

# **Hoosier African Americans and The Civil War**

Middle School and High School Lessons

The Colonel Eli Lilly  
Civil War Museum,  
An Indiana War Memorials Museum

## Acknowledgements

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## Description of Lessons

The history of African Americans in Indiana during the Civil War provides a rich insight into their contributions in the war efforts. This set of lessons is designed to supplement the information provided in U.S. History textbooks. Highlights include African American settlements in Indiana, Hoosier attitudes toward African Americans and the Abolitionist Movement, the issues surrounding the formation of African American troops, and the involvement of the 28<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops (USCT) that included Hoosier African American soldiers.

**INSERT ACADEMIC STANDARDS HERE**

## Objectives

1. The students will be able to examine and interpret primary sources.
2. The students will be able to summarize the conditions under which African Americans were recruited and served in the Civil War and the ways in which their experiences differed from that of other soldiers.
3. The students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the events surrounding the Battle of the Crater.

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## **Did You Know?**

- There were approximately 180,000 African Americans who served in the Union Army during the Civil War. A total of 166 black regiments served in the Union Army.
- Sixteen African Americans were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Civil War. Additional awards have been made since then, bringing the total to over 20.
- African Americans made up 10% of the Union Army.
- Approximately one-third of the African Americans who fought in the Union Army gave their lives in the line of duty.
- The U.S. Navy did not segregate its sailors during the Civil War. Whites and blacks served together on Navy ships. Howard University, aided by the National Park Service and the U.S. Navy, is currently conducting research to determine the number of African American sailors who served during the Civil War. Although the research is not complete, they have currently identified 19,000 African American Civil War sailors. That would be roughly 16% of the 118,000 Civil War enlistments.

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## Timeline

### **1843**

- Frederick Douglass and a group of Abolitionist speakers stop at Pendleton, Indiana as a part of their Hundred Conventions Tour. A mob, mostly from out of town, causes rioting as soon as the speakers begin. Douglass and others are injured.

### **1851**

- Article XIII of the Indiana Constitution prohibits African Americans from entering and settling in the state.

### **July 1862**

- Congress passes the Second Confiscation Act and the Militia Act, allowing the enlistment of African Americans. Act of 1795 is repealed, which had prevented African Americans from serving as soldiers.

### **August 1862**

- First African American regiment begins recruiting in Kansas.

### **January 1, 1863**

- Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in the Confederate States.

### **January 31, 1863**

- South Carolina organizes the first southern regiment to be made up of former slaves or freedmen. It is known as the 1<sup>st</sup> South Carolina.

### **May 1863**

- The 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts is organized and is the first black regiment from a northern state. Because Indiana does not yet allow the enlistment of African Americans, approximately 100 African American men from Indiana join a company of the 54<sup>th</sup>.

### **July 16 - 18, 1863**

- The 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry Regiment leads a brave assault on Fort Wagner. Troops demonstrate great courage before being forced to withdraw. The 54<sup>th</sup> suffered 116 casualties. Six hundred men charge the fort, and 272 are either killed, wounded or captured.

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**November 30, 1863**

- War Department authorizes Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton to raise a regiment of African Americans. Recruitment of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT begins days later.

**April 12, 1864**

- Union-occupied Fort Pillow, Tennessee is taken by General Nathan Bedford Forrest's Confederate troops. Previously held by 285 white soldiers and 292 black Union soldiers, only 62 of the U.S. Colored Troops survive.

**April 24, 1864**

- Having been assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Army Corps under Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, as a part of Grant's Army of the Potomac, the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT Regiment leaves Indiana for Washington, D.C.

**June 15, 1864**

- Blacks granted equal pay by Congress.

**July 30, 1864**

- Battle of the Crater, Petersburg, Virginia.

**September 29, 1864**

- Battle of New Market Heights, Virginia. Fourteen African American soldiers awarded the Medal of Honor for their valor at this battle.

**March 23, 1865**

- Confederate Congress passes General Order 14, allowing the enlistment of slaves in the Confederate Army.

**April 9, 1865**

- Lee surrenders.

**July 1, 1865**

- 28<sup>th</sup> USCT arrives in Brazos, Texas as a part of the Army of Occupation of Texas.

**November, 1865**

- 28<sup>th</sup> USCT musters out.

**January 8, 1866**

- Public reception honors the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT in Indianapolis.
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# LESSON 1

## AFRICAN AMERICANS IN INDIANA PRIOR TO THE CIVIL WAR

### Activities

1. African Americans in Indiana Prior to the Civil War (Handout 1a) provides students with a summary of African American settlement and population up to 1860. Discuss with students the following points:
  - a. Although Indiana was not a slave state, what legal measures or attitudes prevented more African Americans from moving to the state?
  - b. Which groups in which areas of the state encouraged or assisted African American settlement?
2. Read and discuss the text of Article XIII, Section 1 of the 1851 Indiana Constitution (Handout 1b) concerning the prohibition of African American settlement in the state.
3. Read the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments to the U.S. Constitution and discuss the degree of rights that were gained as a result.

### Did You Know?

- In 1851, there were about 11,000 African Americans living in Indiana. This was a little more than 1% of the state's population. In 1860, the Hoosier African American population was 11,428. In 1870, this number had grown to 24,560. By 1900, there were 57,705 African Americans in Indiana.

### Vocabulary

**Abolitionist:** a person who was a part of a movement to do away with slavery

**bond:** money required to be put on deposit with, in this case, the state government, in the event that the individual would need government assistance

**bounty:** a sum of money paid to army or navy recruits when they enlisted

**Underground Railroad:** a network of people who provided safe lodging and passage for escaped slaves who were making their way North



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## HANDOUT 1a

### BACKGROUND READING: AFRICAN AMERICANS IN INDIANA PRIOR TO THE CIVIL WAR

The first Africans to come to the territory that became known as Indiana came as slaves as early as the mid-1700s. A group of French settlers brought African slaves to a settlement on the Wabash River now known as Vincennes. However, slavery had never been legal in Indiana, and the African Americans who settled here in the early 1800s were mostly those who had escaped slavery in the South or who were freedmen wanting to make a decent living in the North.

Although the **Underground Railroad** was active in Indiana and there were many Hoosiers who believed that slavery was wrong, this did not mean that the people of Indiana welcomed African Americans to the state. A law in 1831 said that African Americans wishing to settle in the state had to post **bond**. This meant that they would have to pay a deposit of money to the state government just to live here. The government would hold the money and would have it to use if these residents were ever in a situation where government funds were needed (e.g., court cases, legal trouble, or government financial assistance). That is how the law explained the need for a bond. However, since most African Americans coming to the state had little or no money, the law was probably also designed to discourage or prevent the settlement of African Americans.

