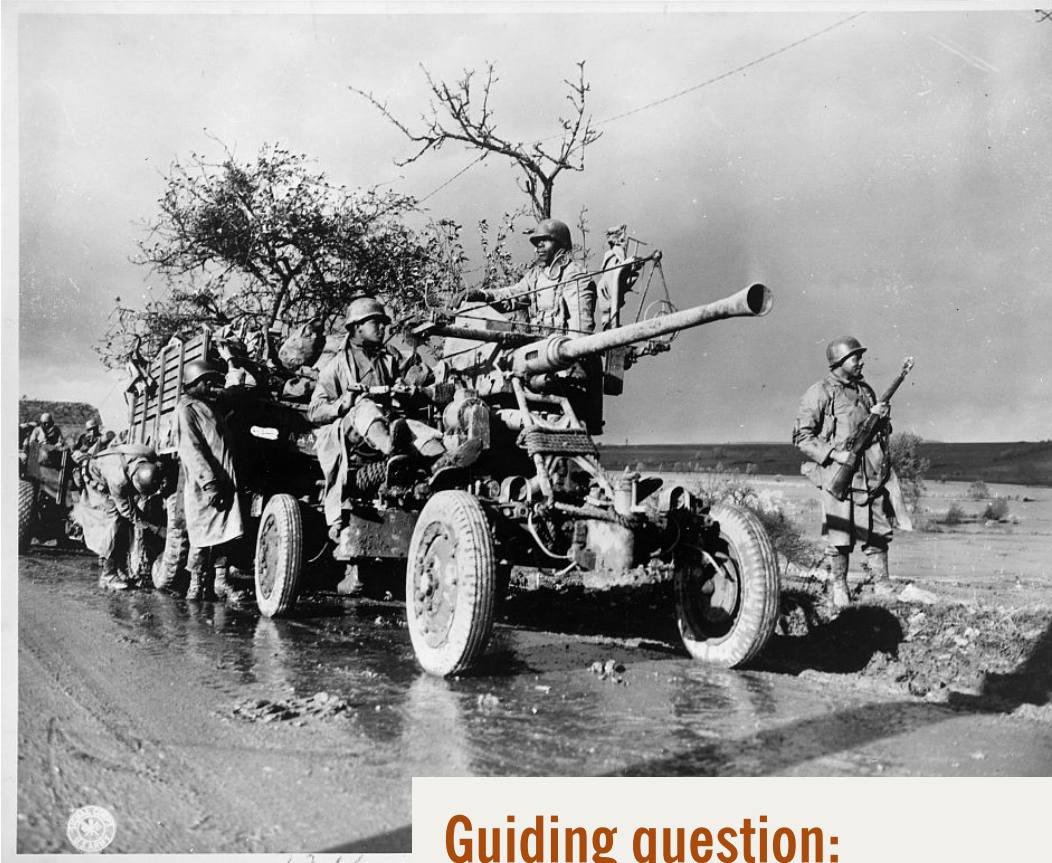




UNDERSTANDING
SACRIFICE

Activity: Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice in World War II



Guiding question:

Why was the U.S. military reluctant to use more African American soldiers in combat alongside white soldiers?
How and why did the policy change as the war progressed?

DEVELOPED BY DONALD Z. DAVIS, NBCT

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Subject(s): Social Studies, English/Language Arts

Cemetery Connection: Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery

Fallen Hero Connection: Private First Class Edward Elewicz

Overview

Students will read primary and secondary sources regarding the 18th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division. These sources will discuss the role of African American soldiers during World War II. Students will answer guided questions to go along with the readings.

Historical Context

As the Allies advanced into Germany during World War II, their objectives included taking over towns and cities and keeping up the advance to Berlin. The 1st Infantry Division had participated in many engagements during the war, including North Africa, Sicily and D-Day, as well as the battles for Normandy, Aachen, Germany, the Huertgen Forest, and the Battle of the Bulge. By March 1945, as the Allies continued their march into the heart of Germany and crossed the Rhine River at the Remagen bridgehead, many combat units required replacements to remain effective. The 18th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division is one such example. Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery is the final resting place for many men, like Private First Class Edward E. Elewicz from the 1st Infantry Division, who gave their life fighting to cross the Rhine into Germany.

