



The Invisible Men of Honor
THE LEGEND OF THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS

STUDY GUIDE

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Buffalo Soldiers: The Invisible Men of Honor

WHO WERE THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS

On July 28, 1866, the U.S. Congress, as part of a broad reorganization of the army, authorized creation of six “colored” army regiments. Largely in acknowledgment of the outstanding service of the more than 180,000 African-American volunteers who fought for the Union during the Civil War, black soldiers were allowed to enjoy the status of army “regulars” for the first time.

Four infantry and two cavalry regiments were created, which were composed entirely of African-American soldiers led by white commanding officers.

The original Buffalo Soldiers were the men who enlisted in these regiments: the 9th and 10th cavalries and the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st infantries. A total of 5,000 names were on the original muster roll.

Many joined for the adventure but, more often, they were seeking the opportunity to make a new beginning in the aftermath of slavery and to prove their equality with other men.

They worked seven days a week and the starting wage for enlisted men was only \$13 per month. However, this pay enabled them to buy land for farming or to start their own businesses. Many

troopers served ten years or more and, after retirement, helped found thriving new communities.

Their first job as Buffalo Soldiers was helping to secure the western frontier, subduing the American Indians who resisted the exploration and population of their lands.

They subsequently went on to perform a variety of duties on behalf of the U.S. government and to serve valiantly in numerous wars.

Over the 82 years of the Buffalo Soldiers’ existence, 23 men received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest recognition awarded by the U.S. government for military service.

More than 200,000 African Americans served in World War I and more than 1 million served in World War II. Buffalo Soldiers of these periods became a part of the 92nd Infantry Division.

Buffalo Soldiers (all black regiments) ceased to exist in 1948 when President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981 mandating equal treatment and opportunity for African-American servicemen.

HOW DID THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS GET THEIR NAME?

Buffalo Soldiers fought against, yet gained the respect of, the great warrior nations of the American plains. Their name—Buffalo Soldiers—was bestowed on them by the Cheyenne people. It refers to their fierce fighting abilities along with the woolly texture of their hair.

Overview for the Teacher/Discussion Leader

This study guide provides information and activities to assist parents, teachers, students and community groups to learn more about the Buffalo Soldiers. It is our hope that knowing more about them will encourage greater appreciation for their contributions to American society. We also hope that programs like this will promote multicultural dialog and encourage young people to emulate their legacy of honor, valor and courage in everyday life.

ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARY

The **INVISIBLE MEN OF HONOR: The Legend of the Buffalo Soldiers** is a 44-minute documentary that presents the history of Buffalo Soldiers – African-American soldiers who served in segregated regiments that were created in 1866 after the Civil War and its related emancipation of slaves. Their service continued until 1948, after the end of World War II.

A narrator carries the program forward. Historical photographs, documents and re-enactment footage illustrate the unique contributions of these men. These elements are complemented by interviews with contemporary African-American soldiers who served in World War II and the Korean Conflict of 1950.

The tone of the documentary is serious and emotional. It would not be appealing to very young children. However, students from fifth grade through high school should find it informative and interesting.

ABOUT THE WEBSITE

The Buffalo Soldiers Tribute website provides a wealth of detailed information about the Buffalo Soldiers. It includes a registry where people can look up the names of soldiers and add their own personal information to a linked African-American genealogy site. The website also has an extensive bibliography of materials published about the Buffalo Soldiers and links to related sites, including the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum. There is a downloadable version of this study guide, along with a more extensive collection of activity sheets.

WHAT DID THEY DO?

- Explored and mapped out the southwestern US and protected settlers.
- Rode “shotgun” on stagecoaches and escorted wagon trains.
- Delivered mail longer than the Pony Express.
- Protected work crews building the trans-continental railroad.
- Served as the first U.S. Border Patrol.
- Protected the giant redwoods of California before establishment of the U.S. Forest Service.
- Won 23 Medals of Honor
- Engaged in over 177 military campaigns including the following:

1866-91 Indian Wars

1898 Spanish American War

1899-1902 Philippine Insurrection

1916 Mexican Campaign

1917-18 World War I

1941-45 World War II

1950 Korean Conflict

Suggested Activities

INTERMEDIATE LEVELS (5TH–8TH GRADES)

- Draw a picture of a Buffalo Soldier (consider more than one version: one from the 1800's and one from the 1900's.)
- Draw a picture of an American Indian (choose from any of the nations and make the picture as authentic as possible.)
- Make a list of various American Indian nations and tell something about each one.
- Draw a picture of a buffalo and write some facts about this animal.
- Find a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Write a story about a slave and how the person feels upon finding out they are free.
- Develop an outline of all the wars African Americans fought in and identify which ones in particular Buffalo Soldiers fought in.
- Read a book or article (or visit a website) about Buffalo Soldiers and write a report on it.
- Define the words “segregation” and “discrimination” and explain what they mean to African Americans.
- Identify today's leading African-American military personnel and write a biography on one or more of them.
- Find pictures of African-American military personnel – past and present.
- Find out who Frederick Douglass was and why he was important in the formation of the Buffalo Soldier regiments and African-American history in general.
- Research and write a report on African Americans in the world wars.
- Collect images of military crests.
- Write an essay on the Buffalo Soldier principles of honor, valor and courage.
- Role-play an encounter between a Buffalo Soldier and a foreign language speaker during World War I.
- Investigate the Tuskegee Airmen to find out if any of them were Buffalo Soldiers.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE DOCUMENTARY & RELATED MATERIALS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Developing imagination
Understanding words & meanings
Appreciating history
(African-American, American and world context)
Using reading & writing skills
Appreciating role models

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What is the documentary about?
What was slavery?
What happened to black people after slavery ended?
Why are the Buffalo Soldiers important to all people?

