

THE LOCKE SOCIETY

LIFE, LIBERTY & EDUCATION



Unit

Topic

World War II

Tuskegee Airmen

Lesson Plan

Aim

To identify the lessons taught to us from the Tuskegee Airmen by analyzing the challenges they overcame.

Rationale

The Tuskegee Airmen are among America's greatest heroes whose stories must not be forgotten. It is essential that their efforts and accomplishments are recognized in our great history, for they are the ideal role models for all young students. The challenges of segregation, discrimination, and prejudice were immensely discouraging, but these individuals who so strongly believed in the promise of America were motivated by their own dreams and passions to overcome these obstacles. The Tuskegee heroes fought valiantly in World War II and the wars that followed, with many earning the Distinguished Flying Cross and other honors. This lesson introduces students to just three of the many heroic airmen whose inspirational stories must be heard.

Student Learning Objectives

Students will be able to identify the physical and psychological challenges faced by the Tuskegee Airmen by reading their biographies.

Students will be able to collaborate with peers to identify the most significant challenges and the lessons taught to us by these Tuskegee Airmen.

Civics Connection

- How can one change, strengthen, or improve upon a social, political, or economic standing?
- How does this history influence the present?

*See the *Civics Connection Through Questioning* guide in *Civics* for more ideas.

Vocabulary

Tuskegee Airmen	Discrimination
Tuskegee Institute	Executive Order 8802
Segregation	Executive Order 9981



Materials and Resources

1. Text: *The Tuskegee Airmen*

Source: Written by The Locke Society using the following resources: Museum of Aviation:

https://museumofaviation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Museum-of-Aviation-Tuskegee-Airmen-Teacher-Guide_10-Nov-2011.pdf; Library of Congress: <https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.44004/mv0001001.stream>
<https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.44004/pageturner?ID=pm0001001&page=1>; National Archives: https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/a_people_at_war/new_roles/99th_pursuit_squadron.html; U.S. Air Force: <https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Biographies/Display/Article/107298/general-benjamin-oliver-davis-jr/>; National Park Service: https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee_airmen/featured_individuals.html; Military.com: <https://www.military.com/history/gen-benjamin-o-davis-jr.html>; Encyclopedia of Alabama: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-7497>; Redtail.org: <https://www.redtail.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Fifty-Two-Misconceptions-About-the-Tuskegee-Airmen.pdf>; History.com <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tuskegee-airmen#:~:text=The%20Tuskegee%20Airmen%20were%20the,Africa%20during%20World%20War%20II.>; Wikipedia Images

2. Handout: The Tuskegee Airmen

Procedure

Do Now:

Thinking about the time period (1930's – 1940's), interpret the meaning of this quote in the context of America's own progress. What needs to be done to move towards unity during this time? What are the challenges to achieving unity? How is this quote relevant today?

“The point in history at which we stand is full of promise and danger. The world will either move forward toward unity and widely shared prosperity - or it will move apart.” -Franklin D. Roosevelt

Lesson:

The teacher will review the circumstances of segregation, discrimination, and prejudice with the class. Next, the teacher will discuss the threat of World War II and provide background information of the rising heroes from Tuskegee, and define key vocabulary terms, including both executive orders. The teacher will read the background information with students, and then direct them to read and annotate each mini-biography independently. While annotating, the teacher will instruct students to note the most significant challenge faced by each airmen.

Collaborative/Independent Work:

Before students begin working in groups of 2-4 to complete the worksheet on the Tuskegee Airmen, the teacher will review the purpose and directions. The teacher will make sure students understand the difference between physical and psychological challenges by doing at least one example each together with the class. All students must have notes for themselves from the challenges chart, and there must be a group consensus for the second chart in which they will determine the most significant challenge, how it was met, and the lesson taught by each airmen.

Share:

Students will share their responses with the class, noting similarities and differences, and explaining the reason for their choices.

Close:

Students will reflect on the Tuskegee Airmen and the lesson by responding to the following questions:

What is the overall lesson taught to us by the Tuskegee Airmen? How is it relevant to us today?
Why is it important that the Tuskegee Airmen are remembered and honored in our history?



Modifications

- The teacher may require students to conduct their own research of the Tuskegee Airmen. Students or groups may be assigned an individual airman to research and share with the class.
- The teacher may provide a word box/examples of different physical and psychological challenges that students can sort into the correct category.

