

# The Tuskegee Airmen and the Civil Rights Movement

C3 Inquiry Arc



## LESSON PLAN OVERVIEW

<b>Compelling Question</b>	What impact did the efforts of marginalized groups in America during World War II have on the Civil Rights Movement?
<b>Timeframe</b>	1-2 Weeks
<b>Lesson Summary</b>	<p>Begin the project by watching the film <i>The Tuskegee Airmen</i> (produced 1995). Introduce the compelling question before the film so that students are already thinking about potential answers. Students will complete a guided worksheet based on the compelling and supporting questions as they watch the film.</p> <p>After watching the film, the project moves into a Jigsaw activity focused on content and sources. The Jigsaw will expose students to a variety of primary and secondary sources that reinforce the compelling and supporting questions.</p> <p>Students will then create a timeline reinforcing dimensions 2 and 3 of the C3 Framework. The timeline will connect the Civil Rights Movement and the service of the Tuskegee Airmen. Students will next complete a comparative analysis of marginalized groups and their experiences during World War II both abroad and in the United States. For the final activity of the C3 Inquiry Arc, students will create a museum exhibit or short documentary about the Tuskegee Airmen and other marginalized groups from the World War II era.</p>

## Learning Standards, Objectives, & Materials

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### Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Standards Alignment

### American History Learning Standards for High School that align with this project:

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#### HIGH SCHOOL AMERICAN HISTORY

##### TOPIC: Historical Thinking and Skills

- **Content Statement 1:** The use of primary and secondary sources of information includes an examination of the credibility of each source.

##### TOPIC: From Isolation to World War (1930-1945)

- **Content Statement 21:** United States policy and mobilization of its economic and military resources during World War II affected American society. Despite mistreatment, marginalized groups played important roles in the war effort while continuing to protest unfair treatment.

## Common Core Standards Alignment

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-12.2-4

- Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-12.1-10

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-12.6-9

- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamic

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## Objectives & Materials

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will develop the following skills over the course of this project:
- **Critical Thinking:** Consider how the Tuskegee Airmen and other marginalized groups positively impacted the war effort, while dealing with discrimination both on the home front and abroad.
- **Collaboration:** Work together during the Jigsaw activity to obtain all necessary information.
- **Source Analysis:** Opportunities throughout to review and analyze primary and secondary sources.
- **Presentation:** Creation of a museum display or short documentary.
- **Creativity:** Opportunities to share their research and ideas in creative ways.

### MATERIALS

- Internet Access (at home or in classroom)
- Student Worksheets (provided)
- Primary & Secondary Source Documents

## LEADING THE C3 INQUIRY ARC

### Milestone 1

<u>Compelling Question:</u>	<u>Primary / Secondary Sources:</u>	<u>Tasks, Activities, or Learning Experiences:</u>	<u>Requirements:</u>
What impact did the efforts of marginalized groups in the United States during World War II have on the Civil Rights Movement?	<i>The Tuskegee Airmen</i> (1995 Film)	Students complete guided worksheet while watching <i>The Tuskegee Airmen</i> .	Students watch the film and complete the guided worksheet. Students write at least a half-page explaining what they think about the compelling question.

### Milestone 2

<u>Supporting Question:</u>	<u>Primary / Secondary Sources:</u>	<u>Tasks, Activities, or Learning Experiences:</u>	<u>Requirements:</u>
How did the experiences of the Tuskegee Airmen challenge perceptions of African Americans in American society during and after WWII?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<a href="#">Executive Order 9981</a></li> <li>-<a href="#">Tuskegee Pilots Historical Newspaper Coverage</a></li> <li>-<a href="#">"In recognition of the role of black veterans in the Civil Rights Movement" – NAACP Resolution</a></li> <li>-<i>Half-American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad</i> – Matthew F. Delmont</li> </ul>	Students will examine the sources by breaking up into small groups and doing a Jigsaw activity. Students will have a worksheet to help them find the key pieces of information that they need to succeed.	<p>Students examine the sources in their Jigsaws. Working together they will share information and complete worksheets. Specific questions to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What challenges did the Tuskegee Airmen face?</li> <li>-What were their major successes?</li> <li>-How did they change the opinions and perceptions of those around them?</li> <li>-How did those changing perceptions affect society when they returned home?</li> </ul>

