

**Lesson Title**

Tuskegee Airmen

**Subjects**

U.S. History, World History

**Suggested Time**

One 50-minute class period

**Grade Level**

7-12

**Essential Questions**

What impact did the Tuskegee Airmen have on the advancement of Civil Rights for African Americans?

**Objective**

Describe the changing role of African Americans through World War II.

**Overview**

This lesson provides an overview of the Tuskegee Airmen and the importance of their role in securing a victory for the Allies. The focus is for the students to understand the discrimination the Tuskegee Airmen endured and their reaction to it. The students will produce a social media plan to promote the Civil Rights of African Americans in a small group activity at the end of the lesson.

**Materials**

- [Chronicles of Courage: Tuskegee Airmen](#)
- [World War II Propaganda Posters](#)
- [Lesson](#)
- [Full Class Activity](#)
- [National Archives Poster Analysis Worksheet](#)
- [Small Group Assignment](#)
- [Rubric](#)
- [Standards](#)
- [NCSS C3 Framework](#)

## Warm-Up Activity

Teacher to ask --

What were race relations like prior to World War II? (*Students may mention segregation, Jim Crow laws, Plessy v. Ferguson (separate, but equal, etc.)*)

Teacher to say –

Knowing what you do about segregation, what do you think of these posters? *No need to fully analyze, keep it brief.*

The three posters may be found [here](#).



### **United We Win**

Photograph by Alexander Liberman, 1943

*Printed by the Government*

*Printing Office for the*

*War Manpower Commission*

*NARA Still Picture Branch*

*(NWDNS-44-PA-370)*



**Above and Beyond  
the Call of Duty**  
by David Stone Martin

*Printed by the Government  
Printing Office for the  
Office of War Information  
NARA Still Picture Branch  
(NWDNS-208-PMP-68*



**Private Joe Louis Says--**  
NARA Still Picture Branch  
(NWDNS-44-PA-87)

**Explore the Video:**

[“Tuskegee Airmen”](#)

**About the Video:**

This is one of 20 short videos in the series *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation*. It tells the story of fighter pilots William Holloman III and Robert Friend who are among the first African American pilots admitted into the United States military. They are known as the “Red Tails” because of the distinctive red paint on the tails of their P-51 Mustangs.

The Eyewitnesses Tell the Story:

By interviewing people who have experienced courageous events, the *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation* series keeps history alive for current generations to explore. Oral history lets the audience hear history directly from those that experienced it and can bring the past to life with powerful information that print resources may miss. The technologies and solutions presented are information few today have and are contextualized by experts that continue to work with and preserve this classic technology.

**Video Voices:**

**Lt. Col. William Holloman III**

Lt. Col. William Holloman III was born in St. Louis and as a child, he walked over two miles to the airport to watch the airplanes take off and land. He joined the U.S. Army Air

Forces to fly and was assigned to the Tuskegee Institute where he trained for his World War II missions. He remained in the military for the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

**Lt. Col. Robert Friend**

Lt. Col. Robert Friend was born in South Carolina and earned a private pilot certificate in 1939. He joined the U.S. Army Air Forces and was sent to the Tuskegee Institute. He was a part of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group as a pilot in the European Theatre of War.

**Dr. Eric Sheppard**

Dr. Eric Sheppard is dean of the Hampton University School of Engineering and Technology and has received numerous awards including becoming an Associated Fellow with the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA).

Language Support

To aid those with limited English proficiency or others who need help focusing on the video, make available the transcript for the video. Click the transcript tab on the side of the video window, then copy and paste into a document for student reference.

**Lesson**

Full Class Activity

**Watch the video, [“Tuskegee Airmen”](#)**

Teacher to ask –

- Did you notice their ages? Thinking of who you might know at that age now, can you imagine them (or yourself in just a few years) flying an airplane over Europe?
- Which geographic area of the war was the focus of the Tuskegee Airmen?
- Why were the tails of the plane painted red?
- Why did Bomber aircraft need an escort?
- Why was the metal that was used in building the plane so important?
- How many missions did the Tuskegee Airmen fly?
- What was considered their riskiest role?
- Explain how their role was crucial to the war effort.

Teacher to say -

Now that we have watched this story about the Tuskegee Airmen and discussed it, who remembers when we have discussed the Tuskegee Institute previously? Which African-American leader founded it? (*Booker T. Washington*) Why? (*He believed education was the key to equality.*)

Let’s review – In the 1940’s, racial segregation is taking place all over the United States including the military. However, the United States government, used the posters we saw at the beginning of class to recruit Black Americans.

Let's dig a little deeper here. Think of yourself as a person that has been denied basic Civil Rights your entire life along with all of your ancestors, would you want to fight for the country that denied you those rights? Now consider what the Tuskegee Airmen said in the video, how does it compare to your feelings? Do you become tougher when challenged?

