

# We Fight, We Fight! A look at the Tuskegee Airmen bomber pilots in WWII



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[Photograph of several Tuskegee airmen attending a briefing in Ramitelli, Italy, March 1945]

## Lesson Overview:

In spite of adversity and limited opportunities, African Americans have played a significant role in U.S. military history over the past 300 years. They were denied military leadership roles and skilled training because many believed they lacked qualifications for combat duty. Before 1940, African Americans were barred from flying for the U.S. military. In 1941 Civil Rights organizations and the black press exerted pressure that resulted in the formation of an all African-American pursuit squadron based in Tuskegee, Alabama. They became known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

## Overview

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify the historical relevance African Americans played in military
- Evaluate the role of the U.S. in fighting the war militarily, diplomatically, and technologically across the world (e.g., Germany First strategy, Big Three Alliance, and the development of atomic weapons).
- Understand the role of strategic bombing in World War II.
- See how warfare changes as new weapons and technologies develop.
- Appreciate the positive contributions African Americans made in battle

Recommended time frame	150 minutes
Grade level	9-12
Curriculum fit	U.S. History, World History and Geography  <b>Era 7: Great Depression and World War II (1920-1945)</b>
Materials	Textbook, pictures, photos, movie, web

## Michigan State Learning Standards

	<p><b>USHG 7.2.2: U.S. and the Course of WWII</b> – Evaluate the role of the U.S. in fighting the war militarily, diplomatically, and technologically across the world (e.g., Germany First strategy, Big Three Alliance, and the development of atomic weapons). <b>USHG 7.2.3: Impact of WWII on American Life</b> – Analyze the changes in American life brought about by U.S. participation in World War II including: 1) mobilization of economic, military, and social resources; 2) role of women and minorities in the war effort; 3) role of the home front in supporting the war effort (e.g., rationing, work hours, taxes); 4) internment of Japanese-Americans.</p> <p><b>Common Core:</b> Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</p>
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## Procedures

	<p><b>Day One:</b> <b>Photo Analysis Handout:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at picture #1 below and complete the primary document analysis questions</li> <li>• Look at the book cover of fighter pilot Col. Alexander Jefferson and write two questions you would like to ask him.</li> <li>• Provide students with a map of Germany, with several places listed and their main contributions to the war effort (Example: Hamburg is a major port, supplying many raw materials to the war effort). Have students' list targets in order of importance to prevent the German troops from being ready for an</li> </ul>
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	<p>Allied attack.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a picture of an airplane from WWII and Tuskegee bomber plane. Have students compare and contrast several differences they notice. Help them notice design changes, change in use of materials, amount of weapons available, and more.</li> <li>• What role did women play in WWII at home based on this primary source photo?</li> <li>• Bessie Coleman is noted as one of the first African Americans in aviation what does this description mean to you as a means of perseverance?</li> <li>• This primary source map is dated Jan 15, 1944. What may have been the goal of the map and how may Tuskegee Airmen have contributed?</li> </ul> <p><b>Day Two:</b>  <b>Complete and then write a page relating to brotherhood as you know it today and give ideas of brotherhood in your community after viewing the video below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch clip from PBS as an introduction to topic: The Tuskegee Brotherhood: Bomber story  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mytxLNbwCMY&amp;feature=player_embedded">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mytxLNbwCMY&amp;feature=player_embedded</a></li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>	
	<p><b>Day Three:</b>  Create a timeline of WWII and include dates and activities of Tuskegee Airmen</p>
<b>Extension</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project on Bessie Coleman and contribution as first African American woman pilot</li> <li>• Oral History project on family member, community leader, etc. who has served in military and/or war</li> <li>• Construct a propaganda poster that depicts the role of the U.S. in fighting the war militarily, diplomatically, and technologically across the world. Use the poster in an oral presentation that explains the poster and evaluates the US role in the war.  <b>USHG 7.2.2, USHG 7.2.3</b></li> <li>• Write an essay that explains how the US participation in World War II resulted in American</li> </ul>

	<p>society moving toward and/or away from its core ideals found in the Declaration of Independence, US Constitution, and Bill of Rights. Use the documents provided, your knowledge of how the United States mobilized for the war effort, and the treatment of minorities during World War II. <b>USHG 7.2.3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What other minorities roles in military were from Army, marines and navy ( Red Ball Express drivers)</li><li>• Research Mayor Coleman A. Young and Davis Aerospace HS connection to African American pilots</li><li>• Speaker- Tuskegee Airmen ( can be a video or actual person)</li><li>• Field trip to Tuskegee Museum at Fort Wayne</li></ul>
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## Rubric

