

LESSON PLAN

A Soldier's Life for Me

Written by Christine Wuebker



SUMMARY

World War I created a need for unprecedented numbers of soldiers, resulting in the enlistment of thousands of White and Black men, who served in segregated units. Prior to WWI, only white men could serve as commissioned officers in the United States Army, but that was about to change at a little-known place called Fort Des Moines. Here, the first officer training school for Black men was created and the first class of Black officers graduated. Most of the men trained at Fort Des Moines had little to no prior military experience so this was a big lifestyle change for them. This program will explore what the day to day lives of those soldiers looked like.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Students will use primary and secondary sources to learn about the day to day life of African American officers at Fort Des Moines in WWI.
- 2 Students will learn how to analyze primary and secondary sources from WWI.
- 3 Students will take what they learned and write a sample journal entry or letter from the point of view of an African American officer at Fort Des Moines.

TIME

30 minutes

IOWA CORE

SS.8.4. Independently, evaluate the credibility of primary and secondary sources by determining their relevance and intended use.

SS.8.13. Explain the powers and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, and the media in a variety of governmental and nongovernmental contexts. (21st century skills)

RH.6-8.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH.6-8.5. Describe how a text presents information (e.g. sequentially, comparatively, causally).

RH.6-8.6. Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

RH.6-8.8. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

WHST.6-8.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

SS.9-12.4. Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the source.

SS-Geo.9-12.17. Analyze how environmental and cultural characteristics of various places and regions influence political and economic decisions.

SS-US.9-12.25. Analyze how regional, racial, ethnic and gender perspectives influenced American history and culture.

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.

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.

RH.9-10.5. Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

WHST.9-10.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

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.

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.

WHST.11-12.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

RESOURCES

Photograph of African American Officers

Photo #1: <https://bit.ly/3rxQYvw>

Photograph of Camp Officers

Photo #2: <https://bit.ly/3cOyFOI>

Victor Daly Photographs

Photo #3: <https://bit.ly/3joVo4Z>

Photo #4: <https://bit.ly/2YTfhrf>

Photo #5: <https://bit.ly/3aFXY7i>

Photo #6: <https://bit.ly/36Qxytl>

Photo #7: <https://bit.ly/3cPNSyQ>

Photo #8: <https://bit.ly/3tKRsqQO>

“White Sparrow Patriotic Ceremony”

Photo #9: <https://bit.ly/3rsAk08>

Camp Schedule

Included

Primary Source Analysis Questions

Included

NOTES



KEY TEACHING POINTS

- 1 African Americans faced racism and segregation almost everywhere during WWI including in the military training camps
- 2 Most of the African Americans sent to Fort Des Moines had no prior military experience so day to day life was very different for them
- 3 Primary source analysis

PROGRAM



1. Knowledge Check

See what the students know about this time period.

Be sure to ask about what years this covers, what race relations are like in the United States, as well as the general state of the world in early 20th century.

They should also understand that racism was strong in many parts of the country and segregation was practiced basically everywhere.

Briefly review what was going on in the country prior to America entering WWI.



2. A look at life before WWI

Talk with the students about what life was like in the United States before WWI.

For many Americans life was about progress. New technological advancements leading to greater migrations of people around the country.

Remind the students that segregation is happening everywhere and racism was extremely common. Jim Crow laws were still very much in effect all over the South.

3. The United States goes to war

Remind the students that the United States did not enter the war immediately.

Discuss with the students that once the country formally joined the fighting going on in Europe there was a tremendous call for soldiers. In order to fill this need the United States government asked men to volunteer to enlist in the army, and also instituted the draft. All men between the ages of 21 and 30 were eligible to be drafted with a few exceptions based on religious or employment classifications. The age range would eventually be broadened to 18 to 45 to allow for a bigger pool to choose from.

4. African Americans join the army

Inform students that when African Americans joined the army it was into segregated units. They were most often given noncombat roles and commanded by white officers.

However, for the first time, the army decides to open an officer's training camp for Black men, allowing Black men to train as commissioned officers so that they can lead Black companies.

By the end of the war approximately 380,000 African Americans served in the army.



DISCUSSION: Why do you think the army segregated White and Black soldiers? Why do you think Black men weren't given the opportunity to become officers?



5. Fort Des Moines is chosen

When the decision was made to finally train some African American officers an appropriate location was needed. Several locations were suggested but given all the racial tension in the country most were eventually ruled out. Ultimately an empty cavalry fort in Des Moines, Iowa was picked as the ideal location. It was located in the middle of the country, far away from potential distractions, and welcomed African Americans to the state.

6. Officer candidates are selected

Once the location was picked the next step was to figure out whom would be chosen as officers. Since it was still a commonly held belief that African Americans were inferior to whites there was much debate about who would be the most qualified to be an officer. Of the 1250 men finally admitted to the officer training camp, only 250 came from the military. The other 1000 men had no military background. In fact most of them were college students and professors. Their life was about to drastically change.

7. A day in the life of a soldier



DISCUSSION: What do you think day-to-day life looked like for these new soldiers?