### Milestone 3

<p><b><u>Supporting Question:</u></b></p> <p>How did the actions and national recognition of the Tuskegee Airmen contribute to the Civil Rights Movement in the years following the war?</p>	<p><b><u>Primary / Secondary Sources:</u></b></p> <p>-<a href="#">A. Philip Randolph's correspondence with the White House</a>          -<a href="#">African Americans at War: Fighting Two Battles</a> – Library of Congress</p>	<p><b><u>Tasks, Activities, or Learning Experiences:</u></b></p> <p>Students will create a timeline of events between the Tuskegee Airmen and the Civil Rights Movement. Students will compare different events and explain how they influenced the Civil Rights Movement. The timeline should range from 1939-1970.</p>	<p><b><u>Requirements:</u></b></p> <p>Students will need to have an extensive timeline highlighting key battles and events of the Tuskegee Airmen. Timeline will also include some of the key events of the Civil Rights Movement with connections to the Tuskegee Airmen. Reflection should be at least 200 words with points relating back to the compelling questions.</p>
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### Milestone 4

<p><b><u>Supporting Question:</u></b></p> <p>What obstacles and discrimination did the Tuskegee Airmen face both within the military and upon returning home after WWII?</p>	<p><b><u>Primary / Secondary Sources:</u></b></p> <p>-<a href="#">Plessy v. Ferguson</a>          -<a href="#">Executive Order 9066</a> – National Archives          -<a href="#">Japanese American Primary Sources</a> – Florida Atlantic University Archives          -<a href="#">Gender on the Home Front</a>          -National WWII Museum          -<a href="#">Native Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces</a> - National Museum of the American Indian</p>	<p><b><u>Tasks, Activities, or Learning Experiences:</u></b></p> <p>Students will complete a comparative analysis of how marginalized groups were treated during WWII. Students will analyze primary sources to find examples of treatment, and how they contributed to the war effort.</p>	<p><b><u>Requirements:</u></b></p> <p>Students use critical analysis to compare different experiences of marginalized groups. Comparative analysis should highlight other marginalized groups such as Japanese American soldiers and Native American soldiers. Analysis should be at least 500 words and cite at least three sources.</p>
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### Milestone 5: Taking Action

<u>Compelling Question:</u>	<u>Primary / Secondary Sources:</u>	<u>Tasks, Activities, or Learning Experiences:</u>	<u>Requirements:</u>
<p>What impact did the efforts of marginalized groups in the United States during World War II have on the Civil Rights Movement?</p>		<p>Students will create one of the following to demonstrate their learning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A small museum exhibit about the role of the Tuskegee Airmen, or another marginalized group, both during and after their military service. This can include posters, timelines of their accomplishments, and individual profiles.</li> <li>2. A short documentary focused on the contributions of the Tuskegee Airmen, as well as other marginalized groups to both the WWII effort and the Civil Rights Movement.</li> </ol>	<p>Students create either a museum exhibit or short documentary highlighting the service of marginalized groups both during WWII and after.</p>

### Milestone 6: Connect with the [National Veterans Memorial and Museum \(NVMM\)](#)

Educators can contact the NVMM Education Department to set up a time to virtually meet with an educator at the museum to discuss current exhibits, specifically the Tuskegee Airmen Alcove of the NVMM.

As part of Milestone 5, students can share their ideas for a museum exhibit with the NVMM. We are excited to hear your ideas and determine ways to incorporate those suggestions into our exhibits!

Contact us at [education@nationalvmm.org](mailto:education@nationalvmm.org) or 614-427-1126.



## ***The Tuskegee Airmen (1995) Film Worksheet***

The film *The Tuskegee Airmen* (1995) is a historical drama that tells the story of the first African American fighter squadron in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II. The film highlights the challenges and triumphs of the pilots as they overcame racial discrimination to become one of the most respected fighter groups in the war. As you watch, pay attention to the key events, characters, and themes portrayed in the movie.

**Fill in the Blank:** Fill in the blank with the correct words.

1. The Tuskegee Airmen were part of the United States \_\_\_\_\_ during World War II.
2. The main character, Hannibal Lee, trained at the \_\_\_\_\_ Institute.
3. The Airmen faced \_\_\_\_\_ from many of their white counterparts.
4. The squadron's primary aircraft was the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Airmen proved themselves in combat by successfully escorting \_\_\_\_\_ bombers on missions.

