

The Red Hand Division: A Soldier's Experience in the 371st Infantry Regiment during WWI

Historical Background

The 371st Infantry Regiment in WWI was an all-Black army unit that fought in WWI. “This African American unit was trained at Camp Jackson in Columbia, SC, and fought alongside French troops using French weapons and equipment. The 157th French Division to which they were attached became known as the “Red Hand Division” under the command of French General Mariano Goybet. Enlisted members (African American) of the 371st earned 12 American Distinguished Service Crosses, and 89 French Croix de Guerre. The 371st fought consistently on the front lines during WWI and consistently drove back the German lines resulting in the “Red Hand” moniker.”

Emmett J. Smith was a personal adviser and speech writer to Booker T. Washington, and served in Woodrow Wilson’s administration as an adviser on black affairs. During that time he published two reports on conditions facing African Americans during the period, which were published as *The American Negro in the World War* (1919) and *Negro Migration during the First World War* (1920). The link below is to an excerpt in *The American Negro in the World War* (1919) focusing on the 371st Regiment.

South Carolina Social Studies Support Document, Grade 8, 2008 http://ed.sc.gov/agency/Standards-and-Learning/Academic-Standards/old/cso/social_studies/social.html

South Carolina Standards

8-6.2 Explain the impact of World War I on South Carolina, including the building of new military bases and the economic impact of emigration to industrial jobs in the North.

Objectives

- Students will analyze and gather information from primary and secondary sources.
- Students will attempt to recreate a journal that traces a typical draftee’s path from recruitment, training, deployment and assimilation to home using background knowledge of WWI and conditions in the segregated south

Time Required

1 week (Homework/Classwork Project)

Recommended Grade Level

Middle/High School

Lesson Materials

- E.J. Scott-Chapter on experiences of 371st Regiment with primary quotes from unit members: <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/comment/Scott/SCh16.htm>
- SCDL link to image of unnamed soldier from 371st. Note “Red Hand” shoulder patch. http://digital.tcl.sc.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/ftscwwi&CISOPTR=0&CISOBX=1&REC=1

Lesson Preparation

1. Download the picture “Unknown African-American Soldier and Daughter” from the University of South Carolina’s Digital Collections website.

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2. Print Journal Questions to hand out to students.

Lesson Procedure

1. Project the image of the Unknown Soldier to the class.
2. Have students analyze the photograph by asking the following questions and getting verbal responses:
 - a. Describe what you see in the photograph.
 - b. What do you notice first?
 - c. What if any words do you see?
 - d. What other details can you see?
 - e. What do these details tell you about the photograph?
 - f. When do you think this picture was taken?
 - g. If someone took this photograph today, what would be different? What would be the same?
 - h. Which branch of the military do you think the gentleman was in? Explain your response.
 - i. What do you wonder about? (Have students write these questions down. They will need to keep track of the answers they find that answer their own questions.)
3. Explain to students that they will be working on a project for the next week that will help them better understand who this man was and what his role was in WWI.
4. Their goal is to create a fictitious journal tracing the path of a typical African American draftee in the 371st Regiment.
5. Provide students with the guided inquiry below.
6. Explain grading procedures and deadlines.
7. When students have turned in their projects allow them ½ of a class period to debrief, sharing with the class what they learned. During debriefing, students should share answers to the questions they had at the beginning of the project.

Assessment

25 points for each journal section

Lesson Extension Options

Have students research to find other photographs related to the Red Hand Division. Offer as extra credit

Digital Collections Information

This lesson plan is based on images and/or documents derived from the K-12 Primary Sources Pilot Project collection available from the University of South Carolina's Digital Collections Library. To see more from this collection please visit the following link.

<http://www.sc.edu/library/digital/collections/K-12.html>

To see other collections that may be helpful to your search, visit the Digital Collections homepage by clicking here <http://sc.edu/library/digital/index.php> or visit SCDL's collections by clicking here <http://www.scmemory.org/index.php>.

Guided Inquiry Questions

1. Start by visiting the following site
<http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/comment/Scott/SCh16.htm>
2. Only read Chapter XVI
3. Create a journal that traces the path of a typical African American draftee in the 371st Regiment. See below for journal sections.
4. Write out answers to questions you had as you work.

Journals should dedicate at least 1 section to each phase of the experience (being drafted, training, deployment to Europe, assimilation). Journals can be bound and illustrated, written as letters, or simply as four 1-page papers.

Questions to consider for each section:

I. Draft notice

- Where do you live?
- What is your occupation?
- Do you have any family?
- How will being drafted affect your family?
- What are your thoughts about being sent to war?
- How do you feel about fighting for America?

II. Training

- Who have you met?
- New friends?
- Where are you training (Camp Jackson, Columbia, SC?)
- Weather?
- How are you treated by your leaders/locals?
- How do you feel about going into battle with your unit?

III. Deployment (Excerpts from E.J. Smith will be used here)

- War experiences in the trenches/daily life on the front

IV. Assimilation to home

- How are you treated by friends/family?
- What are your expectations for the future of America?
- Have your views changed since you were drafted?
- What does it mean to be a war hero in a segregated society?
- Do you expect change?