

Double V and Black Americans' Fight for Equality



Lesson Plan: Double V and Black Americans' Fight for Equality

Overview: The civil rights initiative during World War II known as the Double V campaign advocated for victories over fascism abroad and racial injustice in the United States. The movement, launched by an influential Black newspaper, called out discrimination and segregation faced by Black workers and military personnel. The campaign spotlighted the contradiction of fighting for freedom abroad while enduring racial oppression here in the U.S. It fueled the growing civil rights movement and underscored the push for social justice on both global and national fronts.

Subjects: U.S. History, World History, Ethnic Studies, African American History

- World War II Unit in U.S. History, World History

Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson Duration:

- One Class period, 45-60 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What was the impact at home and abroad of the Double V campaign during World War II?
- How did the Double V campaign serve as a catalyst for the civil rights movement?

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Explain the impact of the Double V campaign during World War II at home and abroad, including how it relates to the civil rights movement.
- Analyze Executive Orders 8802 and 9981 to evaluate the impact they had on civil rights movement.
- Identify factors that influenced President Truman to desegregate the military.

Materials:

- **Preparation:** Laminate (optional), print, and cut into strips: [Why Should We March? Excerpt Strips: Double V](#). Each student will need a strip.
 - There are 20 strips on the handout. Depending on class size, you may need to print twice that amount.
- Retro Report video “[Beyond the Battlefield: Double V and Black Americans' Fight for Equality](#)” ([Transcript](#))
- [Student Activity](#) handout
 - [Handkerchief with Double V Campaign design](#)
 - This can also be found as part of the collection of the [Double Victory: The African American Military Experience Exhibition](#) | Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

- [Why Should We March?](#) | Library of Congress
- [Executive Order 8802: Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry \(1941\)](#) | National Archives
- [Executive Order 9981: Desegregation of the Armed Forces \(1948\)](#) | National Archives
- Select “File>Make a Copy” to eliminate, edit or reorder any of the modular sections on the activity handout.

Procedure:

1. Distribute the Student Activity handout and have students complete the pre-assessment by individually determining and indicating which of the following best describes their knowledge of the term Double V:
 - a. It is a new term
 - b. I have heard of the term
 - c. I know the term and can use it
 - d. I know the term and can teach it
2. Students will then analyze an image of an artifact by individually answering questions provided on the activity handout, followed by a structured partner discussion.
 - a. Describe the image as if you were explaining it to someone who can't see it. Address the following as best you can in your description:
 - i. What is this item and why might it have been created?
 - ii. Who might have used it and for what purpose? List reasons you think so.
 1. From: [Analyze an Artifact](#) | National Archives
 2. Have students [examine the artifact](#) and explain what more they learned about it.
 - b. Find a partner and decide who is Partner A and Partner B. Then, answer the question “What do you think the “V”s represent and why?” aloud using the provided framework:
 - i. Partner A: I think the first V is for “Victory _____” and the second V is for _____ because _____.
 - ii. Partner B: That's interesting. _____ and _____. Therefore, _____.
 - c. Provide an opportunity for pairs of students to share their responses with the class, if they wish.
3. Next, inform students that the image is that of a handkerchief with the Double V Campaign design (from the Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, [Double Victory: The African American Military Experience Exhibition](#)). According to the exhibition, “In 1942 The Pittsburgh Courier, an African American newspaper, launched the Double Victory Campaign, which stood for ‘Victory Abroad and Victory at Home.’ Victory abroad championed military success against fascism overseas, and victory at home demanded equality for African Americans in the United States.”
 - a. Ask students if anyone guessed correctly.
 - i. Optional: As needed, go over select vocabulary words like [fascism](#), [Jim Crow](#) and [desegregate](#).
 - ii. Consider providing students with a [Frayer Model](#) graphic organizer and instructing them to define and then identify facts/characteristics and examples of each term.
4. Next, students will analyze the document [Why Should We March?](#) using the “Book Bits” strategy.