Later the State of Indiana went one step further in trying to keep African Americans from settling here. The Indiana Constitution of 1851, Article XIII, section 1, prohibited African Americans from settling in the state. ["No negro or mulatto shall come into, or settle in the State, after the adoption of this Constitution."] The Register of Negroes and Mulattos was enacted in 1852 as a way of "enforcing" Article XIII. The consistent practice of this registry varied from county to county. While this law didn't prevent African Americans from moving to Indiana, it was a law that clearly stated the Hoosier State's feelings about the immigration of African Americans to Indiana.

By 1860, there were more people living in Indiana who could claim Southern ancestry than any other northern state. Many of these white southerners had come north looking for jobs, and some of them probably saw the movement of African Americans into the state through a Southern viewpoint. They regarded African Americans, escaped slave or freed, as being different from and not equal to themselves. These white residents may also have been concerned that the growth of the African American population in Indiana might threaten the availability of jobs.

However, there were groups in Indiana such as the Quakers, the Methodists, and the Congregationalists who worked to gain support for the **Abolitionist** movement, but these people were in the minority. In 1843, Frederick Douglass and a group of Abolitionist speakers stopped in Indiana as a part of their Hundred Conventions Tour. In Richmond a mob threw eggs at them. In Pendleton a group came from out of town to try to disrupt the meeting, and they succeeded. They threw eggs and rocks, and a riot broke out. Frederick Douglass and several others were injured before the Abolitionists were able to control and quiet the crowd.

Nevertheless, African Americans came to Indiana to settle and work. As early as about 1829, an African American man named Vinchen Roberts came to Rush County with a white Quaker family from North Carolina. Other African American families followed, and this became known as the Beech settlement. Many African Americans who came to Indiana settled in or near Quaker settlements. In 1850, the counties with the highest number of Quaker, or Society of Friends, churches also had the highest number of African American residents. These counties included Wayne, Grant, Marion, Rush and Randolph. In 1837, a group of free African Americans came to Hamilton County and purchased land near Westfield. It was named Roberts' Settlement after several of the men who founded it. The residents cleared the trees, plowed the land, and built a town which included a church and a school. Another example is Lyles Station in Gibson County in southern Indiana. Joshua Lyles was a slave whose owner had freed him and given him money with which to move north before the Civil War. He and his brother, Sanford, used the money to purchase some land. The Lyles worked the land and caused it to prosper, and other former slaves who wished to settle and farm soon joined them. After the Civil War, Joshua went south to talk to his old friends and to persuade some of them to come to Indiana to settle in the same area as he had. By 1860, there were 11,428 African Americans in Indiana. This was out of a total state population of 1,350,000.

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## HANDOUT 1b

### Article XIII of the Indiana Constitution, 1851 (Until the Constitution was Amended in 1881)

"Section 1. No negro or mulatto shall come into, or settle in the state, after the adoption of this constitution.

Section 2. All contracts with any negro or mulatto coming into the state, contrary to the provisions of the foregoing section, shall be void; and any person who shall employ such negro or mulatto or other wise encourage him to remain in the state, shall be fined in any sum not less than ten dollars, or more than five hundred dollars.

Section 3. All fines which may be collected for violation of the provisions of this article or any law which may hereafter be passed for the purpose of carrying the same into execution, shall be set apart and appropriated for the colonization of such negroes and mulattoes, and their descendants, as may be in the state at the adoption of this constitution, and may be willing to emigrate.

Section 4. The general assembly shall pass laws to carry out the provisions of this article."

Source: Morrison, Olin D., *Indiana, Hoosier State, (Volume 1) History: Economic, Social, Political*, E.M. Morrison, publisher, Athens, Ohio, page 100g.

## LESSON 2

### RECRUITING FOR THE UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS

#### Activities

1. Recruiting for the U.S. Colored Troops (Handout 2a) summarizes the issues surrounding enlistment of African Americans as Civil War soldiers. Read and discuss the quotes by Samuel Smothers and Frederick Douglass and their views on the importance of African Americans fighting for the Union.
2. Provide students with a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation. It is available online at the National Archives and Records Administration home page at: [www.nara.gov/exhall/featured-document/eman/emantrns.html](http://www.nara.gov/exhall/featured-document/eman/emantrns.html). Have students read the document and draft a letter to the editor from one of the following points of view: white Indiana farmer, free African American Indiana farmer, southern slave holder, an Abolitionist, a "conductor" for the Underground Railroad, or a Quaker family in Randolph County.
3. In November of 1863, Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton was authorized by Congress to raise a regiment of African Americans. The General Orders issued from the Adjutant General's Office detailed the officers, number of privates, pay, bounties, and qualifications. The General Orders (Handout 2b) have been recreated for students' use. Discuss with the students the ways in which the recruitment and requirements for African American Troops compared and contrasted to previous recruiting enlistment for white soldiers.
4. Handout 2c is a reproduction of a portion of an actual recruiting poster. The Confederacy had declared that any armed, uniformed African American soldier captured in the South would be considered an escaped slave and returned to his owner. This portion of the recruiting poster is President Lincoln's response to the South's threat. Have students design a recruiting poster of their own that would accompany Lincoln's response. Then compare their design to the remainder of the poster, which can be viewed at: [www.nara.gov/education/teaching/usct/home.html](http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/usct/home.html)
4. Handout 2d is a worksheet that can be used to guide students' reading of the Handouts 2a, 2b, and 2c.

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## HANDOUT 2a

### RECRUITING FOR UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS

At the start of the Civil War, African Americans were not legally allowed to serve as soldiers. A law from 1795 prohibited this. African Americans had fought in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. However, since the issue of slavery was one of the driving forces behind the Civil War, the law from 1795 was now followed, and African Americans were not allowed to serve as soldiers. When the war began in 1861, both the Union and the Confederacy believed it would not last long. After more than a year of fighting, however, both sides began to realize that African Americans were an untapped resource of fighting power and began to take steps to recruit and train these men. In July of 1862, Congress passed two acts regarding African Americans and military service. The Second Confiscation Act gave the President the power to use as many men of African descent as necessary to serve in the military. The Militia Act repealed the 1795 law that prevented blacks from serving as soldiers and passed a law that allowed them to enlist. The black soldiers were to receive \$10 per month as pay and \$3.00 of this money could be paid in clothing. White soldiers received \$13 per month plus a \$3.50 clothing allowance.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the freedom of the slaves in the Confederate States with the Emancipation Proclamation. This meant the end to slavery in the South as far as the Union government was concerned. News of this proclamation spread quickly throughout the North and South. While there was much rejoicing by former slaves, Abolitionists and others over this event, the war raged on. The end of slavery influenced many African Americans in the North to enlist in a military service, which they hoped would guarantee their freedom and help them gain a more equal footing with whites. Because of the large African American population in the South, the southern states also began to enlist blacks in the military.

