



African American Experience in World War I

Recommended Grade Levels: 9-12

Course/Content Area: Social Studies

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- What was life in the United States like for African Americans during World War I?
- What roles did African Americans play in World War I?
- How did patriotism play a role for African Americans who were denied full-citizenship rights and privileges but still expected to defend the United States at war?

SUMMARY: Students will examine the conditions for African Americans living in the United States during the time of the Great War (1914-1918), paying particular attention to Jim Crow laws and the high rates of lynching in many states. They will learn about the Selective Service Act of 1917 and consider why African Americans were expected to serve a country that did not bestow on them full citizenship rights and allowed widespread and institutional discrimination. Students will learn about the ways African Americans served in World War I and then debate whether African Americans should have fought in World War I to help Europeans gain democracy, even though they were regarded as second-class citizens in their own country.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT: **Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading for students in grades 6–12:**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Common Core English Language Arts Standards for History/Social Studies for students in grades 9-10

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3: Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6: Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8: Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Common Core English Language Arts Standards for History/Social Studies for students in grades 11-12

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.RH.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6: Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8: Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

National Standards for Social Studies Teachers prepared by National Council for the Social Studies

Thematic Standards:

I. Culture and Cultural Diversity

II. Time, Continuity, and Change

III. People, Places, and Environments

IV. Individual Development and Identity

VI. Power, Authority, and Governance

IX. Global Connections

X. Civic Ideals and Practices

TIME NEEDED: Three 50-minute class periods

OBJECTIVES: *Students will:*

- Examine political cartoons and charts to learn about the rates of lynching in the United States.
- Read about Jim Crow laws during the time period of World War I to understand the extent to which African Americans were not given full citizenship rights.

- Prepare for debate by reading two primary sources that take different positions on whether or not African Americans should have fought to help Europeans gain democracy.

INTERDISCIPLINARY: History, English, Public Speaking

THEMES & CONNECTIONS: This lesson works best when included in a broader study of the First World War, including instruction on the following:

- Causes of the War
- Course of the War (including battles, trench warfare, propaganda, etc.)
- Analysis of primary source documents is a key component of preparing for this debate and learning about the status of African Americans in the United States at the time of World War I.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Background information section of this lesson including historical context, political cartoon, and chart of lynching rates in the United States.
- Primary sources for the debate by W.E.B. DuBois and A. Phillip Randolph (See Appendix A).
- Debate preparation guide for student notes (See Appendix A).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

AFRICAN AMERICANS AFTER THE CIVIL-WAR

- Civil War ends in 1865:
 - 13th Amendment- outlawed slavery
 - 14th Amendment-granted full citizenship to African Americans
 - 15th Amendment-provided suffrage to African American men
- Reconstruction- the period after the Civil War whereby blacks achieved great progress in the areas of education, politics, and economics. It ended swiftly after President Hayes withdrew Union troops from the South in 1877.
- After Reconstruction- embittered white Southerners reduced African Americans to second-class citizens through Jim Crow laws. These laws mandated segregation in all public facilities, usually resulting in inferior accommodations for black people.
- During Reconstruction- white supremacist groups such as Ku Klux Klan were created with the sole purpose of terrorizing African Americans. Lynching was one form of violence used to thwart social, political and economic progress.

EDUCATION

Education was one of the greatest forms of liberation that African Americans could aspire to attain. During Reconstruction, black churches served as schools for African American children teaching the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic to the formerly enslaved. However, by the end of Reconstruction white people conspired to eliminate public support designated for the betterment of black people through education. In the South, black children were limited to the amount of education they could acquire. But this did not stop communities from providing opportunities for advancement.

