



Lincoln Lesson Plans

Grade Level:
8-12

Materials

- Student Handout: Primary Source Assignment
- Student Handout: Plan Your Characters
- Student Handout: Plan the Script
- Ideas for Plays about Camp Nelson
- Background Information: Camp Nelson
- Lyrics to "Give Us a Flag"

Technology

- DVD player or computer
- computers with Internet access for research

Vocabulary

abolition
artillery
Confederate
democracy
emancipation
enlistment
equality
falling action
infantry
liberty
recruit
recruitment
re-enactment
rising action
turning point
Union

Give Us a Flag: Black Americans in the Union Army

Length

Five 50-minute class sessions

Concepts/Objectives

- Students will learn what life was like for African Americans who enlisted in the Union army and their families.
- Students will learn that, although Kentucky was a slave-owning state, many Kentuckians opposed slavery and fought for its abolishment.
- Students will learn about the contributions Black Americans made in the struggle to secure freedom for American slaves.

Activities

After examining primary-source documents dealing with Camp Nelson, the Union Army supply depot and recruiting station for African-American soldiers in Jessamine County, Kentucky, students create 1-3 character dialogues/ plays featuring characters who might have been at Camp Nelson in 1864-65.

Lincoln Resources

KET documentary, *I, too, am a Kentuckian*

- Segment 21: Enlisting Black Kentuckians to Fight

Kentucky Life Online segment

- Kentucky's Camp Nelson found at www.ket.org/lincoln/resources.htm

Instructional Strategies and Activities

Introducing the Activity

Day 1: Camp Nelson

Point out, or re-emphasize, that students have spent some time discussing the historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution that state the fundamental values and principles of American representational democracy, e.g., liberty, justice, individual human dignity. However, these fundamental rights were denied to African Americans, and the Civil War was fought, in part, to right that wrong. It was Abraham Lincoln's agenda to rid the world of what he called a "moral, social, and political evil."

Play the song "Give Us a Flag," by Richie Havens. (You can download it from iTunes. A guide to the lyrics is below.) Ask students what is happening in the song. Why did "Old Abe" have "his fears"? (*He thought Kentucky might leave the Union if slaves were allowed to enlist in the Union army so Kentucky slaves were not permitted to enlist until 1864.*) Who is "old Jeff" and why will he hang them? ("*Old Jeff*" is Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. *The Confederacy had announced its intention to hang*



any former slave wearing a Union uniform.) Tell them that 180,000 African Americans served as soldiers in the Civil War, and that 25,000 of them were from Kentucky—the most from any state in the Union.

Show the students video segment 21, Enlisting Black Kentuckians To Fight, from the KET documentary *I, too, am a Kentuckian*, and the **Kentucky Life** video segment on Camp Nelson. After the viewing, as a class brainstorm a list of facts about the camp and the enlistment of African-American soldiers. (More information on Camp Nelson is provided for you below so that you can answer students' questions.) Ask the students about the characters depicted in the Camp Nelson re-enactment. Why was it so important for them to come to “enlist in Mr. Lincoln’s army”? What were the children and the women thinking about as they came into the camp? What about the white soldiers and the women who helped the refugees? Can students come up with a backstory for individual characters?

Day 2: The African-American Experience in Kentucky

Take students to the computer lab to explore the online Patton Museum exhibit, “What was life like in Kentucky before the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves?” This is found at www.generalpatton.org/education/life-before-lincoln/. For more information about Camp Nelson, tell them to move the slider on the interactive timeline/map to 1864 and then click on the blue square below Lexington for information and links about Camp Nelson. However, the entire exhibit is relevant for their understanding and they should be encouraged to explore as much as possible.

As they read through the case studies on the web site, tell them to look for evidence of the following:

- African-American soldiers were treated differently than white soldiers.
- No provisions were made for families of escaped slaves who enlisted.
- Owners were generally unwilling to let their slaves enlist in the army (even though they were supposed to be paid by the army for allowing this).
- No state was more divided by the Civil War than Kentucky.

As a homework assignment, students are to choose one of the primary source documents, print it out, study it, and then write a summary of it and explain how it helps further understanding of African-American experiences in Kentucky.

Day 3: Developing an Imaginative Re-creation of Camp Nelson

Remind students of the re-enactors in the Camp Nelson chapter on the KET documentary. They will have the opportunity to make those people come to life by imagining the stories that might have brought them to Camp Nelson or the experiences they might have had after they arrived. Working in pairs or threes, students will write and perform short dialogues/plays no longer than three minutes. The plays must not contradict what they know about Camp Nelson history.