In August 1862, the first African American regiment began organizing in Kansas. On January 31, 1863, South Carolina was the first southern state to organize a regiment of former slaves in the south. In May, Massachusetts organized the 54<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops (USCT), becoming the first northern state to organize a black regiment. Because Indiana had not yet authorized the recruitment of African Americans, approximately 100 men from Indiana joined the 54<sup>th</sup> USCT. This was the regiment whose story was told in the movie *Glory*. It was their bravery at Fort Wagner in South Carolina that proved the courage and ability of black troops and helped to influence other states to set in motion the further recruitment of black troops. On November 30, 1863, Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton was authorized by the War Department to raise a regiment of African American soldiers. Within days hundreds of Hoosiers enlisted in what would become the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT.

The men who enlisted in the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT knew that they would be joined by African Americans from other states, and they knew that their commitment to fight was particularly risky. During 1862 and early 1863, the Confederate government had announced that armed, uniformed African Americans captured in battle would be considered to be escaped slaves and would be returned to their owners or would be dealt with according to the laws of that southern state. Their white officers would be treated as insurrectionists (those in rebellion to legal authority), and they would be tried and possibly executed. President Lincoln responded to these announcements with a strong statement of his own. In July of 1863, President Lincoln made it clear that for any African American punished in this way, there would be a Confederate soldier who would be treated likewise.

Hoosier African Americans didn't hesitate to enlist. Perhaps they were encouraged by the feelings and sentiment, if not the actual words, of Samuel Smothers, a fellow African American from Indiana. Mr. Smothers was a student at the Union Literary Institute in Randolph County in northeastern Indiana and a resident of Indianapolis after the war. He wrote the following, which was published in 1863 in the school's *Students' Repository*.

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"The time has now come for intelligent, decisive and energetic action on our part. For thirty years we have been lecturing, talking and praying for the liberation of our enslaved brethren. God has answered our prayers, and our brethren are being liberated by the thousands. The wonderful changes which are now taking place in our condition brings upon us new duties.

The first and most important of these duties is to stand by and defend the government. Our liberties, our interests and our happiness, in common with other citizens, depends upon the fate of this government. If the government stands, our liberties are secure. If the government falls, we will be doomed to life-long bondage and chains. It is true that we do not enjoy in some of the States all the rights and privileges other citizens enjoy, but our condition is certainly far better than it would be under Jeff. Davis' rule."

Frederick Douglass was an escaped slave and talented public speaker who became famous for his stand against slavery. He was a great supporter of the formation of the United States Colored Troops. He wrote and spoke out in support of the enlistment of African Americans in the military. He believed that not only were these men needed for the war effort, he also believed that their involvement would help promote the idea of their right to citizenship. His words follow.

"Once let a black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pockets, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States."



The Hoosier men of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT trained at Camp Fremont in Indianapolis. On April 24, 1864, they left for Washington D.C., having been assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Army Corps under Major General Ambrose E. Burnside (also from Indiana), as a part of Grant's Army of the Potomac. On April 20<sup>th</sup> the newspaper the *Indianapolis Journal* commented on these men, reporting that "They walk erect, and bear themselves as men who have rights and dare to maintain them." From Washington, D.C. they went to Alexandria, Virginia. Their first battle was at White House, Virginia. Then they moved on to become involved in the siege of Petersburg.

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## HANDOUT 2b

### ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE

Indiana Volunteer Militia,

Indianapolis, Dec. 3, 1863

### GENERAL ORDERS

Authority having been received for the organization of a battalion of colored troops in this State, enlistments therefor will be accepted from this date.

The recruitment of colored troops in this State for companies or regiments organizing in other States, is henceforth positively prohibited and must cease.

Authority to recruit for the battalion will be granted upon presentation of satisfactory recommendations showing the applicants to possess the requisite qualifications to discipline and command such troops.

By order of GOVERNOR MORTON.

LAZ. NOBLE

Adjutant General of Ind.

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### ADDENDA

The Regiment will be designated as the "First Regiment Indiana Colored Volunteers," and when organized, will be credited on the State's quota under any call for troops for the United States service.

All good and loyal citizens, it is hoped, will encourage enlistments for the Regiment and aid in its organization.

WILLIAM P. FISHBACK, Esq., of Indianapolis, has been appointed by the Governor Commandant of the Camp of Rendezvous and charged with the recruitment and organization of the Regiment, to whom all applications relating to the Regiment will be referred for consideration.

There will be a general rendezvous for recruits established at Indianapolis.

The Regiment will consist of Ten Companies, and the following Officers:

- 1 Colonel.
- 1 Lieutenant-Colonel.
- 1 Major.
- 1 Regimental Adjutant. (extra Lieut.)
- 1 Regimental Quartermaster, (extra Lieut.)
- 1 Surgeon
- 2 Assistant Surgeons.
- 1 Chaplain.
- 1 Sergeant-Major.
- 1 Reg'l Quartermaster Sergeant.
- 1 Reg'l Commissary Sergeant.
- 1 Hospital Steward.
- 2 Principal Musicians.

Companies will consist of---

1 Captain.  
1 First Lieutenant.  
1 Second Lieutenant.  
1 First Sergeant.  
4 Sergeants.  
8 Corporals  
2 Musicians.  
1 Wagoner.

And not less than 64 nor more than 82 privates.

The commissioned officers will be appointed by the Governor as the companies are raised and organized. The regulations require that the commissioned officers shall be white men; but the non-commissioned officers will be selected from the best men of the companies, in the usual mode of appointing them.

In appointing company officers, they will be selected with special regard to their qualifications and fitness to command such troops. None will be appointed unless they are strictly sober, moral, diligent and of tried bravery.

At present the law provides that the pay shall be Ten Dollars per month, Three dollars of which monthly may be in clothing. Application will be made to Congress, and it is confidently believed that provisions will be made by law, to increase the pay and compensation to such troops, and place them on a similar footing with others in the service as to pay and allowances.

Inasmuch as a number of counties have agreed to pay bounties to volunteers, and as they will receive credit on their quotas for the colored men who enlist, it is presumed they will pay the bounty to colored as well as other volunteers. This will be but justice to the colored men.

Persons authorized to recruit for the Regiment, except commissioned officers, will be paid six dollars for each man enlisted by them and mustered into the United States service.

None but stout, healthy, active able-bodied men, at least five feet four inches high, over eighteen years and under forty-five years of age, will be accepted. Particular attention must be bestowed on these points by recruiting officers.

When men have been enlisted and are ready to report to the Camp of Rendezvous, a copy of the enlistment roll must be forwarded to the Adjutant General's office, giving their names, ages, when, where and by whom enlisted--upon the filing of which, passes will be furnished for their transportation.

Recruiting officers may contract for the subsistence of such recruits as will assuredly pass inspection, for a period of not exceeding seven days, at not exceeding thirty-five cents per day for boarding and lodging; bills for which, made out and approved in the proper form, will be paid without unnecessary delay.