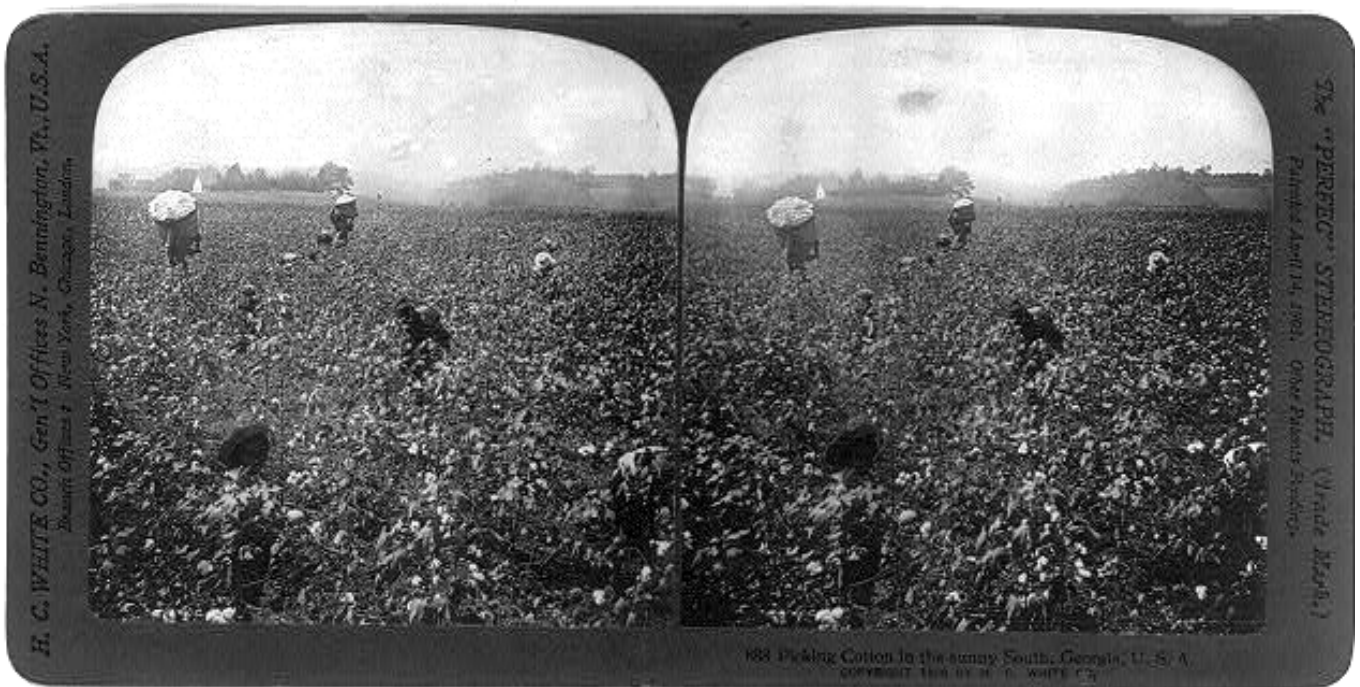
Even though a majority of black Americans lived in abject poverty, there were those who were able to attend educational institutions like Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri (1866), Howard University in Washington, D.C. (1867), Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia (1868), Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee (1876), and the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama (1880). African American leadership centered on changing how blacks saw themselves and worked to create a vision for a future that rivaled one of oppression and domination.

Between 1880 and 1937, individuals such as Booker T. Washington, Mary Church Terrell, George Washington Carver, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson led the effort to change the circumstances and outcomes that a majority of African Americans experienced in the late nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century.

SHARECROPPING

Although slavery had ended by the turn of the twentieth century, a majority of African Americans still lived in poverty due to a lack of education and the prevalence of overt racism. In the South, sharecropping became the primary source of survival.

- Black farmers rented land and planted various crops, most of which were sold back to the landowner to repay their loan.
- The farmers bought their supplies from the landowner: farming equipment, seeds and clothes.
- One of the consequences of not being able to read was the increased vulnerability that black people experienced at the hands of dishonest landowners.



Stereographic view of sharecropping in Georgia.

LYNCHING

Numbers of African American Victims of White Lynch Mobs by State, 1882-1930

<u><i>Deep South</i></u>	<u><i>Border South</i></u>
Mississippi/ 462	Florida/ 212
Georgia/ 423	Tennessee/ 174
Louisiana/ 283	Arkansas/ 162
Alabama/ 262	Kentucky/ 118
South Carolina/ 143	North Carolina/ 75

- Between 1836 and 1942, 48 African Americans were lynched in Missouri.
- Between 1864 and 1920, 24 African Americans were lynched in Kansas.
- During the 1890s, there was a nationwide average of 150 lynchings per year.



("The Reason" *The Crisis*, 1916)

What is this political cartoon attempting to illustrate?

NIAGARA MOVEMENT

Recognized by W.E.B. DuBois as the “Talented Tenth,” the educated elite became the foundation for progress for black Americans. Their commitment to change had a significant effect on the success of the race throughout the twentieth century.

- The black middle-class developed and supported several groups to advocate on behalf of black Americans:
 - In 1905, the Niagara Movement began with the intention of advocating for full manhood rights and privileges for African Americans.
 - In 1909, a group of black and white Americans formed the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
 - The Urban League, an organization that advocates against racial discrimination was formed in 1911.

WORLD WAR ONE

- June 28, 1914: Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne.
- Urged on by its ally Germany, Austria invaded Serbia.
- Serbia turned to Russia for help and for imperialistic reasons, Germany declared war on Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Russia. In return for their aggression, Great Britain declared war on Germany.
- The assassination set many things in motion and soon the allies of Austria-Hungary (Germany and the Ottoman Empire) also known as the Central Powers were embroiled in war with The Entente Powers, led by France, Russia and the British Empire. Italy (1915) and the United States (1917) would later join the Entente Powers.
- Although the United State had a policy of isolationism before 1917, a number of war-related incidents drew the U.S. into the Europe conflict.
 - President Woodrow Wilson declared war on April 2, 1917 after a telegram was sent from the Foreign Secretary of the German Empire to the German ambassador in the United States.
 - The “Zimmermann Telegram” instructed the ambassador to approach Mexico with a military alliance if the United States decided to enter the war. Germany promised to help Mexico reclaim territories lost during the Mexican-American War.
- On May 18, 1917, the Selective Service Act of 1917 was passed by Congress.
- Close to 400,000 African Americans served during World War I. A majority answered the call of the draft.

