

Lesson: Racial Integration and the Korean War

About This Lesson: Students will examine a variety of primary sources in order to evaluate the extent to which the Korean War accelerated racial integration in the U.S. Armed Forces and in American society. Students will also learn how to locate relevant articles using a historical newspaper database and keywords. This lesson utilizes the digitized archive of the *Chicago Defender*, but could ProQuest contains searchable archives for a variety of national African American newspapers including the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *New York Amsterdam News*, and *Baltimore Afro-American*.

Grade Level: 10-12

Time: One 60 minute class period.

Materials/Primary Sources:

1. President Harry S. Truman, [Executive Order 9981](#), July 26, 1948.
2. Thurgood Marshall, [“Draft of Report on Korea,”](#) March 12, 1951.
3. [“Summary of Courts Martial in Korea.”](#) Assorted charts. March 1, 1951. Reproduced by Library of Congress.
4. [ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender](#) [access provided by the Philadelphia Free Library].

Objectives:

- Students will make inferences based on historical knowledge.
- Students will learn how to search in digitized archives using search terms and date limits.
- Students will learn to determine a newspaper article’s tone by analyzing the article’s intended audience, purpose, and language.

WI Standards:

- SS.Hist2.c.h Evaluate how the historical context influenced the process or nature of the continuity or change that took place.
- SS.Hist4.c.h Analyze the intended purpose of a specific primary or secondary source.
- SS.Hist4.b.h Analyze how the intended audience influences a primary or secondary source.

Essential Questions:

What factors made racial integration of the military easier than in other areas of American society?

What obstacles hindered or complicated racial integration of the military?

To what extent did the Korean War help the cause of racial integration?

How did the experiences of African American soldiers in Korea expose racial discrimination in the military and American society?

Lesson

Opening Activity: Integration with the Stroke of a Pen? [20 Minutes]

1. Background/Scene Setting:

Have students define and review the following term:

Executive Order:

Commander-in-Chief:

Cold War:

Explain why President Truman did not need Congress to pass a law in order to integrate the military. Remind students of how the Cold War had made U.S. race relations an urgent foreign policy issue for the Truman Administration.

2. As a class, students read **Executive Order 9981** out loud.

In small groups, students will brainstorm at least 3 bullet points to the following questions:

-What factors might have made the military easier to integrate than other areas of society (schools, public transportation, restaurants).

-What potential obstacles can you identify to the implementation of Truman's order.

3. Groups share out their lists by adding to the board or a class google doc.
4. Based on their lists and prior knowledge have students write a 1-2 sentence response to question: In what ways was Korea an opportunity to press for the implementation of Truman's order? Make a prediction about the experiences of African American soldiers who fought in Korea? [Set these aside]

II. Using Digitized Newspaper Archives for Historical Research [20 minutes]

1. Provide students with link to [ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender](#) [access provided by the Philadelphia Free Library].
2. Brainstorm three search terms based on the essential questions of the unit.
Possible search terms include: Korea + African American*+ soldiers
*This is a good place to discuss racial terminology of the time and why alternate search terms like "Black" "Negro" "Tan" and "Colored" might also yield results.
3. Divide the class into groups of three and using the search terms have them find an article with a positive tone, a negative tone, and a neutral tone. Have them enter their articles in

a google spreadsheet including the author (if identified), headline, and date of article. Students should also provide a link to the .pdf of the article and a one sentence description of the article's *purpose*.

III. Drawing Preliminary Conclusions [20 minutes]

1. Ask students which type of article (positive, negative, or neutral) was hardest to find. How might they explain this? [Consider that purpose and audience]
2. Based solely on the headlines have students write a six word summary of African American experience in Korea from a positive, negative, or neutral perspective.

HW: Read pages 1-7 of Thurgood Marshall, [“Draft of Report on Korea,”](#) March 12, 1951 and examine [“Summary of Courts Martial in Korea.”](#) Assorted charts. March 1, 1951. Reproduced by Library of Congress.

Answer the following questions:

1. What evidence does Marshall provide that African American soldiers were treated unjustly by the military justice system in Korea?
2. Based on the charts, write one conclusion that can be drawn about race and courts martial in Korea and provide one piece of evidence (data) that supports your conclusion.
3. To what extent di Marshall's report support or clash with the newspaper articles you found in class, explain?