Extension

Oral History: Students will listen to and watch the interview of Tuskegee Airman Lee A. Archer Jr. with the Veteran's History Project from the Library of Congress. Students will discuss how seeing and hearing Archer tell his story in person changes their experience in learning about him. View the interview here:

<https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.44004/mv0001001.stream>

Notes

**Use discretion for activities according to what is appropriate for your class.*



The Tuskegee Airmen



In 1939, at the beginning of World War II, America started to prepare for a possible war that they knew would be fought differently than those previous. The Air Force was going to have an extremely important role in fighting this war. Many people wanted to become pilots and join the fight for freedom, including black Americans who themselves were newly free.

At this time America was segregated, and black Americans were still struggling with equality amidst discrimination and prejudice. Segregation not only existed in communities including schools, transportation, and restaurants, but it was also present in the military. Black Americans were not permitted to fly planes in the military, but those who believed in themselves, and others who believed in them, ended that unjust rule. The challenges faced by black Americans were overcome with strength, determination, confidence, teamwork, and pride.

Lee A. Archer Jr.



Lee A. Archer Jr. was born on September 6, 1919 in Yonkers, New York. Originally majoring in international relations at New York University, his passion and goal was to fly airplanes. Inspired by the aviators of World War I and their heroic stories, Archer was determined to be an American hero of the skies. As the threat of World War II grew closer, Archer knew his chance to fight for America had come.

Not discouraged by segregation, Archer went to join the Army Air Corps, took the test, did very well and waited, but never received a call. Upon hearing the news that his white friends heard back, he sought an explanation and was informed that he would never be called as there were no black units, nor was there going to be one. This response did not stop Archer from serving his country, nor did it seem to shake his belief in the promise of America. With his voluntary enlisting, Archer



became a member of the infantry. Beginning his training in New York, Archer soon was moved to Georgia where he experienced his first real “shock” of discrimination. He shares that while he experienced segregation in New York, it was nothing like Georgia where segregation came with deadly threats.

In Georgia, Archer was a member of the 16th Battalion, an all-black battalion which was segregated in location and personnel. It was located at the edge of the base, and it took them a ten-minute drive just to get to the main base; even military buses were segregated.

Archer learned Morse Code and excelled so greatly that he became an instructor in radio code and field communications. While an instructor, he found out about the opportunity to fly through the Tuskegee Program. He found out in September 1942, accepted the opportunity immediately, and in December he was authorized to go to Tuskegee.

The CPTP (Civilian Pilot Training Program) was created to teach young college graduates how to fly so that in the event of war, they could be trained as pilots rapidly. The government refused to have any black students in this program; Congress would not appropriate money for it. It was not until Public Law 18 was passed that brought the program to six black colleges, including Tuskegee.

After nine months at the Tuskegee Institute, Archer graduated first in his class, got his wings, and was commissioned second lieutenant. He was assigned to the 302^d Fighter Squadron of the 332d Fighter Group and flew the Curtis P-40 *Warhawk*. In 1944, Archer was assigned to Italy where he flew “convoy escort, scrambles, reconnaissance, and strafing missions to cover Allied forces pinned down on the beaches of Anzio.” Soon after, Archer’s group was transferred to the 306th Fighter Wing and “flew cover and escort for numerous long-range bomber missions as well as strafing missions against enemy landing zones and troops on the march. Finally, as one of the ‘red-tailed angels’ flying the North American P-51 *Mustang*, Archer flew 169 combat missions over more than 11 countries, scoring at least 5 aerial victories.”

Archer returned to Tuskegee Army Air Field as Chief of the Instrument Instructor School. He retired as a lieutenant colonel after 29 years of service, with having earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and other special citations from Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. Archer’s commitment to excellence inspires so many to believe in and work hard for the American dream. His courage, skill, and perseverance has made him a remarkable role model for Americans today.