Weekly report must be made by recruiting officers, showing their progress in recruiting.

By order of the Governor.

LAZ. NOBLE,  
Adj't. General Indiana

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HANDOUT 2c

**To colored men!  
Freedom,**

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**protection, pay, and a call to military duty!**

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On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January, 1863, the President of the United States proclaimed FREEDOM to over THREE MILLIONS OF SLAVES. This decree is to be enforced by all the power of the Nation. On the 21 of July last he issued the following order:

**protection of colored troops**

War Department, Adjutant General's Office  
Washington, July 21

General Order, No. 233.

The following order of the President is published for the information and government of all concerned:-

EXECUTIVE MANSION, Washington, July 30.

It is the duty of every Government to give protection to its citizens, of whatever class, color, or condition, and especially to those who are duly organized as soldiers in the public service. The law of nations, and the usages and customs of war, as carried on by civilized powers, permit no distinction as to color in the treatment of prisoners of war as public enemies. To sell or enslave any captured person on account of his color, is a relapse into barbarism, and a crime against the civilization of the age.

The Government of the United States will give the same protection to all its soldiers, and if the enemy shall sell or enslave any one because of his color, the offense shall be punished by retaliation upon the enemy's prisoners in our possession. It is therefore ordered, for every soldier of the United States, killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed; and for every one enslaved by the enemy, or sold into slavery, a rebel soldier shall be placed at hard labor on the public works, and continued at such labor until the other shall be released and receive the treatment due to prisoners of war.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By order of the Secretary of War.

E. D. Townsend, Assistant Adjutant General.

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HANDOUT 2d  
STUDY QUESTIONS

Recruiting for United States Colored Troops

1. How much pay did the African American soldiers receive per month?

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2. How much pay did the white soldiers receive per month?

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3. What was the first northern state to organize a black regiment?

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4. Who was Indiana's Governor during the Civil War?

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5. What did the Confederate government announce would happen to uniformed African Americans who were captured in battle? What would happen to the white officers of these African Americans?

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6. Explain why Samuel Smothers believed it was important for African Americans in Indiana to "stand by and defend the government".

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### Adjutant General's Officer General Orders

7. List 5 officers that were to be included in the First Regiment of Indiana Colored Volunteers.

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8. What were the qualifications of the officers?

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9. What were the height and age requirements of the recruits?

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### Recruiting Poster

10. What did Lincoln's General Order, No. 233 say about selling or enslaving "any captured person on account of his color"?

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11. This General Order was a direct response to the Confederate government's announcement of what it would do to uniformed African American soldiers and their officers. What did President Lincoln write would happen to rebel soldiers in return?

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## Handout 2d Key

1. Ten dollars per month (\$3.00 of it in clothing).
2. Thirteen dollars plus \$3.50 for a clothing allowance.
3. Kansas
4. Oliver P. Morton
5. The uniformed African Americans would be considered to be escaped slaves and returned to their owners or dealt with according to the laws of the southern states. The white officers of African American soldiers would be considered to be insurrectionists and tried and possibly executed.
6. The Union would defend and protect the freedom of African Americans and the Confederate government would not.
7. Answers may vary.
8. The commissioned officers needed to be white men who were strictly sober, moral, diligent and tried of bravery. The non-commissioned officers needed to be the best men in the camps.
9. At least 5' 4", over 18 and under 45 years old.
10. It "is a relapse into barbarism, and a crime against the civilization of the age."
11. Whatever the Confederacy did to African American soldiers (killing, enslavement) in violation of the laws of war, a similar fate (execution or hard labor) would result for a captured rebel soldier.

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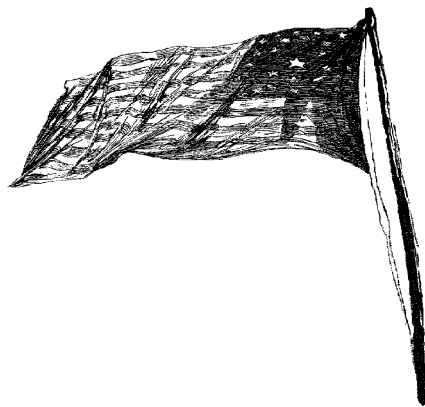
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## LESSON 3

### THE BATTLE OF THE CRATER PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA

#### Activities

1. The Battle of the Crater (Handout 3) provides students with a summary of the preparation, battle and investigation that followed. Discuss the issues faced by the leaders at different levels of command and the reasoning for the decisions that were finally made.
2. Working in groups, have students write a short script for the following conversations that might have taken place before or after the Battle of the Crater.
  - a. Major General George Meade and Major General Ambrose Burnside.
  - b. A member of the Fourth Division and a member of the First Division.
  - c. Soldiers of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT as they waited for the explosion.
3. Playing the role of field correspondent, have students write a story for Indianapolis' *Daily Journal* detailing the events of the Battle of the Crater.



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## HANDOUT 3

### THE BATTLE OF THE CRATER. PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA

In June of 1864, Confederates held Petersburg, Virginia. The Union planned to capture Petersburg before moving on to the Confederate capital of Richmond. One of the Union regiments stationed outside Petersburg was the 48<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania. Many of these men were Pennsylvania coal miners by trade. The plan was to dig a tunnel under the Confederate-held fort, fill it with gunpowder, and create an early morning explosion that would provide chaos in the Confederates' camp while the Union carried out a well-planned attack. The tunnel was 511 feet long and then it forked into two "side galleries" measuring 37 and 38 feet each. Burnside had requested 12,000 pounds of gunpowder, but he only received 8,000 pounds.

Officers drilled the Fourth Division, to which the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT belonged. The Fourth was chosen to lead the attack. They were chosen, in part, because their division had not suffered as many casualties as some of the other (white) divisions. This meant that they were perhaps in better condition to lead the attack than other divisions which might have been weary from battle. It was also noted that they had performed very well in previous engagements. They were told of the dangers and how to react and move forward when the explosion went off. They were told that Cemetery Hill could be seized in a matter of minutes because the Confederates would experience confusion as a result of the surprise explosion. Capturing Cemetery Hill would allow them to have a strategic position and would work in helping them capture Richmond.

The mine was ready on July 28<sup>th</sup>. It was then that a change of plans occurred. Major General George Meade informed Major General Ambrose Burnside that the African American troops would not be used to lead the attack after the explosion. His reasoning was that they were an "untried" group and that a more seasoned group was needed. Burnside did not agree with this opinion, but Meade gained the support of General Grant; and so the plan was changed. Burnside had been convinced that the Fourth Division was the best choice, and, in the end, three officers drew lots from a hat to determine which (white) division would lead the assault only hours later. This is how it was determined that those in the lead would be the First Division and the Fourth Division would follow.