Tell students their plays can be constructed according to a simple pattern designed to hold the audience’s attention. Write the following on the board:

Rising action: Main problems are introduced, i.e., characters, issues, exposition.

Turning point: The problem or conflict occurs.

Kentucky Academic Content

Academic Expectations

2.14.
2.20
2.22

Program of Studies

Social Studies

Understandings

SS-8-GC-U-3
SS-8-HP-U-1
SS-8-HP-U-3

Skills and Concepts

SS-8-GC-S-3
SS-8-HP-S-1
SS-8-HP-S-2

Arts & Humanities/ Drama

Understandings

AH-8-SA-U-1

Skills and Concepts

AH-8-SA-S-DT2

Core Content

Social Studies

SS-08-1.3.1
SS-08-5.1.1
SS-08-5.1.2
SS-08-5.2.4

Arts & Humanities/ Drama

AH-08-1.3.1
AH-08-4.3.1

Writing for the Lesson

- Each student will write a summary of a primary source document, or a selection from a primary source document, connected to the study of Camp Nelson. They are to choose one of the documents linked to the online Patton Museum exhibit on African-American experience (www.generalpatton.org/education/life-before-lincoln), print it out, study it, and then write a summary of it and explain how it helps us understand the African-American experience in Kentucky.
- Working in groups, students will write a script for a three-minute performance featuring characters who might have been at Camp Nelson and incorporating what they know of Camp Nelson history.

Falling action: Repercussions occur (as a result of the conflict or a resolution to it).

In a short play, what each character wants should be very clear at the outset. Define the problem or conflict as something that gets in the way of the main character getting what he or she wants. This simple structure also works for short stories, novels, and full-length plays.

Divide students into groups of two or three, intermixing skills and interests, and choosing carefully so that each group contains students who are comfortable performing in front of the class. Tell the students that not all students must perform, but all should take part in planning and writing. Give them the rest of the period to discuss ideas and to complete their character plan. (They may choose to complete the Character Plan as homework.)

Make students aware of the following:

- There can be no introductions, no narration, and no jumps in time; that is, the action must be confined to a single time and place. Characters can reveal their names, their location, and the time in dialogue.
- When deciding on actors, students should follow the rules of color-blind casting; that is, students of any race may play African Americans, and African-American students may play characters of any race.
- Students should avoid stereotypes in their characters. The documentary indicates that the major emotion when the first African Americans arrived at the camp was confusion; this was probably true for much of what happened at Camp Nelson. The races hadn't mixed for generations; no one was sure how this new relationship would work. No one knew what to do when the families of the recruits started coming along either. But, that said, there definitely were some bad things that happened at Camp Nelson, and students who have discovered this in their research should be encouraged to explore the incidents for their dramatic potential. (For example, over a hundred refugees died of starvation and exposure when the camp commander expelled them from the camp and burned their houses. When a white officer informed his army superiors what had happened, a formal refugee camp was established with a school, a church, a hospital, and much more.)

Day 4: Writing the Script

If students have not completed the Plan Your Characters handout and are without ideas, assign them a character. (Several ideas are listed below.) Distribute the Planning the Script handout and tell students to use it for prewriting; it's a good idea to jot down their ideas before beginning to write.

Check with the groups as they work to keep students on task, make suggestions, and answer questions. Tell them you expect a clean copy of the script to be turned in the next day, after they have performed.

Be wary of students who might want to depict racist acts or speech. Honor the truth in such depictions, but the emphasis here is on blacks and whites fighting together to abolish slavery and combat racism. If a character makes a racist remark, for example, be sure that a more respected character contradicts the message and corrects the speaker.

Day 5: Performing the Scripts

Set the last day aside for performances. This should be a celebration of the students' work, so keep the responses very positive.

Support/Connections/Resources

Web sites:

Life Before Lincoln

General George Patton Museum

www.generalpatton.org/education/life-before-lincoln

This extremely well designed and informative site attempts to answer the question, "What was life like in Kentucky before the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves?" via an interactive timeline/map and fascinating case studies. Pop-ups on the timeline reveal complete histories and links to primary source documents. Move the slider to 1864 and click on the blue square south of Lexington for information and links about Camp Nelson. Note the tab for case studies at the top of the page.

