

The Massachusetts 54th Colored Infantry Unit

The First Union Black Regiment of the
Civil War

Boston Institute Project
May 2007

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Standards:

4th Grade Standards:

A – Level 2 - Determine how the issue of slavery caused political and economic tensions between government policy and people's beliefs (i.e., abolitionists, plantation owners, state's rights, and central government)

I - Identify rights and responsibilities of citizens

D (Process Standard) - Construct and analyze timelines for historical awareness

D (Process Standard) - Utilize primary and secondary source material such as biographies and autobiographies; novels; speeches and letters; and poetry, D – (Process Standard) Incorporate the use of technological resources for historical awareness

I - (Process Standard) Read critically a variety of materials including textbooks, historical documents, newspaper, magazines, and other reference sources for historical awareness

D (Process Standard) - Construct and analyze timelines for historical awareness

5th Grade Standards:

A – Level 1 - Recognize military and non –military leaders from the North and South during the Civil War (i.e., Frederick Douglas, Clara carton, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, Abraham Lincoln Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, and Jefferson Davis)

A – Level 2 – Recognize the rights established by the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments

A – Level 3 – Interpret a primary reading sample

A – Level 2 – Use tools of social science inquiry such a surveys, statistics, maps, and documents

I – Identify the accomplishments of notables who have made contributions to society in the areas of civil rights, women's rights, military actions, and politics

I/D - Chart the course of major events throughout the Civil War

D - Identify examples of rights and responsibilities of citizens

D (Process Standard) - Construct and analyze timelines for historical awareness

D – (Process Standard) Incorporate the use of technological resources for historical awareness

Lesson 1:
Overview of the Massachusetts 54th

Introduction:

Discuss with the students the Emancipation Proclamation, which was the order by President Lincoln that the slaves in the Confederacy were to be freed.

Activity:

Students will view The 54th Massachusetts segment of the video Civil War Journal, published by The History Channel. While watching, students will complete the Massachusetts 54th Activity. (See attached.)

Teacher note: The video contains certain racial derogatory terms that you will need to point out to your students before viewing!

Conclusion: Class discussion of their reaction to the video.

Lesson 2:
Power Point on Massachusetts 54th

Introduction:

Students will check their answers to the video activity with a partner. As a group activity, answers will be verified orally by rotating around the room, giving each pair a chance to share their responses.

Activity:

View the prepared power point on the Massachusetts 54th. Students will take notes on the provided note sheets. (If power point is not available, teacher may read the book 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, published by Footsteps – A Cobblestone Publication.)

Conclusion:

The students will create a step book using their note sheets and information gained. The book will include a title page and five pages consisting of a fact and an accompanying picture on each page.

Lesson 3:

Reading of Primary Sources:

Introduction:

Teacher will clarify any questions the students still have about the Mass. 54th.

Five questions teachers might ask:

1. Why were black soldiers not allowed in the army before 1863?
2. What was the Massachusetts 54th?
3. Why is the Massachusetts 54th so important to history?
4. Of which battles were the Massachusetts 54th a part?
5. Who were the leaders of the Massachusetts 54th?

Five questions the students may possibly ask:

1. Why would the Union not let black men fight at first?
2. Who made that rule?
3. Why did black men want to fight so badly?
4. How were the black soldiers treated differently?
5. Did the soldiers win any important battles?

Activity:

The teacher will read two primary sources.

First, a letter from a soldier:

H.I.W.

July 23, 1864

Morris Island, South Carolina

Secondly, letters from the front from the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, p. 22 & 23.

A discussion will follow.

Conclusion:

Students will have the choice of writing an imaginary diary entry or writing a poem.

Lesson 4:
Historical Reading & Timeline

Introduction:

Share products from previous day.

Activity:

Brainstorm with class the main events involving the 54th Massachusetts.

Conclusion:

Students will be given a blank timeline. Students will then place the events in chronological order on the timeline. Students may add other events if they choose.

Key events are attached.

Key Civil War Events for Timeline
(From 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry)

1861 - The Civil War begins in Charleston, South Carolina, when Confederate Guns fire on Fort Sumter on April 12.

1862 - The first black regiments are organized. Most of the soldiers are freed slaves in Southern areas held by Union forces.

1862 - In September, President Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, which frees the slaves in all territories still at war with the Union as of January 1863.

1863 - The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry is organized from January to May. It is the first black regiment recruited in the North.

1863 - On July 16, the 54th takes part in the assault on James Island, South Carolina.

1863 - On July 18, the 54th leads the night assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina.

1864 - On February 20, the 54th faces Confederate forces at Olustee, Florida.

1864 - In November, the 54th battles Confederate forces at Honey Hill, South Carolina.

1865 - On April 18, the 54th fights its last battle of the Civil War at Boykin's Mill, South Carolina.

1865 - The Civil War comes to an end after Confederate generals surrender to Union general Ulysses S. Grant on April 9 and April 26.

The Massachusetts 54th

The Massachusetts 54th was the first Union _____ regiment in the Civil War. These brave men of the 54th Massachusetts _____ Infantry Regiment proved many people wrong. America was a _____ country. A free black was considered a slave without a _____. The northern men enlisted to _____ the union and avenge insult to the _____. Frederick _____ campaigned for Negro enlistment in the army. The Emancipation _____ paved the way for black enlistment.

In recruiting men for the Massachusetts 54th, Governor Andrew wanted black men born _____. Men from other northern states were recruited because there were not enough _____ in Massachusetts. Eli George Biddle became the _____ man in Company A of the 54th. Frederick Douglas's two _____ served for him. The number of men in the Massachusetts 54th was _____. Robert Gould _____ was chosen as the colonel.

Every day, _____ gathered at the camp to watch the black men in blue. In less than 100 days, the 54th got its orders to leave for _____. The first battle was at _____ Island. Afterward, they learned that instead of getting paid \$13 like the white soldiers, they were only going to get paid \$_____, minus \$3 for their uniform.

Next, they marched to Fort _____. The Union thought there were 300 Rebels in the fort. Instead, there were _____ rebels inside. During the attack, Shaw yelled, "Forward, my brave _____!" William Carney was awarded the Medal of _____ for keeping the flag up. Of the 1,000 men, _____ were killed or wounded. Lincoln said that it was doubtful the war would have been won without the involvement of _____ troops. For these men, it was the battle for _____ equality.

Sources

Video – The 54th Massachusetts from The Civil War Journal - The History Channel.

54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Footsteps – African American History. A Cobblestone Publication - January/February 1999.

Photographs from Boston Institute, May, 2007.

www.archives.gov

Key People & Events

Emancipation Proclamation signed - September 1862

54th Massachusetts organized – 1863

Assault on Ft. Wagner - July 18, 1863

Battle of Olustee, Florida - February 20, 1864

Mustered out – September 2, 1865

Frederick Douglass & two sons Lewis & Charles

Abraham Lincoln

Robert Gould Shaw