**Word Bank:** discrimination, Army Air Corps, Tuskegee, B-17, P-51 Mustang

**Multiple Choice Questions:** Choose the correct answer from the choices for each question.

1. Who was the commanding officer of the Tuskegee Airmen in the film?
  - a) General George Patton
  - b) Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr.
  - c) Major Richard Winters
  - d) Captain James T. Kirk
2. What was a significant achievement of the Tuskegee Airmen during the war?
  - a) Inventing new flying techniques
  - b) Becoming the first astronauts
  - c) Successfully escorting bombers without losing any to enemy fighters
  - d) Winning a gold medal at the Olympics
3. The Tuskegee Airmen were initially trained to fly which type of aircraft?
  - a) B-52 Bomber
  - b) P-40 Warhawk
  - c) F-16 Fighting Falcon
  - d) C-130 Hercules
4. What was one of the main challenges faced by the Tuskegee Airmen besides combat?
  - a) Lack of fuel
  - b) Racial prejudice and segregation
  - c) Poor weather conditions
  - d) Mechanical failures
5. How did the performance of the Tuskegee Airmen impact the future of the U.S. military?
  - a) It led to the integration of the U.S. armed forces
  - b) It resulted in the disbandment of the Air Corps
  - c) It caused a decrease in pilot training programs
  - d) It increased the number of segregated units



**Open Ended Questions:** Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. Describe how the Tuskegee Airmen's achievements challenged racial stereotypes during World War II.
2. Discuss the significance of the leadership shown by Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr. in the film.
3. How did the success of the Tuskegee Airmen contribute to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States?

## Answer Key

### Fill in the Blank:

1. Army Air Corps
2. Tuskegee
3. discrimination
4. P-51 Mustang
5. B-17

### Multiple Choice Questions:

1. b) Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr.
2. c) Successfully escorting bombers without losing any to enemy fighters
3. b) P-40 Warhawk
4. b) Racial prejudice and segregation
5. a) It led to the integration of the U.S. armed forces

### Open Ended Questions:

1. The Tuskegee Airmen's achievements challenged racial stereotypes by demonstrating that African-American pilots could perform as well as or better than their white counterparts, proving their skills and bravery in combat.
2. Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr.'s leadership was significant as he inspired confidence and discipline among the pilots, helping them to excel despite the challenges of racism and segregation.
3. The success of the Tuskegee Airmen showed that integration was possible and effective, providing a powerful argument for the desegregation of the U.S. military and contributing to the broader Civil Rights Movement by challenging discriminatory practices.

## **Jigsaw Activity**

### **Group 1: Executive Order 9981**

- **Source Overview:** This executive order, signed by President Harry S. Truman in 1948, officially desegregated the U.S. Armed Forces.
- **Key Focus:** How the order impacted racial segregation in the military and what it meant for African American soldiers.
- **Questions to Discuss:**
  - What were the goals of Executive Order 9981?
  - Why was this order significant for African American veterans and military personnel?
  - How did the order contribute to the broader civil rights movement?

### **Group 2: Tuskegee Pilots - Historical Newspaper Coverage**

- **Source Overview:** Newspaper articles from the 1940s covering the exploits and challenges faced by the Tuskegee Airmen.
- **Key Focus:** Public perception of African American pilots during World War II, as well as challenges they faced both in and out of combat.
- **Questions to Discuss:**
  - What were the key themes in the newspaper coverage of the Tuskegee Airmen?
  - How did the media portray the Tuskegee Airmen's achievements or struggles?
  - How did media coverage influence public opinion about African American military service?

### **Group 3: *Half American: The Heroic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad***

- **Source Overview:** A book recounting how Black Americans had to fight for the right to combat racism abroad because of the racism at home.
- **Key Focus:** The courage and resilience of African American service members in overcoming prejudice and proving their worth.
- **Questions to Discuss:**
  - How did the Tuskegee Airmen and others challenge stereotypes about African Americans and combat?
  - What role did the African American service members play in the overall success of World War II?
  - What hardships did African American service members endure, and how did they overcome them?

**Group 4:** [Testimonies from the NAACP on African American Veterans](#)

- **Source Overview:** Personal accounts and testimonies collected by the NAACP about the experiences of African American veterans, especially after World War II.
- **Key Focus:** The experiences of African American soldiers returning home from World War II and the ongoing fight for equality and civil rights.
- **Questions to Discuss:**
  - What are some of the challenges African American veterans faced when they returned home from war?
  - How did the NAACP support African American veterans in their post-war struggles?
  - How do these testimonies connect to the broader civil rights struggle in the U.S.?