ACTIVITY: Create a daily schedule for the African American officers training at Fort Des Moines. Remind them to think about not only the types of things the soldiers are doing/learning but also what time are things happening, how much time is being spent doing different activities, and what they might be doing for fun. After they have had a few minutes, pick a few students to share their schedules. Then hand out the Camp Schedule worksheet (see below) for the students to compare their sample schedule with the “official” schedule. How did they do?

8. A picture is worth a thousand words



ACTIVITY: Explain to the students that they will be looking at several photos taken at Fort Des Moines while the African American officers were in training there.

They should think about things such as who took the picture, what does the picture show happening, who is the intended audience of the picture, what can we learn from the photograph, and is the picture effective?

After they have been given several minutes to study all the photos, discuss what they learned from looking at the images including any similarities between the different photos, any reoccurring themes, anything specific they took away, etc.



9. Assignment

The last part of the program is where the students will take what they have learned and use it to create a sample journal entry or letter from one of the African American officers stationed at Fort Des Moines. Whatever the students choose it needs to incorporate the things they learned during the program. Make sure there are a few minutes for each group to share what they created.

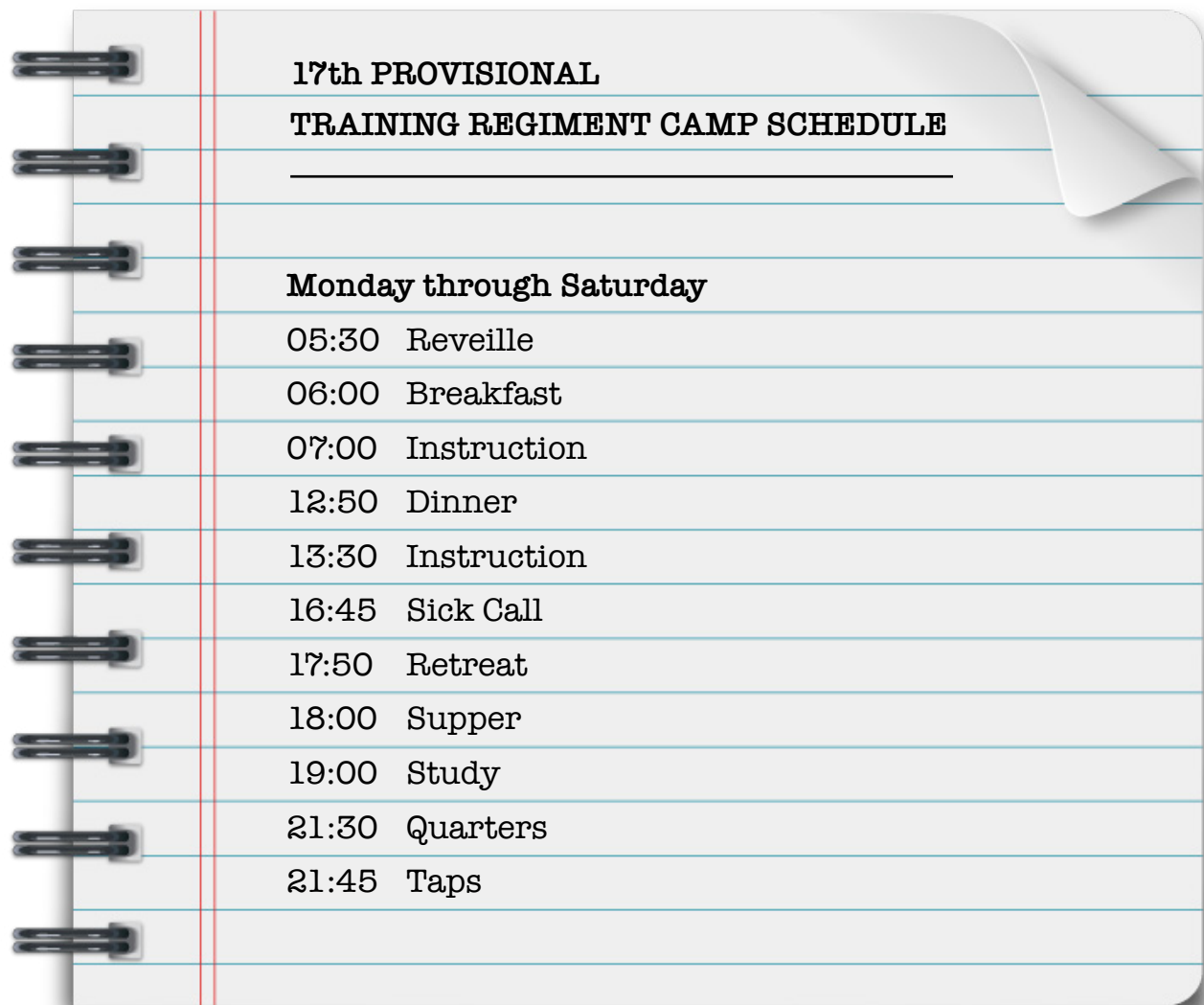


Put it all together.

There should be a few minutes at the end to recap everything discussed during the program from the daily life of African American officers at Fort Des Moines to analyzing primary sources.

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CAMP SCHEDULE



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PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

1. Who took/created the photograph?
2. Who is the intended target of the photograph?
3. What is the purpose of the photograph?
4. What is happening in the photograph?
5. What can we learn about society during the time this photograph was taken?
6. Is the photograph effective? Why or why not?