The explosion was set to go off at 3:30 A.M. on the morning of July 30<sup>th</sup>. Because of fuse problems, the explosion didn't go off until 4:45 A.M. Unfortunately, the last minute plans to defeat the Rebel soldiers with a surprise attack had disastrous results for the Union troops. The explosion formed a huge crater, the Rebel troops were able to organize quickly, and many of them focussed their wrath directly on the African American soldiers.

An investigation was ordered by President Lincoln to determine the real reasons behind the tragedy of this battle. Brigadier General Edward Ferrero, who had been in charge of the Fourth Division testified that the African American troops had gone into battle "in the most gallant manner without hesitation ". Even General Grant was quoted in the investigations as saying that if the U.S. Colored Troops had been put in front, he believed that the Union effort would have succeeded. However, he had agreed with General Meade who had feared that if they put U.S. Colored Troops in the front and were not successful, the officers would be accused of having put them in the front "to get killed because we did not care anything about them."

Petersburg finally fell to the Union in April of 1865, and finally it was on to Richmond. The 28<sup>th</sup> USCT were some of the first troops to enter Richmond. There they were put in charge of Confederate prisoners.

At the end of the war, the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT served one more year, since their enlistment was not complete, having enlisted for three years. They served this time in Texas, helping to prevent problems between the Apaches and the Mexicans. They also built bridges and roads and ran telegraph lines.

The 28<sup>th</sup> USCT finally returned to Indianapolis and were mustered out on November 28, 1865. On January 8, 1866, they were honored with a reception in Indianapolis. Chaplain Garland White made a speech at this celebration and said that they had been first class citizens in the cartridge box and that they were first class citizens now that they were back home in Indiana. Although it would be a time before they were constitutionally guaranteed their "first class citizenship", they had certainly proved themselves worthy of this right by their behavior on the battlefield.

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## LESSON 4

### VOICES OF THE 28<sup>th</sup> USCT

#### Activities

1. Benjamin Trail was a member of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT. Provide students with the background information and excerpts of the letters written by Trail (Handout 4a). Point out that the letter excerpts are typed exactly as Benjamin Trail wrote them. Many African Americans were unable to read and write at this time, but it is obvious that Sargent Major Trail was quite a capable writer. The fact that he was writing to his male family members (as opposed to a wife or sweetheart) provides perhaps a more candid picture of events. Discuss the events that he describes in his letters. Have students write a letter responding to Benjamin Trail as if they were his brother or sister.
2. Handout 4c is a fictitious interview with Chaplain Garland H. White, the chaplain for the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT. Mr. Charles Poindexter, an Indianapolis Civil War reenactor, was interviewed as the man whose role he plays, Chaplain Garland H. White. Mr. Poindexter became interested in Black History classes taught by Dr. Joseph C. Carroll at Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis. Mr. Poindexter is particularly interested in the experiences of the United States Colored Troops. He has carefully researched the life of Garland White at the Indiana Historical Society. Since that time, Mr. Poindexter has portrayed Chaplain White at Crown Hill Cemetery, Indianapolis Public Schools, The Children's Museum, and churches. For more information, Mr. Poindexter can be contacted by email at: [121632@email.msn.com](mailto:121632@email.msn.com) or by U.S. mail at: 5234 North Illinois Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46208-2636.
3. Students can read the background of Chaplain Garland H. White. They can then take turns reading aloud the transcript of the interview. As an extension of this activity, students can each research a battle in which USCTs were involved and can roleplay or become a reenactor of a particular soldier or civilian.
4. Handouts 4d and 4e provide study questions for students to complete as they read the selections about Benjamin Trail and Garland White. These questions can help to guide students' reading and can be used to promote class discussion.

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## HANDOUT 4a

### BENJAMIN TRAIL, 28<sup>th</sup> USCT

Benjamin Trail was born in Rush County, Indiana. He joined the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT on January 24, 1864. Military records show that he was 22 years old, had yellow eyes, black hair and was 5 feet 4 inches tall. He was appointed a Sargent Major (a noncommissioned officer) while at Camp Fremont in Indianapolis. Mr. Trail wrote letters home to his brothers that helped to paint a picture of the life of an enlisted man in the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT. Sargent Major Trail was killed at the Battle of the Crater.

The Trail Family Correspondence is owned by the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee. It is with their permission that excerpts from his letters follow. (Note that the letters are typed exactly as he wrote them.)

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No. 1

Camp Fremont  
Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1864

Dear Brother,

I left Charlottesvill on the noon train Thursday and found Milton Winslow on board, and we came to the city and we were accomadated very well as the people gave us our supper free of charge, and we slept in the old Court-House very comfortable, but about 5 in the morning I was awakened by cries of some who had got their ears and feet frosted it looked bad enough to see some 15 or 20 persons complaining of the frostbite .

I was examined on New Years morning and passed a bully examination, and am good for 90 years if I don't die in less time .

The camp is undoubtedly a curiosity, because here are presented to the observer, every grade, shade, disposition, dialect, conduct, and some one always talking, singing, dancinging going on at almost any time, you ought to come sometime and see it.

To see all our boys, in their suit "dres parade" dancing, with their countless number of shining buttons which diffuses a magnificent lustre over the gloomy aspect of the camp.

There are now more than 325 in camp and they keep coming in all the time, 10 this morning. There are some here I know .

When I get my uniform and bounty I will express my Clothes and money to you and hope you will take good care of it for my sake, so if I ever come home it may do me some good, if I will know at that time what is good, but I will try to be a good boy, but it is hard for any one to say that; who is in the army. Yet I have my doubts whither I ever come home after I leave Camp because it sometimes looks a little bad here, and this is a heaven compared with our expected future.

One year ago today I had no idea that this time I would be a U.S. soldier. I hav'nt time to read my letter over.

Ben

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14

Camp Fremont  
April 27, 1864

Dear Sir:

It is just now two o'clock P.M. and I am getting my 3 days rations cooked to take with me on my trip to Anapolis, as I intend to leave as the rest did this evening at 8:15 P.M. on the Billfountaine RR.

We were offered \$7.50 per month but there was not one of us that took a cent; but I was willing to take mine as I knew that was all we were going to get at the present, but as long as no one else would take it, and I being the Sergt. Major of the Regiment, I thought I would not come down lower than any one else, but I hope the time will come when we will be payed the same as other Soldiers, and if we are not payed for sometime I will try to do without any money, as I have the most that I need, I will try to get use to living without any money, as I have only 1 cent and 3 cent stamp about me, and will keep that till I want to send a letter to some person on a particular occasion, but you need never send me any unless I tell you to .

Your Brother  
Ben in the Army

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No. 20

Camp Russell White House Station Va. June 4, '64

I am well, doing well and well satisfied as anyone in the army .

we left Camp Casey Monday Morning about 10, and then went to Alexandria and laid there till Tuesday, and then traveled down the Potomac about 60 miles, there we anchored right in the middle of the river till morning, about dusk or day break, away we went, & in a short time we were in the great Chesapeak Saltwater .