History of Camp Nelson

Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage State Park

www.campnelson.org/history

Site linked to the main Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage State Park web site tells the fascinating history of Camp Nelson in some detail. Go to www.campnelson.org/colored/ for additional information about African Americans at Camp Nelson.

National Register of Historic Places

www.nps.gov/history/nr/feature/afam/2002/campnelson.htm

History and photos of Camp Nelson

History of African Americans in the Civil War

National Park Service

www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/history/aa_cw_history.htm

An overview of African American soldiers in the Civil War.

Music:

The Colored Volunteer

www.geocities.com/rmorecook/blacksoldiers.html

Read more about "Give Us a Flag" and listen to an army band recording at this site.

Books:

Mulligan, William H. *Camp Nelson, Kentucky: A Civil War History*, 2002.

This volume was called "a major contribution to the literature of the Civil War and to the history of the transition from slavery to freedom by African Americans" by the *Journal of Southern History*. Includes the text of several primary sources.

Applications Across the Curriculum

- This activity works well as a collaboration with the drama teacher, if there is one at your school. The KET Drama Toolkit lesson, Elements of Drama, employs the same strategy to teach play analysis as this lesson does to teach playwriting: rising action, turning point, falling action. The students' skits will be much stronger and more powerful if they have experience with this format.
- If this lesson is taught in collaboration with the language arts teacher, the product can be a piece of writing, perhaps a mock primary source document similar to those students have examined on the web site, e.g., a memoir, newspaper report, a letter, a series of diary entries.

Lesson Extensions

So that students can empathize with the African-American characters, show selections from the 1989 movie *Glory*. (Since the movie is rated “R,” you will have to secure parents’ permission for this.) The movie is based on the story of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, organized in 1863 as one of the first formal units of the U.S. Army made up of African Americans. Don’t show the students the two scenes that earned the movie its R rating: the opening scene at the Battle of Antietam and the first skirmish in South Carolina.

If you don’t have time to show the entire movie, focus on the early scenes show the enlistment and training and highlight the difficulties faced by African-American soldiers and their white officers. (Most students will probably be motivated to watch the rest of the movie on their own.)

O’Malley, Mimi. “*Civil War Refugee Expulsion from Camp Nelson.*” *It Happened in Kentucky*. New York: Guilford, CN: Globe Pequot, 2006.

Ms. O’Malley tells 23 tales taken from Kentucky history, including the story of the refugees in Camp Nelson.

Polacco, Patricia. *Pink and Say*. New York: Philomel, 1994.

This beautiful picture book about an interracial friendship between two 15-year-old Union soldiers during the Civil War is honest and heart-wrenching. “Let me touch the hand that touched Mr. Lincoln,” the African-American boy says to his friend, and, as the novel ends, the survivor tells his children, who tell theirs, that they have touched the hand that touched the hand. (Intended for grades 2-5, but meaningful to any age.)

Open Response Assessment

Prompt: Kentucky slaves wanted to join the Union army but there were many obstacles to their service, both before and after they enlisted.

Directions: Name three of the obstacles and describe them in detail.

Open Response Scoring Guide

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student describes three obstacles fully and completely (e.g., could not enlist until 1864; masters were not willing to let them go; there was no provision for families; soldiers were often given menial work).• Details are insightful and relevant, demonstrating extensive knowledge of slavery in Kentucky and the roles of the African-American soldiers in the Union Army.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student describes three obstacles.• Details are relevant and demonstrate broad knowledge of slavery in Kentucky and the roles of the African-American soldiers in the Union Army.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student only describes two obstacles or describes three obstacles without supporting details.• Answer shows a basic understanding of slavery in Kentucky although a few facts may be incorrect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student describes only one obstacle or describes two obstacles without supporting details.• Some facts are incorrect.• Answer shows that the student’s understanding of slavery in Kentucky is unclear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No answer or irrelevant answer.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Why weren't African Americans in Kentucky able to enlist in the Union Army until 1864?
 - A. Slaves were needed to work on their owners' farms.
 - B. President Lincoln thought slave owners would bring pressure on the Kentucky government to secede from the Union.
 - C. The army generals thought that African Americans would be disloyal soldiers.
 - D. The Confederacy had vowed to hang every ex-slave caught wearing a Union uniform.
2. Why did most African Americans want to join the Union army?
 - A. Slaves who enlisted in the army were given their freedom.
 - B. The army paid well.
 - C. Conditions in the army were better than conditions they faced on the farms and plantations.
 - D. All of the above.
3. Which of the following is not true?
 - A. 25,000 African-American men from Kentucky fought for the Union army in the Civil War.
 - B. Most of the African-American soldiers were sent to fight in the front lines.
 - C. African-American soldiers were trained in the operation of heavy artillery.
 - D. Many of the African-Americans who stayed in the army after the war played a role in settling the far west as "buffalo soldiers."
4. The Emancipation Proclamation
 - A. freed the slaves in Kentucky.
 - B. freed the slaves who wanted to enlist in the Union Army.
 - C. freed the slaves in the Southern states.
 - D. freed the slaves in states that had seceded from the Union.
5. What provision did the U.S. government eventually make for the families of the African-American recruits at Camp Nelson?
 - A. The government established a refugee camp for wives and children.
 - B. The government gave the women and children their freedom.
 - C. The government found all the wives jobs at the camp.
 - D. Both A & B.