LESSON

PRE-ASSESSMENT:

Ask students to read the background information section of this lesson plan and prepare questions/comments based on the reading. Questions should be about segments where they are 1) confused, 2) curious for more information, and 3) find something noteworthy for the class to discuss.

DIRECTIONS:

High School Structured Academic Controversy

Question: Should African Americans have been expected to serve in World War I to help Europeans gain democracy, even though they were regarded as second-class citizens in their own country?

Steps in the Structured Academic Controversy:

1. Separate the class into two teams: an affirmative (Side A) and an oppositional (Side B).
2. Using the positions presented by W.E.B. Dubois and A. Philip Randolph (see Appendix A), have students decide which of the two will represent the affirmative.
3. Give the students some time to research the topic using books made available in the classroom and various online research. They can use the accompanying table in Appendix A to organize their points.
4. Present position to the class – each side presents their position using supporting evidence from the primary source text and additional online research.
5. The opposite side will restate the position they just heard to the other side's satisfaction – this will demonstrate listening and understanding before moving to the next step.
6. Consensus-building – the step that moves beyond traditional classroom debates. Sides will be abandoned while students build consensus regarding the question or note where the differences lie, making sure to use supporting evidence in the discussion.

POST-ASSESSMENT:

Students can evaluate the benefits and drawbacks for African Americans in particular and the United States in general of African Americans serving in World War I. How did and how should service in World War I have affected treatment of African Americans upon their return to the United States? Students can write an informal essay and do additional research to consider the follow up questions.

MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS

Students can work in teams on the post-assessment to allow for more breadth and depth in research. They can have the option of writing or presenting depending which skill needs more practice.

APPENDIX A

PRIMARY SOURCES FOR THE DEBATE BY W.E.B. DUBOIS AND A. PHILLIP RANDOLPH

POSITION ONE

This is the crisis of the world. For all the long years to come men will point to the year 1918 as the great Day of Decision, the day when the world decided whether it would submit to military despotism and an endless armed peace – if peace it could be called – or whether they would put down the menace of German militarism and inaugurate the United States of the World.

We of the colored race have no ordinary interest in the outcome. That which the German power represents today spells death to the aspirations of Negroes and all darker races for equality, freedom and democracy. Let us not hesitate. Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting democracy. We make no ordinary sacrifice, but we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills.

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Crisis* (July 1918)

POSITION TWO

At a recent convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a member of the Administration's Department of Intelligence was present. When Mr. Julian Carter of Harrisburg was complaining of the racial prejudice which American white troops had carried into France, the administration representative rose and warned the audience that the Negroes were under suspicion of having been affected by German propaganda.

In keeping with the ultra-patriotism of the old-line type of Negro leaders the NAACP failed to grasp its opportunity. It might have informed the Administration representatives that the discontent among Negroes was not produced by propaganda, nor can it be removed by propaganda. The causes are deep and dark - though obvious to all who care to use their mental eyes. Peonage, disenfranchisement, Jim-Crowism, segregation, rank civil discrimination, injustice of legislatures, courts and administrators - these are the propaganda of discontent among Negroes.

The only legitimate connection between this unrest and Germanism is the extensive government advertisement that we are fighting "to make the world safe for democracy", to carry democracy to Germany; that we are conscripting the Negro into the military and industrial establishments to achieve this end for white democracy four thousand miles away, while the Negro at home, through bearing the burden in every way, is denied economic, political, educational and civil democracy.

A. Phillip Randolph, *The Messenger* (July 1918)

DEBATE PREPARATION GUIDE FOR STUDENT NOTES

Opinion: I believe that African Americans should have fought in the War.	Opinion: I do not believe that African Americans should have fought in the War.
Reason:	Reason:
Fact(s) that supports this reason:	Fact(s) that support this reason:
Reason:	Reason:
Fact(s) that supports this reason:	Fact(s) that supports this reason:
Reason:	Reason:
Fact(s) that support your reason:	Fact(s) that support your reason:

FURTHER RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

- Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (1940).
- Scott Nearing, *Black America* (1929).
- Michael L. Cooper, *Hell Fighters: African-American Soldiers in World War I* (1997).
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845).
- Timothy C. Dowling, *Personal Perspectives: World War One* (2005).
- Emmett J. Scott, *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (1919).
- Kai Wright, *Soldiers of Freedom: An Illustrated History of African American in the Armed Forces* (2002).
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).
- Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892).
- Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldier: Black American Troops in World War I* (1974).

BOOKS FOR INSTRUCTORS

- Darlene Clark-Hine and Earnestine Jenkins, eds., *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity* (1997).
- Carl Gutierrez-Jones, *Critical Race Narratives: A Study of Race, Rhetoric, and Inquiry* (2002).
- John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (1990).
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism* (1991).
- David Marriott, *On Black Men* (2002).
- Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men* (1998).
- David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (1993).
- W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Under Sentence of Death, Lynching in the South* (1997).