Next day we arrived at this place about noon and could hear the cannons roaring, cafloom, caflom almost every second, & men up on the top of masts of the vessells with their glasses could see the line of battle 10 miles long, as it was only from 8 to 12 miles distant, and it has been reported that Maj. Gen. Burnside was shot dead that evening, but we that hear the report dare to tell any one here, but as no one shall know what I write, I will write all that I hear .

there is an ambulance train of more than 500 wagons passing the road about 4 rods in front of my tent .

I detailed by order of the Colonel 350 men to work on fortifications and there are now about 800 men at work with shovels, picks, axes .we are expecting an attack at this place I have nothing to do, but order details, & make out reports we are only 25 miles from Richmond- .

I'll write no more, but will aim to write to you all the time 1 or 2 times a week if you will send me stamps, (not money) as I guess you would like to hear from me often, or ought to- I don't write many particulars, but I write many more than those who can't write very well & have but little or no time to write. Keep writing to me whither I ever get them or not, number all. My love to all--

Address                   Sergt. Major B. F. Trail 28 U.S.C. Troops  
                                  Whitehouse landing Virginia  
                                  Via Washington D.C.

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## HANDOUT 4b

### CHAPLAIN GARLAND H. WHITE: VOICE OF THE 28<sup>th</sup> USCT

Garland H. White was born a slave in Hanover County, Virginia. He escaped from his master and made his way to Canada. By 1859, he had been ordained as an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) minister. He came to Indianapolis from Toledo, Ohio first to recruit for the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment in 1863. He believed that it was the duty of each black man to join in the fight for his own freedom, and he was active in recruiting men from throughout the Midwest. He returned to Indianapolis a second time to recruit for the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT. This time he enlisted, too, because he had been told that he would be able to serve as the chaplain for the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Chaplain White was 5 feet 6 inches tall with black hair and black eyes. He was 34 years old when he enlisted in the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT on December 14, 1863, at which time he was assigned as a private, even though he had requested to serve as the regiment's chaplain.

During his time with the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT, he wrote letters to the AME Newspaper, *The Christian Recorder*. It is through these letters that one can gain a more personal description of the activities of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT.

Mr. Charles Poindexter of Indianapolis portrays Chaplain Garland H. White as a Civil War reenactor. A reenactor is someone who plays the role of a particular person in history. Mr. Poindexter became interested in Black History when he was a student of Dr. Joseph C. Carroll at Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis. Mr. Poindexter has carefully researched the life of Garland White, and he has portrayed Chaplain White for schools, museums and churches. The following is an "interview" with Chaplain White, as portrayed by Mr. Charles Poindexter.

**"Interview" With Chaplain Garland H. White  
The Voice of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT**

***Chaplain White, I'd like to thank you so much for meeting with us today. I understand that you were born into slavery in Virginia. Could you tell us how you were able to escape and make your way to Canada?***

Yes, you're exactly right! I was born a slave in Hanover County Virginia in 1839. There in Hanover County I was taught by my masters to read and cipher. At that particular time, it was against the law to teach a slave to read and cipher. At the age of 12, I was taken away from my mama when they found out I could read and cipher and taken to Georgia and there they sold me to Senator Robert Toombs. My first night there I heard the people singing the gourd song and I found out what it was all about. One slave was going to escape that night, and they were telling him to look to the North Star, the Big Dipper was called the gourd, and you were supposed to follow the gourd North to freedom. Well, I wanted to escape, too.

***What did Senator Toombs have you do?***

Senator Toombs made me his personal servant, and he also allowed me to preach to the people on the plantation. At this time, a slave could not talk to groups of more than 4 or 5 slaves unless a white person was present. Senator Toombs allowed me to talk to 10 or 15 slaves as I was talking religion to them.

***Senator Toombs represented Georgia. Did you witness anything special when you were with him?***

Yes, I did. Because I was Senator Toombs' personal servant, he would take me with him to Washington, D.C. when Congress was in session. In 1857, I was at Congress, and my master let me sit upstairs and watch the proceedings. A Congressman by the name of Charles Sumner took the floor. He spoke against slavery, and he spoke real passionately for about an hour and a half. There was a Senator there from North Carolina by the name of Preston Brooks. Brooks came up to Sumner with a cane with a large brass knob on it and beat Congressman Sumner with the cane, knocking him out with the first blow and beating him over and over again with it. He beat him so badly that it was three or four years before Congressman Sumner was himself again.

So I made up my mind at that point that I was going to escape. And it wasn't until the next year that I made my way up to Canada.

***You became a minister for the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Would you describe for us what the AME Church was?***

In 1787, a man by the name of Richard Allen and a group of other African Americans were asked to leave the St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia, because the white people there were upset about having blacks attend their church, and so the whites forced the African Americans to leave. These African Americans formed their own church called the African Methodist Episcopal Church, or AME Church, and it is one of the oldest African American organizations that was ever formed in the United States.

***When did you join the AME Church?***

When I escaped to Canada, I joined the AME Church in 1858, and I became a minister in 1859. Then the church moved me to Ohio with my wife to be in charge of a church. And then when the Civil War broke out in 1861, the AME Church took the lead in asking African Americans to join the services to fight for their freedom and end slavery.

***When did you first begin recruiting African American troops?***

I was quite passionate about getting African Americans to join. So I went to the east to help recruit for the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment. There weren't very many African Americans in Massachusetts at the time, and so Frederick Douglass along with other individuals and the AME Church asked for volunteers to come to Massachusetts. At that particular time, as a free or escaped slave African American, you could go any place to join the army, and so we went around the northern states asking people to join the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts. We recruited people from Ohio and Michigan, and subsequently I worked my way back here to Indiana.

***How did you start recruiting in Indiana?***

Out here I talked to your Governor Morton in October of 1863, and I tried to get him to start a regiment. I went to talk to Governor Morton with Willis Revels and Calvin Fletcher. Willis Revels was the pastor of the Bethel AME Church here in Indianapolis, which was the first AME church in Indianapolis. And Calvin Fletcher is well-known in Indiana in the field of banking. Anyway, we went to talk to Governor Oliver P. Morton about putting together an African American Regiment.

***What did Governor Morton do?***

He decided to make a militia first, and he said he was going to make me chaplain. A month later, the U.S. Government took over the state militia and

made it a federal unit. And so I said I'll join right there on the spot and stay with these guys, and so I joined. But I couldn't join as a chaplain, so they put me in as a private. But I worked as a chaplain and did everything that a chaplain was supposed to do, except get the pay and the rank.