Answer Key for Multiple Choice Questions

1. B
2. A
3. B
4. D
5. D

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Primary Source Assignment

After you explore the various primary source documents in the “Life Before Lincoln” exhibit, pick one to analyze in more detail. Answer the questions below and attach a one-page summary of the document’s contents.

1. What is the name and the web site address of your document?

2. What year was it written?

3. Where was the author when it was created?

4. What kind of a document is it?

Letter Journal Entry
 Memoir Official government document
 Other (explain) _____

5. What do you find most interesting about the document?

4. What does the document contribute to our knowledge of African Americans before and during the Civil War in Kentucky?

Plan Your Characters

1. Who are your characters? What are their names and ages?

2. Why are they at Camp Nelson?

3. What does each of the characters want?

Have your teacher approve this sheet before you proceed.

Plan the Script

Rising Action

Turning Point

Falling Action

Ideas for Plays About Camp Nelson

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|-----------------|--|
| 1. Characters: | A young African-American girl and her father |
| Conflict: | The father wants to enlist; the daughter doesn't want him to enlist. |
| Rising action: | The girl follows her father to Camp Nelson to beg him to return to the farm. |
| Turning point: | The girl realizes why freedom is so important to her father. |
| Falling action: | The girl vows to help the Union army as a spy or however else she is able. |
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|-----------------|---|
| 2. Characters: | An African-American woman and her daughter, a white woman working with U.S. Sanitary Commission. |
| Conflict: | The African-American woman wants to be with her husband. She is worried that the white woman will block her and her daughter from entering Camp Nelson. |
| Rising action: | The woman and her daughter approach the camp. They see the white woman and try to avoid her. |
| Turning point: | To the surprise of the African Americans, the white woman is warm and welcoming. |
| Falling action: | The white woman explains the work of the Sanitary Commission and takes the two to find their husband/father and a place to stay. |
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- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 3. Characters: | General Speed S. Fry, commander of Camp Nelson
Captain Theron Hall, Camp Nelson quartermaster
An African-American soldier whose child has died |
| Conflict: | Captain Hall has discovered General Fry's decision to expel the refugees from the camp has resulted in 102 deaths by exposure and starvation. He wants justice, but General Fry is his commanding officer. |
| Rising action: | Captain Hall confronts General Fry with the information about the deaths. General Fry orders him to destroy the evidence. |
| Turning point: | Captain Hall says that there is a higher authority to be obeyed and decides to contact the commanding general, Ambrose Burnside. |
| Falling action: | Captain Hall tells the soldier that nothing can compensate for his child, but that evil must not be allowed to win. |

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| <p>4. Characters: A white soldier, an African-American soldier</p> <p>Conflict: One man's hatred for the other interferes with his ability to be a good soldier.</p> <p>Rising action: One man professes his hatred for the other's entire race in general and the other soldier in particular</p> <p>Turning point: The complainer sees the other man perform some selfless task or show enormous courage and realizes that people shouldn't be judged by their race.</p> <p>Falling action: The two men show their ability to work together.</p> |
| <p>5. Characters: Two young African-American soldiers.</p> <p>Conflict: One young man is terrified of dying but he has been assigned to protect a railway bridge.</p> <p>Rising action: The Confederates attack and one of the young men dies.</p> <p>Turning point: The young man realizes that war calls on you to do things you never thought you could do.</p> <p>Falling action: The young man is successful in keeping the Confederates from blowing up the bridge.</p> |
| <p>6. Characters: An old African-American man, a white sergeant, two African-American soldiers</p> <p>Conflict: The old man wants to enlist; the sergeant believes he is too old.</p> <p>Rising action: The old man, despite several mishaps along the way, finally succeeds in reaching Fort Nelson. The sergeant insists he is too old to enlist in the army.</p> <p>Turning point: The two soldiers recognize the old man and help him realize that there are other ways he can fight for freedom.</p> <p>Falling action: The old man agrees to be a teacher in the refugee school.</p> |