- a. Give each student an excerpt from the document in the form of a strip ([Why Should We March? Excerpt Strips: Double V](#)).
 - i. The strips are not in order.
 - b. Instruct students to think about their individual excerpt strip to predict how the excerpt they have might relate to other ones.
 - c. Next, students will have a designated amount of time to move around the room and read their excerpt to at least 4-5 other people. Tell students that they should not discuss the excerpts. All they should do is read it to a classmate and listen as their classmate reads theirs.
 - i. Consider playing music from the World War II era. (For ideas, see [American Music Goes to War](#) | The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History; [Songs of the Second World War](#) | Recorded Sound Archives, Florida Atlantic University)
 - d. Once students have had the opportunity to hear most of the excerpts, have them return to their seats.
 - e. Students will engage in a quick [Think-Pair-Share](#), trying to predict what the text is about based on the different excerpts they heard.
 - i. For more information, see [Tip of the Week - Book Bits](#) | History Tech, Glenn Wiebe
 - f. Have students view the full “[Why Should We March](#)” document and determine how accurate their predictions were. [Full link here](#).
5. Inform students that they will watch the Retro Report film “[Beyond the Battlefield: Double V and Black Americans’ Fight for Equality](#)” and fill out the corresponding section of the activity handout.
- a. As needed, pause the video to check for understanding, or review as a class after the video.
6. Inform students that they will be reading and analyzing the background to and excerpts from two Executive Orders. Answer questions related to their assigned excerpts on the student activity handout.
- a. [Executive Order 8802: Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry \(1941\)](#) | National Archives
 - i. Who was A. Philip Randolph? What was his goal?
 - ii. What tactics did Randolph and others use to try to achieve their goals?
 - iii. What did this Executive Order do? How was it supposed to be enforced?
 - iv. Hypothesize why this Executive Order may not have been effective in preventing and eliminating segregation.
 - b. [Executive Order 9981: Desegregation of the Armed Forces \(1948\)](#) | National Archives
 - i. What was the purpose of this Executive Order? How did it differ from Executive Order 8802?
 - ii. How did the service of Black Americans during World War II affect this decision?
 - iii. Why might this Executive Order have been more effective in achieving its goal than Executive Order 8802? Think of the differences in what the order did, whom it affected and the time period.
 - c. Review with students, as needed: [What is a primary source?](#) | Library of Congress (Frequently Asked Questions)
 - i. [Analyze a Written Document](#) | National Archives

7. Wrap-up: have students complete the post-assessment by individually determining and indicating which of the following best describes their knowledge of the phrase Double V Campaign, and then craft a short summary paragraph that explains the campaign's goals, actions and outcomes.

Extension Activities:

1. Explore the timeline for Black Women Veterans and give examples of what is meant by "Victory at Home and Abroad."
 - a. [Victory at Home and Abroad: African American Army Nurses in World War II](#) | Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture
2. [Discover Colonel Young's Protest Ride for Equality and Country: A Lightning Lesson from Teaching with Historic Places, featuring the historic Colonel Charles Young House](#) | National Park Service
3. [Harry S Truman and Civil Rights](#) | National Park Service
4. Explore the [Double Victory: The African American Military Experience Exhibition](#) collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Some ideas:
 - a. Use the map. Have students scroll over "Red Ball Express" and determine Who, Where and What does this refer to? Then have them look over "Tank Battalions" and determine Where, Who, and When?
 - b. Read the following and identify the contributions of: [Jackie Robinson and the "Double V" Campaign](#), [Joe Louis' Sacrifice and Service for Equality](#), [Breaking the Color Barrier in the Trenches](#), [Victory at Home and Abroad: African American Army Nurses in WWII](#)
5. Read [The Freeman Field Mutiny](#) | The National World War II Museum, New Orleans, and answer the question: What was the Freeman Field Mutiny?
6. Listen to ["Equality of Treatment and Opportunity": Executive Order 9981](#), then create a biographical sketch for at least three veterans.
 - a. Serving Our Voices: Stories from the Veterans History Project, Library of Congress

Relevant Standards/ Frameworks:

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies

- **D1.1.9-12.** Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in the field.
- **D2.Civ.8.9-12.** Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.
- **D2.Civ.14.9-12.** Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.
- **D2.His.1.9-12.** Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- **D2.His.2.9-12.** Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.
- **D2.His.3.9-12.** Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.
- **D2.His.4.9-12.** Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

Common Core Literacy Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary

and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

About the Author:

Rebekkah Morrow is a professor emeritus of American History and is in her 37th year as a Social Studies educator. She is a National Constitution Center Constitutional fellow, a Pulitzer Center fellow, an iCivics board member and a Retro Report Teacher Ambassador. She holds a master's degree in Instructional Leadership and Curriculum with an emphasis in Political Science from the University of Oklahoma.