***How did you get the federal government to recognize you as a Chaplain?***

Subsequently, I wrote letters to Secretary of War Stanton and others, asking for the rank of Chaplain, saying nobody else wanted my job; and I got the support of the white officers, and so finally they relented and they let me have that spot. So I became the chaplain for the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT, and the chaplain's rank is like that of a captain. However, they did not give me a uniform. They were fearful that I'd have to be saluted. So I just wore my civilian clothes, and that proved quite difficult at times like when I'd try to go to the hospital to visit the ill or wounded men. I'd have to find someone to vouch for me as being the chaplain. It wasn't until 1865 that I got a chaplain's uniform.

***Where did you take your training?***

We took our basic training at Camp Fremont. Right now people call it Fountain Square. You know, over by Shelbyville Road and Shelbourne. It was named after General John Charles Fremont. I don't know if you're familiar with this or not, but in 1856 Fremont was the first Republican person to run for president. The Republican Party was formed in 1854 for the sole purpose of ending slavery. Fremont ran and was defeated. The next man who ran on that platform won. And his name was Abraham Lincoln.

***What type of training did the men receive at Camp Fremont?***

We took our training there at Camp Fremont. We learned military courtesy, military discipline, we learned how to care for our weapons, and march. We learned how to build latrines and pup tents and eat hardtack and beef jerky.

***What were some of the differences between the duty and pay and benefits of the U.S. Colored Troops and that of the white regiments of the Union?***

Something interesting about when we joined the military, we joined thinking we got a \$300 bounty from the federal government to join and \$100 bounty from the state to join. So when we joined, we thought we were going to get the same pay as whites. The white soldiers were getting \$13 per month plus \$3.50 clothing allowance, plus a ration. When we joined, they paid us \$10 a month, and \$3 of that \$10 was taken for clothing. So we actually only got \$7 a month. And so we argued our point, and several of us did not take our money. It wasn't until a year later that the government yielded and gave us the same pay as they gave the white soldiers.

***After leaving Indiana, the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT went to Washington D.C. and then on to Virginia. What did you do in Washington?***

We went to Washington, D.C. and that was our first station, to guard the nation's capital. And we took some more training there, because we needed to be ready for combat. We were attached to General Burnside's unit, the 9<sup>th</sup> Army Corps. We had quite a few skirmishes after that. And then in July in 1864 we had the Battle of the Crater. And let me tell you, that was a battle and a half.

***Can you describe for us The Battle of the Crater in Petersburg, Virginia? How was the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT involved? What were the original plans, and why did those plans meet with such disastrous results?***

Part of the 9th Corps was your 48<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania volunteers. A lot of these men were coal miners. And so they came up with this idea. Johnny Reb, meaning the Confederates, was up on high ground, and they were blocking us from going to Petersburg, which was on our way to the Confederate capital of Richmond. So they came up with the idea of tunneling under the rebel encampment. So these miners of the 48<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania dug a tunnel 500 feet long. We were supposed to use 12,000 pounds of black powder, but we only had 8,000 pounds of black powder. So anyway, everyone was ready to go. And the plan was that when the explosion went off, we, the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT and another USCT, were supposed to attack. This was something we had been practicing for. Unfortunately, there was a change of plans, and the commanding officers decided that they wouldn't send the USCTs in first. This wasn't because they didn't think we could do it or thought we weren't ready. They were afraid of what people would think if they were sending the African American troops in first. They were concerned that people would think the commanding officers were sacrificing the U.S. Colored Troops, and so they made plans to send in other troops ahead of us.

***Was the change of plans successful?***

Well, for some reason or another the explosion didn't go off on time. It was supposed to go off at 3:30 in the morning, and it didn't. So we waited another hour, and it didn't go at 4:30 in the morning. So some of the soldiers started drifting off to take care of personal hygiene. Some started putting their weapons down, some started drifting off to sleep, some went to wash their face and stuff like that. Turns out they had used bad fuses. But later, all of a sudden the ground shook. I looked over at where Johnny Reb was, and I saw body parts flying in the air. That explosion dug a 200-foot long crater, 25 feet deep and 50 feet wide.

***Why did those plans turn into such a disaster?***

The 28<sup>th</sup> USCT were all together, and they held us up for 45 minutes after the explosion, waiting for the order to go. We finally got the order to go, and when we did, there were other Union soldiers walking toward us and past us, retreating. But we kept moving forward, because our charge was to take the hill. But we hadn't expected Johnny Reb to be able to regroup so fast. And so, as we were in the crater, Johnny Reb was firing down on us, and we had real trouble getting up the sides. It was just like sand and 25 feet high and hard to climb. And so Johnny Reb just kept taking pot shots at us, killing everyone who was left there mostly. Part of the Colored Troops made it to the top.

***What happened to those men who made it to the top of the Crater?***

Johnny Reb was so angry at seeing the Colored Troops that they didn't take a single prisoner. They'd have their hands up in the air to surrender, and the Confederates would shoot them right in the head. I saw one soldier get shot in the head. One soldier got bayoneted, and another soldier was down on his knees, pleading for his life, and no sooner had he got up than three Confederate soldiers stabbed him with a bayonet.

***I understand that there was an investigation after The Battle of the Crater. What were the findings of that investigation?***

They had a big inquest after the Battle of the Crater. This was an investigation of the facts surrounding the actions of the troops and officers at this battle. It was found that we fought quite bravely. People had heard that there was a lot of retreating going on, and for awhile, those rumors didn't reflect very well on the U.S. Colored Troops. But it was found that we did our job to the fullest, and we were not guilty of or responsible for the retreat at the Crater. They were retreating before we got to the battle. And they credited us with being good soldiers.

***After the fall of Petersburg in April, 1865, the men of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT were some of the first to enter Richmond. Can you describe for us how Richmond reacted to the presence of African American soldiers?***

The 28<sup>th</sup> USCT was the first to march into Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. And it was a great day when we marched into Richmond. The white members of the city of Richmond closed their shutters and doors and would not look at us. However, slaves there made a big celebration out of it. They whooped and hollered and wished us well. And a lot of them were looking for their loved ones because they just lived a couple of blocks down, but they never did get to see each other because they were slaves. We were very proud to be there to march into Richmond, Virginia with General Sherman.

***What was your unit's assignment while in Richmond?***

We took occupation of the city in charge of the Confederate prisoners, and they took offence of us being in charge of them. They complained to our commanding officers that they did not like having African American troops in charge of them.

***There is a very special personal event that occurred for you in Richmond. Will you tell us what that was?***

Well, there was some commotion outside of my tent. A soldier came in and said, "Sir, come out here, please! This woman says that she's your mother!" Remember, at the age of 12, I was sold away from my mother. And lo and behold, it WAS my mother, and she was looking for Garland White. I hadn't seen her for many years, and I met my mama then, and it was quite a warm and inspiring sight to see her.

***After the war was over, the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT had to serve for one more year, and this time was spent in Texas. How did you get to Texas?***

Finally we were sent east to a port city where we got on a boat and went all the way around Florida and went to Brazos Santiago, Texas, near the mouth of the Rio Grande. Then at Corpus Christi, Texas, that's where we got off.