CAMP NELSON

Background Information for Teachers

- Camp Nelson was established by the Union Major General Ambrose Burnside in 1863 to serve as a supply depot for the Army of the Ohio in support of its campaign in eastern Tennessee to capture Knoxville.
- The camp was located on the Lexington-Danville turnpike approximately five miles south of the county-seat town of Nicholasville in Jessamine County. It was named for Major General William Nelson, who had established the first Union recruitment camp in the state.
- Camp Nelson initially had nothing to do with slavery, freedom, or the service of African Americans in the army. It continued its role as a supply base throughout the war. The camp had extensive repair shops, blacksmith forges, bakeries, a hospital and a prison. At its peak, it covered 4,000 acres and had approximately 300 buildings. The number of troops garrisoned there varied between 3,000 and 8,000. There were more than 2,000 civilian employees.
- Because President Lincoln did not want to alienate slave owners in Kentucky, African-Americans could not enlist in the Union army until 1864. Slave owners loyal to the Union were supposed to be compensated; all slaves were to be given their freedom upon enlistment.
- A flood of African Americans began arriving to enlist. By August 1864, 2,000 African-American enlistees were at Camp Nelson. By the end of 1865, 10,000 African-American soldiers had been trained at Camp Nelson. The camp was the third largest recruitment camp for African Americans in the Union.
- Because so many families came with the men who wanted to enlist, a refugee camp was established within the camp borders. Its population exceeded 3,000. Refugees were cared for by missionaries.
- In November 1864, under pressure from Kentuckians who wanted their slaves returned, the camp commander decided to expel all refugees from the camp and, to prevent them from returning, destroyed their shanties. Over a hundred refugees died of disease and exposure.
- The commander's action led directly to Congress's granting freedom to the families of the African-American soldiers. A refugee home was established at Camp Nelson, to be administered jointly by the army and the American Missionary Association. The rate of enlistment increased immediately.
- The Reverend John S. Fee, a well-known and passionate abolitionist, was installed as the administrator. Reverend Fee established a church and a school for the refugees. He also founded Berea College, the first racially integrated college in Kentucky.
- Camp Nelson was closed and abandoned by the army in June 1866. The Freedmen's Bureau took over responsibility for the refugee camp. It still exists today as the community of Hall.

Give Us A Flag

Oh, Fremont¹ he told them when the war it first begun,
How to save the Union and the way it should be done.
But Kentucky swore so hard and Old Abe he had his fears,²
Till ev'ry hope was lost but the colored volunteers.

Chorus

*Oh, give us a flag,
All free without a slave;
We'll fight to defend it as our fathers did so brave;
The gallant Comp'ny "A",³
Will make the rebels dance,
And we'll stand by the Union if we only have a chance.*

McClellan went to Richmond with two hundred thousand brave;
He said, "Keep back the blacks and the Union he would save;
Little Mac he had his way, still the Union is in tears,⁴
Now they call for the help of the colored volunteers.

Old Jeff says he'll hang us if we dare to meet him armed,⁵
A very big thing, but we are not at all alarmed;
For he first has got to catch us before the way is clear,
And that is "what's the matter" with the colored volunteer.

So rally, boys, rally, let us never mind the past;
We had a hard road to travel, but our day is coming fast;
For God is for the right, and we have no need to fear,
The Union must be saved by the colored volunteer.

Then here is to the 54th, which has been nobly tried,
They were willing, they were ready, with their bayonets by their side,
Colonel Shaw led them on and he had no cause to fear,
About the courage of the colored volunteer.

¹ General Fremont, an occasional nominee for president, had recommended the use of African-American troops early in the war.

² President Lincoln was afraid the slaveholding state of Kentucky would secede if African-Americans were allowed to enlist in the army

³ "Company A" was in the 54th Massachusetts volunteer Infantry, the unit whose story is told in the movie *Glory*.

⁴ The Union General George McClellan was defeated at Bull Run, the first major battle of the Civil War.

⁵ "Old Jeff" is Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy.