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African Americans in the Civil War: Grade 8 Lesson Plan

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Lesson Plans

African Americans in the Civil War

Author: Bill Sigg

Grade(s): 8

Suggested Time: 1, 45 minute class

Materials

paper

pencil

rulers (to construct a timeline)

student copies of the recruiting poster, bill, and speech

copies of the primary sources and document-based questions. **Primary sources can be accessed by clicking on the link under resources.*

Core Instruction

1) Have students construct a timeline for the following events:

April 1861: First shots of the Civil War (Fort Sumter).

July 1862: Congress passes the Confiscation Act freeing slaves who had masters in the Confederate Army.

January 1863: The Emancipation Proclamation declares all slaves in rebellious states free.

May 1863: U.S. Government establishes the Bureau of Colored Troops.

July 1863: President Lincoln issues General Order #233 threatening reprisal on Confederate prisoners of war if captured black Union soldiers are mistreated by the Confederacy.

June 1864: Congress grants equal pay to U.S. Colored Troops.

April 1865: By the war's end, 21 black soldiers are awarded the Medal of Honor

2) Distribute speeches and bill. Allow time for students to read it aloud or silently.

3) Distribute questions based on the primary source documents.

4) After a discussion of the questions, conduct an assessment to measure the students' learning.

Assessment

Situation #1: Imagine that you are a free black male living in Columbus, OH in 1863. You have seen the recruiting poster and have been thinking a lot about whether or not to enlist in the Union Army.

Task: Write a one-page letter to your mother telling her of the decision you have made about enlisting (or not enlisting). Be sure to explain the reasons that caused you to make the decision.

Situation #2: Imagine that you are a newspaper editor in Columbus, OH in 1863. The Civil War has been dragging on for more than two years already and shows no signs of ending soon. You are aware that many black males are willing to enlist in the Union Army but you fear that they

may be mistreated and abused by the majority of soldiers on either side in this war.

Task: Write a one-page editorial for tomorrow's edition of the newspaper. The topic is military service in the Union Army by free African American males. In your editorial, take a clear position for or against having black men join the fight. Be sure to give reasons for whatever position you choose to take.

Situation #3: It is late November in the year 1863. You are Major General Ulysses S. Grant. President Lincoln has just made you Commander of all Union Armies. Your plan for ending the Civil War is to attack the Confederate Armies in several places at once. A message has just arrived from Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War. In this message Stanton has told you to expect the arrival of 5,000 new recruits. They are all African Americans who have no previous military experience. This will be the first time you have had a large number of black soldiers under your immediate command. You are aware that many of your white officers and enlisted soldiers do not believe that black men should be given weapons and put into battle. You are also aware that the enemy soldiers fight even harder when they see that black soldiers are being used against them.

Task: Write a one-page letter to your brigade commanders. (Each of them is a one-star general commanding several thousand soldiers) Tell the brigade commanders how you expect them to use the black soldiers that you will be sending to them in a few days. The brigade commanders will want to know whether to keep the black troops together (separate from the current fighting units) or to put a few black soldiers in each company and platoon so they are spread out evenly. Are the black soldiers to be used in the front line fighting or to be used as cooks and laborers for the Army? Provide any special directions you think the brigade commanders will need for incorporating the black soldiers into their units.

Standards

History 6-8, Benchmark G: Analyze the causes and consequences of the American Civil War.

- *Indicator:* Grade 8, GLI 10. Explain the course and consequences of the Civil War with emphasis on: a. Contributions of key individuals, including Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant; b. The Emancipation Proclamation