As a result of a loss of soldiers, the 18th Infantry Regiment allowed African Americans to fight alongside their regular units in Germany, a change in the military's policy towards African American soldiers serving in combat units. Some of the African American officers gave up their commissions to serve in the infantry.

Objectives

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

- Analyze and evaluate the contributions of some African American soldiers during World War II;
- Sequence important events in Europe leading to the defeat of Germany in World War II;
- Compare and contrast primary and secondary accounts of African Americans fighting in World War II; and
- Draw conclusions about why the Allies were able to defeat Germany during World War II.

“I was excited to find accounts of African American and white infantry soldiers fighting together in Germany late in World War II. These sources further explain the contributions and sacrifices of African American soldiers to the effort to defeat Hitler, while also leading to changes in the U.S. government’s views about segregation.”

—Donald Z. Davis

Davis teaches at Washington High School in Chicago, Illinois.

Documents Used ★ indicates an ABMC source

Primary Sources

“Negroes Fight Beside Whites in Two U.S. Armies”
Chicago Tribune, March 20, 1945, page 1

“Sentence Four Negro WACS Who Protested Taking Menial Jobs”
Chicago Tribune, March 21, 1945, page 3

“U.S. Negroes Win 1st Test by Fire East of the Rhine”
Chicago Tribune, March 22, 1945, page 7

Secondary Sources

Baumer, Robert W. and Mark J. Reardon, *American Iliad: The 18th Infantry Regiment in World War II*, (Bedford: The Aberjona Press, 2004), 339-340.

Silent Hero Profile of Edward Elewicz ★

National History Day

nhsilentheroes.org/profiles/edward-e-elewicz/

Materials

- “Negroes Fight Beside Whites in Two U.S. Armies,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 20, 1945
- “Sentence Four Negro WACS who Protested Taking Menial Jobs,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 1945
- “U.S. Negroes Win 1st Test by Fire East of the Rhine,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1945
- *American Iliad* excerpt (pages 339-340)
- Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice in World War II Guided Discussion Questions
- Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice in World War II Writing Prompt Rubric

Lesson Preparation

- Print one copy of the three newspaper articles (“Negroes Fight Beside Whites in Two U.S. Armies,” “Sentence Four Negro WACS who Protested Taking Menial Jobs,” and “U.S. Negroes Win 1st Test by Fire East of the Rhine,”) and *American Iliad* book excerpt for each student.
- Print one copy of the Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice in World War II Guided Discussion Questions and Writing Prompt Rubric for each student.
- Assign students into groups of three to four students each (heterogeneously grouped mixing genders and reading levels). Arrange seating in the classroom for cooperative learning.
- Set up a projector connected to the Internet for use during the early parts of the lesson.
- For the final assessment arrange seating in a circle for a whole class discussion of the readings.

Procedure

Activity One: The Need for Replacement Soldiers (45 minutes)

- Ask students to reflect on the following in their notebooks: *What challenges did the Allies face as they fought in Germany during 1945? How do you think that contrasted earlier battles between Germany and the Allies?*
- Review Private First Class Edward Elewicz’s fallen hero profile and ask students to reflect on the following: *What challenges did replacement soldiers have during World War II? Why were they needed? What does it mean to sacrifice during wartime?*

Activity Two: Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice (45 minutes)

- Divide students into groups of three to four students each and outline the roles that each person in each group will perform (recorder, reporter, timekeeper, and clarifier.)
- Assign each group a section of the Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice in World War II Guided Discussion Questions. Assign the groups to read the three articles. At teacher discretion, all students could read all articles or the groups can be assigned different ones.
- Rearrange the seating in a circle for the whole class to share out and discuss.
- Each group’s reporter will share out their responses to the questions from their reading. For those questions involving students’ opinions, the teacher should encourage several responses to be shared.

Assessment

- For the final assessment arrange seating in a circle for a whole class discussion of the readings.
- In your discussion include ALL of the following: motives for African Americans to want to fight; what African Americans had to sacrifice in agreeing to fight; why the U.S. Army decided to change its policy; and how African Americans performed once they entered combat.