***What were their responsibilities in Texas?***

It seems that the Apaches were raiding the Mexicans, and the Mexicans didn't like it, and they threatened to retaliate. The U.S. didn't want that to happen, and so the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT was charged with keeping the Apaches from raiding Mexican settlements and with keeping the Mexicans from coming across the border. We built roads there in Texas. We ran telegraph lines. We built bridges. Texas was the most horrendous place for us that we'd ever been in our military lives, Texas was. It was so hot. Men died from malaria, from scurvy. And just like our medical facilities had been during the war, the facilities for these sick men were inadequate.

***How did the Texans like your being there?***

We did our job. And part of our job was also to protect the settlers in Texas. But the Texans, who had been on the losing side of the war, felt they were being penalized by having African American soldiers there. The Texans were supposed to have set their slaves free, but they wouldn't do it. So we had to help in setting the slaves free in Texas. And that made the Texans a little mad.

***When the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT returned to Indianapolis, what sorts of events led to their mustering out?***

We stayed in Texas until we got orders to move and be mustered out. We returned to Indianapolis to muster out, and that was a glorious day! I'll never forget the day! January 8, 1866, our soldiers were looking spiffy and we marched down Washington Street to the Soldiers' Home. We had a sumptuous meal there, a meal fit for a king. The Republican paper reported on our march down Washington Street and called us "ebony soldiers."

***Wasn't there a special ceremony to honor the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT?***

Yes, there was. At the ceremony, Lt. Governor Baker spoke first, and I spoke next. I said we had fought a good fight. I said we were first class citizens at the cartridge box and that we were first class citizens back here in Indiana when we came back home.

Well, it took some time for that to be so. Nonetheless, that was my speech.

***What honors did the federal government give men of the USCT?***

It's quite noteworthy that there are more than 20 Medal of Honor winners from USCT troops in the Civil War. I thought that was quite noteworthy, because at the time we were formed, people said that we couldn't fight, didn't want to fight, and we proved to the contrary under extreme circumstances. We proved ourselves. Abraham Lincoln wrote a letter saying that we had proven our manhood, and we were worthy of everything we got.

***Looking back over the entire experience, what would you say were the greatest contributions these men of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT made to the war efforts?***

They proved themselves men. They proved themselves Americans, and they proved themselves worthy of being first class citizens of the United States. And they ended slavery. It was really the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution that ended slavery. The 14<sup>th</sup> amendment made African Americans citizens of the United States. And then in 1870, the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment gave African American men the right to vote. But it was truly the efforts of these brave men, the United States Colored Troops, that helped to turn the tide of the war and put an end to slavery in the United States, once and for all.

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## HANDOUT 4c

### STUDY QUESTIONS

#### Benjamin Trail, 28<sup>th</sup> USCT

1. In his letter of January 6<sup>th</sup>, Benjamin Trail describes some of his experiences at Camp Fremont in Indianapolis. List three of the activities he describes in this letter.

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2. By April 27<sup>th</sup> the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT is leaving Camp Fremont for Annapolis. At this point there is a problem with the soldiers' payment. Explain Sergeant Major Trail's thoughts concerning this problem.

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3. By June 4<sup>th</sup>, the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT is only 25 miles outside of Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. Sergeant Major Trail describes the fighting in the distance. If you were to write him a letter, what would you write to encourage him to stay strong and brave through the next few days?

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Bonus Question: Was Major General Burnside "shot dead" as had been reported or not? Site your source.

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HANDOUT 4d  
STUDY QUESTIONS

Chaplain Garland H. White

1. What was the message of the gourd song?

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2. What event caused Garland White to decide to escape and go to Canada?

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3. What church took the lead in encouraging African Americans to fight in the Civil War?

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4. How did Garland White finally officially get to be the Chaplain of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT? Why was he not given a chaplain's uniform at first?

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5. What were several factors that caused the disastrous events of the Battle of the Crater?

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6. What special event occurred for Chaplain White in Richmond?

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7. Describe the greatest contributions of the men of the 28<sup>th</sup> USCT.

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Handout 4c  
Study Questions Key  
Benjamin Trail, 28<sup>th</sup> USCT

1. Talking, singing, dancing, with more soldiers coming every day.
2. He wanted to take his pay. Since no one else was going to take their pay, and he was Sergeant Major, he wasn't going to "come down lower than anyone else."
3. Answers will vary.

Bonus: No.

Handout 4d  
Study Questions Key  
Chaplain Garland H. White

1. Find the gourd (the big dipper) in the constellations to find the North Star. Follow the North Star to freedom.
2. When Preston Brooks beat Congressman Charles Sumner for making an anti-slavery speech.
3. The African Methodist Episcopalian Church.
4. He wrote letters to Secretary of War Stanton and others and got the support of white officers.
5. The troops who were to attack first after the explosion were changed at the last minute. The explosion didn't go off on time. The Union troops regrouped quickly. Once in the "crater", the men had trouble getting out.
6. His mother, from whom he'd been separated at age 12, came looking for him and found him.
7. They proved themselves to be worthy of being first class citizens of the United States.

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## **Online Sources**

### **Civil War Soldiers and Sailor Home Page**

**<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss>**

An excellent source for battle summaries, organized by state or campaign. Also provides brief information about African American Civil War Sailors. Describes research that is currently being conducted by Howard University to determine the number of African American sailors who served during the Civil War. Includes contact for additional information.

### **Colonel Eli Lilly Civil War Museum**

**[www.state.in.us/iwm/civilwar/index.html](http://www.state.in.us/iwm/civilwar/index.html)**

Located in the base of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on the Circle in Indianapolis, the Colonel Eli Lilly Civil War Museum offers a virtual tour on its website. Directions to the museum, volunteer information, and a number of valuable links are also included.

### **Freetown Village Homepage**

**<http://www.freetownvillage.org>**

This living history museum of African American life in Indiana in 1870 provides excellent information and links regarding the Hoosier black experience in the mid-nineteenth century.

### **Harper's Weekly**

**[www.harpweek.com](http://www.harpweek.com)**

Great 19<sup>th</sup> century primary source with information on black Americans from 1857 - 1874 and Civil War African American Soldiers.

### **National Archives and Records Administration**

**<http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/usct/home.html>**

Lesson plan entitled: "The Fight for Equal Rights: Black Soldiers in the Civil War" provides a good background of the USCT (especially the 54<sup>th</sup>). Provides links to the Emancipation Proclamation, poster, pictures, and documents.

### **Walden Font Company**

**[www.waldenfont.com](http://www.waldenfont.com)**

All graphics in these lessons are from The Civil War Press compact disk. It is available for purchase through Walden Font Company, Purveyors of Historic Fonts and Clip-Art.