Let's revisit the posters.

Use the questions on the poster analysis worksheet from the National Archives, found [here](#), as a class discussion.

- What are the main colors used in the poster?
- What symbols (if any) are use in the poster?
- If a symbol is used, is it
  - clear (easy to interpret)?
  - memorable?
  - dramatic?
- Are the messages in the poster primarily visual, verbal, or both?
- What does the Government hope the audience will do?
- What Government purpose(s) is served by the poster?
- The most effective posters use symbols that are unusual, simple, and direct. Is this an effective poster?

Teacher to say –

The Tuskegee Institute turned out to be extremely successful. These men proved to themselves and the world they could become pilots and become an integral part of America winning the war.

Historians have long argued over the onset of the Civil Rights Movement. While many consider it to have begun in the 1950s, a growing number believe it began with World War II. Two other movements were taking place during this time, one being a proposed March on Washington. However, the plans for the march were cancelled when President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which prohibited racial discrimination in the defense industry if companies wanted to bid on government work. Since this was wartime, companies wanted the government contracts and needed workers. The Pittsburgh Courier, a weekly black newspaper that helped influence public opinion among black Americans orchestrated the "Double V Campaign," which called for integration and for the possibility of fighting for freedom everywhere. The Double 'V' war cry stood for victory over enemies at home and victory over enemies on the battlefields abroad.

### **Small Group Assignment**

Teacher to say –

Since [A. Philip Randolph](#) was the "king" of awareness building, he would have been thrilled to have social media. He didn't, but you do. In your group, develop a social media plan including which media and sample postings/images/tweets you would use to promote the success of the Tuskegee Airmen, the Executive Order 8802 and the *Double V Campaign*.

Teacher to –

- Establish groups of 4 - 5 students.
- Assign each group 8 -10 minutes to create a social media plan that promotes Civil Rights for African Americans.
- Each group will have two minutes to present their social media plan in front of the class.
- Online Resources:
  - A Philip Randolph
    - [A. Philip Randolph Biography](#)
    - [“Patriotism Crosses the Color Line” article](#)
  - Double V Campaign
    - [“A Campaign for Freedom”](#)
    - [“Patriotism Crosses the Color Line” article](#)
  - Executive Order 8802
    - [“Prohibition Against Segregation in the Defense Industry”](#)

**Rubric**

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Understanding of Topic	Information is accurate  Clear understanding of topic	Information is mostly accurate  Good understanding of topic	Information is somewhat accurate  Fair understanding of topic	Information is somewhat inaccurate  Presentation is off topic
Cooperation	Accepts ideas of others; able to compromise  All members contribute	Accepts most ideas of others; able to compromise  Some members contribute	Unwilling to compromise  Few members contribute	Group does not work together  One, maybe two members work together
Presentation	Shows confidence  Informative  Engages audience  Uses body language	Shows some confidence  Informative  Engages audience  Uses body language	Shows little confidence  Somewhat Informative  Engages audience intermittently  Little movement	Performance stalls  Not informative  Audience bored  Very little movement

## Standards

- Understands the causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs

[http://www.educationworld.com/standards/national/soc\\_sci/us\\_history/5\\_12.shtml#nss-ush.5-12.8](http://www.educationworld.com/standards/national/soc_sci/us_history/5_12.shtml#nss-ush.5-12.8)

11.8. WORLD WAR II (1935 – 1945): The participation of the United States in World War II was a transformative event for the nation and its role in the world. (Standards: 1, 2; Themes: TCC, GOV, CIV, TECH)

11.8a As situations overseas deteriorated, President Roosevelt’s leadership helped to move the nation from a policy of neutrality to a pro-Allied position and, ultimately, direct involvement in the war.

Students will examine reasons for the passage of the Neutrality Acts (1935–1937) and consider the national debate as a shift to pro-Allied policies, including “cash and carry” and Lend-Lease.

Students will trace ongoing negotiations with Japan and United States efforts to stop Japanese aggression without resorting to war and without appeasing Japanese demands.

Students will examine the impact of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Students will examine President Roosevelt’s leadership during World War II, including his role as commander in chief and his diplomatic efforts to maintain the Grand Alliance.

Students will examine how technological advancements altered the nature of war and the extent of its devastation, including the use of air power over civilian targets and President Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

## Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standards for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies

English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies » Grade 9-10

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/9-10/>

### Key Ideas and Details:

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.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

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.

**Craft and Structure:**

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.9-10.5

Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

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.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7

Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

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.

**English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies » Grade 11-12**

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/11-12/>

**Key Ideas and Details:**

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.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**Craft and Structure:**

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.11-12.5

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

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.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**

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.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.10

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**NCSS C3 Framework**

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

Dimension 3: Argument Writing

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action