Methods for Extension

- Students can write a complete essay with an evaluation of the sources along with their analysis of the role of African Americans in World War II.
- Students can research southern newspapers to see how integration was covered at this time.
- Students can use ABMC's website to search on African American units that participated in the fighting in Europe in order to find African American service members who remain interred overseas.
- Students can research and report on African Americans' experiences fighting during World War II
- 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 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice, visit abmc.gov/education and NHDSilentHeroes.org.
- Teachers can enhance students' interest in African Americans who served in World War II by exploring these related lesson plans:
 - [Duty and Dignity: Black Americans and the 92nd Infantry Division Buffalo Soldiers](#)
 - [The Montford Point Marines: One Step Towards Civil Rights](#)
 - [Race and Tragedy on the Homefront: The Forgotten Port Chicago Disaster](#)
 - [Two-Front War: African Americans' Fight for Victory at Home and Abroad](#)

Adaptations

- Students can work individually on the readings and discussion questions, then discuss their answers with a partner or the whole class.
- Teachers can shorten or annotate the readings (especially the secondary source excerpt) as needed.
- Teachers can enlarge the text of the reading to allow the students to see it better.
- Teachers can have the students use the original text of the newspaper readings online to include a technology component in the lesson.
- Students can be given a shorter writing assignment than the ten-sentence requirement. Teacher can reduce the parts of the writing assignment for them, and alter the rubric to show this change.

Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice in World War II

Guided Discussion Questions

“Sentence Four Negro WACS Who Protested Taking Menial Jobs”

Chicago Tribune, March 21, 1945, page 3

<http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1945/03/21>

Fort Devens, Mass. March 20 (AP)—Four Negro WACs today were convicted by an army general court martial of violating the 64th article of war—refusal to obey orders of superior officers. They were sentenced to serve one year at hard labor and to be dishonorably discharged.

The four had contended that they were ordered to do menial work in Lovell general hospital “because of their color.”

They are Pvt. Alice D. Young, 23, of Washington, D.C., Pvt. Anna C. Morrison of Richmond, Ky, Pvt. Johnnie Murphy of Rankin, Pa., and Pvt. Mary Green of Conroe, Tex.

Pvt. Murphy became hysterical after being led from court by military police.

The army board which tried the four included two Negro officers.

1. What is meant by the word “menial” as used in the reading?
2. What crime were the four women charged with? What was the punishment for this crime?
3. Why do you think the author included the last sentence of the article?
4. Do you think that this punishment was fair? Why or why not?

“Negroes Fight Beside Whites in Two U.S. Armies”

Chicago Tribune, March 20, 1945, page 1

<http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1945/03/20>

PARIS, March 19 (AP)—Negroes and whites are now fighting shoulder to shoulder in the same outfits in both the 1st and 7th armies, marking a break in the United States army’s traditional policy of segregation, Stars and Stripes reported today from the 1st Army front.

Negro platoons have been assigned to rifle companies of Infantry divisions in both armies in response to repeated requests from the Negroes themselves for a chance to fight for their country as well as work for it, the army newspaper reported.

They were chosen from thousands who answered a special appeal Dec. 26 by Lt. Gen John C.H. Lee, communications zone commander, to service troops in his command.

In one engineer company, 171 men of a total of 186 volunteered to fight. Four first sergeants accepted a reduction to privates to qualify for infantry training, the paper said. In one quartermaster laundry company 100 out of a total of 260 volunteered for the front line but only 36 were allowed to go. About 2,500 in all were accepted, Stars and Stripes reported.

1. What are meant by the words “outfits” and “segregation” as used in the reading?
2. According to the article, what caused African American soldiers to serve in rifle companies of the Infantry divisions?
3. What is meant by the phrase, “four first sergeants accepted a reduction to privates to qualify for infantry training”?
4. What do you think motivated these African Americans to volunteer to fight?

“U.S. Negroes Win 1st Test by Fire East of the Rhine”

Chicago Tribune, March 22, 1945, page 7

<http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1945/03/22>

WITH U.S. 1ST ARMY EAST OF THE RHINE, March 21 (AP)—Negro infantry men who left their jobs in rear echelons and volunteered for combat duty are fighting on the 1st army’s bridgehead east of the Rhine—the first time Negro troops have been used in combat on the western front.

The army is keeping close check on the Negro platoons, since this is the first time they have been placed in the same divisions with white soldiers on the fighting front. Weekly reports are to be made on their morale, fighting ability, casualties, and the number of Germans they capture.

“All our reports so far have been good,” said Capt. Edward Finnegan of New York City.

Win Wisconsin Man’s Praise.