Charles Alfred “Chief” Anderson



Charles “Chief” Anderson was born on February 9, 1907 in Pennsylvania. Growing up, Anderson was fascinated by airplanes. When he was young, he saved money so that he could one day take lessons to learn how to fly. Although he could not find a school that would accept him as a student, he did not let that stop him from achieving his dream. Anderson learned about aviation wherever he could, building a wealth of knowledge of airplanes, but wanting to learn how to fly, he purchased his own plane and found a teacher who would give him lessons. Anderson learned privately from pilots Russell Thaw and Ernst Buehl who played key roles in helping Anderson on his way to becoming a licensed pilot. In 1929, Anderson earned his private pilot’s license. Three years later, he became one of the first black Americans to hold a commercial pilot’s license.

In 1933, Anderson and his friend, Dr. Albert Forsythe, were the first black Americans to make a transcontinental round-trip flight across the United States. In 1940, Anderson became the head of the Civilian Pilot Training Program at the Tuskegee Institute. He created and taught courses to aspiring pilots, earning him the nickname, “Chief.”

In 1941, Anderson had the honor of taking First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt for a ride in an airplane. The President and his wife supported the efforts to build training grounds for black Americans. A few months before her visit, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the establishment of the first black flying unit which was called the 99th Pursuit Squadron, and would become famous for its success.

After World War II, Anderson continued to train black and white students under the G.I. Bill, and worked on aircraft maintenance. Years later, in 1967, he helped to establish a summer flight academy for children and young adults.

Anderson died peacefully on April 13, 1996. A man of determination and proof that dreams can come true, he inspired many black Americans to pursue careers in aviation. Anderson was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame and will forever be known as the “Father of African American Aviation.”

Benjamin O. Davis Jr.

Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was born on December 18, 1912 in Washington, D.C. His father, Benjamin Davis Sr. was the first black American general in the U.S. Army and experienced the prejudice and discrimination that his son would also face. Knowing the challenges ahead, Benjamin Davis Sr. instilled courage and perseverance in his son.



In 1932, Rep. Oscar S. De Priest, a Republican congressman, the first black American elected to Congress in the twentieth century, nominated Davis Jr. to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and he was the first black American admitted since the Reconstruction era. There, his determination to fly airplanes grew, but the Army Air Corps would not allow him to train as a pilot even though he performed in the top of his class. (He ranked 35th out of 267 members in the class of 1936.) However, when Davis Sr. was promoted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to brigadier general, making him the first black American general in the U.S. Army, the President also ordered the Army Air Corps to develop a flying program for African Americans. Davis Jr. soon made his way to the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama where he would continue to make history.

In January 1941, the 99th Pursuit Squadron was formed from the Tuskegee Institute. Davis Jr. became the commanding officer of the 99th Squadron which flew over 3,000 missions in Europe during World War II and destroyed nearly 300 enemy aircraft. Eighty-eight members of the group received the Distinguished Flying Cross. His incredible leadership was essential in the success of the Tuskegee Program and America's efforts in World War II.

Sources:

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National Archives:

https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/a_people_at_war/new_roles/99th_pursuit_squadron.html

U.S. Air Force:

<https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Biographies/Display/Article/107298/general-benjamin-oliver-davis-jr/>

National Park Service:

https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee_airmen/featured_individuals.html

Military.com:

<https://www.military.com/history/gen-benjamin-o-davis-jr.html>

Encyclopedia of Alabama:

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-7497>

Redtail.org:

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History.com

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tuskegee-airmen#:~:text=The%20Tuskegee%20Airmen%20were%20the,Africa%20during%20World%20War%20II.>

Wikipedia Images



The Tuskegee Airmen

A challenge can be a physical obstacle (something put in place to stop you from doing what you intend), and it can also be psychological (something that tells you that you can't do what you intend). The Tuskegee Airmen faced both physical and psychological obstacles in their lives, especially when it came to flying airplanes for the United States military. Their legacy and heroism is forever honored.

Directions: On the chart below, list the different physical and psychological obstacles that the Tuskegee Airmen faced. Use the resources provided and additional research if possible.

Physical	Psychological



Directions: On the chart below, list the specific challenge that you think was the most significant faced by each Tuskegee Airmen and how he overcame it. In the last column, write down at least one lesson we have learned from each individual.

Tuskegee Airman	What was his most significant challenge?	How did he overcome this challenge?	What is the lesson we have learned from this individual?
<p>Charles "Chief" Anderson</p> 			
<p>Benjamin O. Davis Jr.</p> 			
<p>Lee A. Archer Jr.</p> 			