WORDS TO KNOW

What are honor, valor and courage?
(Give examples.)
What is a Medal of Honor?
What are the branches of the American military?
What are discrimination and segregation?

Activities Continued

ADVANCED LEVELS (9TH–12TH GRADES)

- Using the Buffalo Soldiers Tribute website, research the history of the Buffalo Soldiers to find out more than what is in the documentary.
- Write a report on the Buffalo Soldiers and their involvement with American Indians.
- Research the stories of individual Buffalo Soldiers such as Henry Flipper, Augustus Walley and Benjamin O. Davis Sr.
- Research American wars and the role African Americans played in each of them.
- Define and discuss the significance of the Buffalo Soldiers to American history.
- Write an essay on what values Buffalo Soldiers represent.
- Discuss the lessons that can be learned from Buffalo Soldiers that apply to contemporary society.
- Find out if there were any Buffalo Soldiers in your family and develop a personal “family tree,” going back as far into history as possible (hopefully to slavery times.)
- Write a story about “A Day in the Life of a Buffalo Soldier”.
- Listen to Bob Marley’s song “Buffalo Soldier” and try to interpret its meaning.
- Write your own song or poem about Buffalo Soldiers.
- Make a timeline of all the wars in which Buffalo Soldiers served.
- Design your own military crest.
- Discuss race relations and how they have changed over the years since you have been alive.
- Research the Congressional Medal of Honor and the African Americans who received it.
- Write a pledge that would guide a person who wants to be a Buffalo Soldiers “in spirit”.

This study guide is intended for use in conjunction with the documentary: TV One Black History Month 2005 Special **THE INVISIBLE MEN OF HONOR: The Legend of the Buffalo Soldiers** and related website: www.buffalosoldiertribute.com

BUFFALO SOLDIERS ARE ROLE MODELS

Their guiding principles were:

**HONOR
VALOR
COURAGE**

“JUST ONCE LET THE BLACK MAN GET UPON HIS PERSON THE BRASS LETTERS, ‘U.S.’; LET HIM GET AN EAGLE ON HIS BUTTON, AND A MUSKET ON HIS SHOULDER AND BULLETS IN HIS POCKET, AND THERE IS NO POWER ON EARTH THAT CAN DENY THAT HE HAS EARNED THE RIGHT TO CITIZENSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES.”

Frederick Douglass, 1863

Additional Resources

INTERNET SITES

Buffalo Soldiers Virtual Museum • www.buffalosoldiertribute.com
Buffalo Soldiers National Museum • www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com
Buffalo Soldiers Re-enactors Association • www.thebuffalosoldiers.com
US National Archives & Records Administration • www.archives.gov
Portraits in Black-The Buffalo Soldiers • www.coax.net/people/LWF/buffpage.htm
Portraits of Buffalo Soldiers • www.clements.umich.edu/Photogal/People.html
Daily Life on the Western Frontier • www.imh.org/imh/buf/buf4.html
Origins of the Buffalo Soldiers • www.ruraltel.net/gced/tnthistory.htm
U.S. Territorial Maps 1775-1920 • www.xroads.virginia.edu/~MAP/terr_hp.html
Historical Maps of the United States • www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/histus.html
African American Genealogy • www.afrigenear.com

TELEVISION AND FILM



REDISCOVERING AMERICA: Buffalo Soldiers - Between 1866 and 1891, more than 10,000 African Americans fought the Indian Wars. This is the story of men whose bravery often went unrecognized because of the prejudiced society in which they lived. (Produced by the Discovery Channel)



GLORY – Denzel Washington and Matthew Broderick star in this Civil War epic about an all-black Union regiment with a white captain. This critically acclaimed true tale features Oscar quality performances and vivid relationship studies. (Directed by Edward Zwick)



A SOLDIER'S STORY – Presenting a frank look at race relations, Howard E. Rollins Jr. and Adolph Caesar are featured in this emotionally potent drama about an army attorney trying to solve the mystery behind the murder of a black soldier. (Directed by Norman Jewison)

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West by William Leckie
Cobblestone-Buffalo Soldiers, February 1995, History of Indian White Relations, Smithsonian Institute
Men-A-Marching by Frank P. Ganglier
The Forgotten Heroes: The Story of the Buffalo Soldiers by Clinton Cox
On the Trail of the Buffalo Soldier by Frank N. Schubert
Black Valor: Buffalo Soldiers and the Medal of Honor by Frank N. Schubert

Buffalo Soldiers National Museum

1834 Southmore Street, Houston, Texas 77004, ph 713 942 8920
www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com

In the historic 3rd Ward Museum District of Houston, Texas, the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum opened in 2000. It is “dedicated to the brave men and women of color who courageously served in every great American war and military campaign.” Its main objectives are to preserve, promote and perpetuate the history and outstanding contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers toward the development and defense of the United States of America. The museum houses an extensive collection of historical memorabilia and documents, conducts guided tours and operates a gift shop.



THE INVISIBLE MEN OF HONOR

The Legend Of The Buffalo Soldiers

TV One Black History Month 2005 Special

One-hour documentary tracing the history and legacy of Buffalo Soldiers. Includes interviews with contemporary African-American veterans.

Check your local listings for additional information.

About the Study Guide Developer



Dr. Regina E. Spellers holds a doctorate in intercultural and organizational communication and has developed curriculum materials, served on advisory boards, and consulted with charter elementary schools and nonprofit organizations.

Her most recent work includes a co-edited book: “Blackberries and Redbones: Critical Articulations of Black Hair/Body Politics in Africana Communities,” which will be published and released by Hampton Press in 2005. Dr. Spellers resides in Chicago and is CEO of Eagles Consulting Group, LLC.

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