Praise for the Negroes came from Tech Sgt. Casper F. Koch of Beaver Dam, Wisc, who helped lead a Negro platoon into action four days ago against the town of Berghausen.

“We didn’t want to give them too tough a job in their first fight,” Koch said, “so our platoon went down a street where there were only about nine houses. We didn’t think there would be many Germans in them.

“In the first house the Negro boys captured 11 Jerries and killed two. By the time they’d gotten to the end of the street they had captured 53 prisoners and killed I don’t know how many.

“They worked perfectly. They are eager to learn and ask a lot of questions. When you tell ‘em to take an objective they want to know what to do after they get there.”

Asked Chance to Fight.

These Negro doughboys asked for the chance to fight. Many of them voluntarily gave up their stripes as staff sergeants and technical sergeants to get into the fighting. They are fighting as platoons under white officers who have had combat experience.

The army has moved cautiously in breaking its long established tradition of keeping white and Negro units separated, and the Negro rifle platoons are being fed into divisions gradually, with one platoon to each regiment now in action.

When the Negro platoons arrived recently at one veteran division’s location, each member got a personal letter from the commanding general along with the divisional shoulder patches. They then were greeted personally by regimental commanders. This is the identical welcome given to all white reinforcements.

As yet the army has set up no replacement pool for the Negro platoons. When their fighting strength is reduced to such a level that they are unable to function as units, then remnants of two or more units will be reorganized into a full strength platoon.

1. What is meant by the word “echelons” in the first paragraph—and “stripes” in the eighth paragraph?
2. What is contained in the “weekly reports” on the soldiers—and why?
3. How did the African American soldiers perform in their first action in the town of Berghausen?
4. How were the African American soldiers brought into their new units?
5. What is the purpose of the last paragraph of the article? What main idea is it meant to convey?
6. Do you think soldiers could have fought as effectively under African American officers? Why or why not?

American Iliad: The 18th Infantry Regiment in World War II, pages 339-340

The attack went off as planned, and Learnard's men gained the crest of Hill 310 against negligible resistance, ahead of schedule, by early morning on 18 March. Company G, trailing to the rear of the 1st Battalion, turned south and descended the southern outskirts of the town. The enemy fought tenaciously, but by afternoon they lost the fight and a number of prisoners were taken. "The exception to the attack going according to plan," a later interview with now Regimental S-3 Major McGregor disclosed, "was the result of Captain Jesse Miller's Company B 4th rifle platoon—47 colored volunteers who joined [the assault by] Company G without order from anyone."

The presence of African American soldiers assigned to a white infantry regiment was unusual, given that the US Army was not integrated in 1945. Integration came about as a result of a critical problem facing General Eisenhower: namely a tremendous shortage of infantry soldiers following the costly fighting in the Hurtgen Forest and during the Battle of the Bulge. The 1st Infantry Division, for example, was only at 60 percent of its assigned strength. As a result, Eisenhower made the decision to permit African American soldiers to volunteer for duty as combat infantrymen with the understanding that after the necessary training they would be committed to frontline service.

Some 2,200 volunteers were organized into 53 rifle platoons and then assigned to rifle companies throughout the 12th Army Group. One of these platoons had been previously assigned to Company B on 13 March while the 18th Infantry Regiment was in Bonn.

The 1st Battalion After-Action Report noted at the time, "The Negro platoon assigned to Company B arrived and its men were indoctrinated as to the merits, accomplishments, and expectations of members of the 1st Division in a talk given by the assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Taylor." A white lieutenant and a sergeant who had combat experience led the volunteer platoon, which was to be used tactically in the same manner as the other platoons. Colonel Williamson later explained to his own staff, "This was an experiment to see if colored troops could be employed efficiently in combat mixed with white soldiers." He emphasized that, contrary to practices on segregated Army installations, colored troops wearing the Red One would receive equal treatment with white troops regarding mess, billets, and recreation. In addition, they would be required to hold up their end in combat without special favor, but also without prejudicial assignments.

Major McGregor, remembering Miller's 4th rifle platoon's first day in battle on 18 March at Quirrenbach noted, "They simply helped Company G in it fight without orders from anyone. They proved to be a very real help to the company, disposing of at least 25 Germans. The battalion commander was much impressed with their initiative and fighting spirit, though their inexperience did result in an unusually high number of casualties. In their first two shows they lost 20 of their 47 men."

