Historical Society's website at www.chicagohistory.org.

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

School: _____ Grade you teach: _____

Are you a CHS member? (circle one): yes no

Name of unit you are evaluating _____

Name of lesson you are evaluating: _____

1. On a scale of one to five (with five being the best) rate this lesson in terms of the quality of the student learning experience it provides (circle one):

5 4 3 2 1

2. What were the strengths of this lesson? _____

3. What aspects of this lesson needed additional fine-tuning? _____

4. What advice, tips, or suggestions would you give to future users of this lesson? _____

5. Where does this lesson fit in your course of study (scope, sequence, unit)? _____

6. If applicable, how did the use of primary sources impact student learning? _____



Chicago Historical Society

Thank you for your time. Please send the completed form to:

Chicago Historical Society, Clark Street at North Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60614-6071,

Attn: History Programs **Fax: 312-266-2077**