Captain Lindo also remembered the time he had an African-American platoon under an earlier experiment during the Battle of the Bulge. "They were all volunteers that had heard of this," he recalled. "All came as buck privates, many having taken reduction in grade to serve under white officers in our outfit. They volunteered for the job to prove themselves, and I could not keep them 'out of trouble'. Whether in reserve or in attacks, they killed Germans."

Based on an earlier experience commanding a 4th Platoon at the Bulge, Captain Lindo later added, "What it proved to me is that the color of your skin or your face didn't mean a damn thing." The fighting at Quirrenbach was noted in the 2nd Battalion report and it reinforced what Lindo believed, recording, "Their actions were comparable to that of other platoons of the Regiment, and a source of deep pride to its members." This successful employment of African-American platoons by the 18th Infantry was one of the many precursors that eventually led to full integration in the US armed forces.

From Robert Baumer and Mark J. Reardon, *American Iliad: The 18th Infantry Regiment in World War II* (Bedford, PA: Aberjona Press, 2004).

1. What is meant by the following words used in the reading: "negligible" and "tenaciously" (1st paragraph); "indoctrinated", "mess" and "billets" (4th paragraph); and "precursors" (last paragraph)?
2. According to the author, why were African American soldiers integrated with White soldiers?
3. In what ways were African American soldiers to be treated the same as white soldiers?
4. According to Major McGregor and Captain Lindo, how did African American soldiers perform in combat?

5. Do you agree with the author's conclusion, "This successful employment of African-American platoons by the 18th Infantry was one of the many precursors that eventually led to full integration in the US armed forces"? Why or why not? Explain your answer.

Use all of the readings to answer the questions that follow:

1. In what ways (or details) do the primary and secondary sources agree?
2. In what ways (or details) do the primary and secondary sources contrast each other?
3. Do you think African American infantry soldiers made a difference in the war against Germany in Europe? Why or why not?
4. Taken as a whole, why did the U.S. Army change its policy of having African American soldiers fight alongside white soldiers?
5. If YOU were an African American soldier during World War II—would you have agreed to fight? Why or why not?
6. Since the *Chicago Tribune* was a northern newspaper, how do you think southern newspapers covered the same events dealing with African Americans in World War II?

Equal Opportunities for Sacrifice in World War II

Writing Prompt and Rubric

In at least ten sentences, and a well-organized and mechanically sound paragraph, compare and contrast the primary and secondary source readings about African American infantry soldiers during World War II. In your discussion include ALL of the following:

- motives for African Americans to want to fight;
- what African Americans had to sacrifice in agreeing to fight;
- why the U.S. Army decided to change its policy; and
- how African Americans performed once they entered combat.

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Emerging
10-sentence minimum	Has ten or more sentences	Has eight to nine sentences	Has five to seven sentences	Has five or fewer sentences
Motives for African Americans to fight	Has strong discussion with good elaboration	Has definite discussion with limited elaboration	Has some discussion, reasons may be inaccurate	Has little to no discussion
What African Americans had to sacrifice in agreeing to fight	Has strong discussion with good elaboration	Has definite discussion with limited elaboration	Has some discussion, reasons may be inaccurate	Has little to no discussion
Why the U.S. Army decided to change its policy	Has strong discussion with good elaboration	Has definite discussion with limited elaboration	Has some discussion, reasons may be inaccurate	Has little to no discussion
How African Americans performed once they entered combat	Has strong discussion with good elaboration	Has definite discussion with limited elaboration	Has some discussion, reasons may be inaccurate	Has little to no discussion
Comparison/contrast of the sources	Has strong comparison and contrast with complete accuracy	Has definite comparison and contrast and is mostly accurate	Has some comparison and contrasting with some inaccuracy	Has little comparison or contrasting
Organization	Information is very organized with a well-constructed paragraph	Information is organized with a well-constructed paragraph	Information is organized, but the paragraph is not well-constructed	The information appears to be disorganized
Mechanics	No grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors	Almost no grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors	A few grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors	Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors
Significance	Completely shows the significance of the events and change over time	Mostly shows the significance of the events	Some significance given to the events	Little significance given to the events

“Sentence Four Negro WACS Who Protested Taking Menial Jobs”

Chicago Tribune, March 21, 1945, page 3

SENTENCE FOUR NEGRO WACS WHO PROTESTED TAKING MENIAL JOBS

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