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Spelling and Capitalization</b>	Spelling and capitalization were checked by another student and are correct throughout.	Spelling and capitalization were checked by another student and were mostly correct.	Spelling and capitalization were mostly correct, but were not checked by another student.	There were many spelling and capitalization errors.
<b>Content/Facts</b>	Facts were accurate for all events reported on the timeline.	Facts were accurate for almost all events reported on the timeline.	Facts were accurate for most (~75%) of the events reported on the timeline.	Facts were often inaccurate for events reported on the timeline.
<b>Dates</b>	An accurate, complete date has been included for each event.	An accurate, complete date has been included for almost every event.	An accurate date has been included for almost every event.	Dates are inaccurate and/or missing for several events.
<b>Resources</b>	The timeline contained at least 8-10 events related to the topic being studied.	The timeline contained at least 6-7 events related to the topic being studied.	The timeline contained at least 5 events related to the topic being studied.	The timeline contained fewer than 5 events.
<b>Graphics</b>	All graphics are effective and balanced with text use.	All graphics are effective, but there appear to be too few or too many.	Some graphics are effective and their use is balanced with text use.	Several graphics are not effective

## Historical Background

When World War II began in 1939, African Americans were no strangers to military service. For hundreds of years blacks had risked their lives in conflicts such as the American Revolutionary War and the Civil War. In 1941, African Americans seized the opportunity to exhibit their patriotism in a new way: They trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama to become the first blacks in the military to fly and manage aircraft. Before this groundbreaking shift, skilled training remained off limits to African Americans because military personnel doubted blacks had the intelligence and talent to excel in leadership roles. Prior to the 1940s, the military actually banned blacks from serving as pilots. The Tuskegee Airmen proved that African Americans were just as capable as any other group of taking on complex missions and succeeding.

### Origins of the Tuskegee Airmen

Had civil rights groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People not swayed the War Department to train black servicemen in the U.S. Army Air Corps as pilots, flight instructors, and navigators and more, African Americans may have been relegated to remedial roles in the armed forces for years to come. Then, the military was segregated and denying African Americans the chance to excel would have largely gone unquestioned. Instead, from 1941 to 1946, nearly 1,000 blacks at the segregated Tuskegee Army Air Field received pilot training. Four squadrons made up the all-black, 332nd Fighter Group: the 99th, the 100th, the 301st and the 302nd.

### A Distinguished Group

The achievements of the Tuskegee Airmen are numerous. The Airmen boasted one of the lowest loss records in escorting bombers, according to Tuskegee University. Moreover, the 99th Squadron received Presidential Unit Citations in 1943 and 1944 for tactical air support and aerial combat. Also in 1944, two airmen found a German destroyer in Italy. The following year, the 332nd Fighter Group received the Presidential Unit Citation for its bomber escort mission in March to Berlin, Germany, where the Tuskegee Airmen wrecked a trio of German jet fighters and damaged a handful of others. By the time World War II ended, the Airmen had flown 1,578 missions and 15,533 sorties. To boot, they destroyed 261 enemy aircraft, and won more than 850 medals.

### Discrimination on the Home Front




When the Tuskegee Airmen returned home after valiantly defending the United States in World War II, they encountered fierce discrimination. One of the airmen, Alexander Jefferson, recalled his return to the country during a 2011 NPR interview. “Coming back on the boat...got to New York Harbor, the flags waving, the Statue of Liberty,” he remembered. “Walked down the gangplank, and a little soldier at the bottom said, ‘Whites to the right, n---ers to the left.’”

Because racial discrimination remained a pressing issue in the U.S. after World War II ended, many black veterans began to press for equal rights without regard to color both in and outside of the military. In April 1948, civil rights supporters won a major victory when the Air Force decided to racially integrate. Three months later, President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which desegregated the entire armed forces.

### **Legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen**

Fifty years after the Tuskegee Airmen fought heroically in World War II, President Bill Clinton approved legislation on Nov. 6, 1998 to create the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site at Moton Field in Tuskegee, Ala. The site includes a museum, national center and various programs in recognition of the Airmen's heroism. Nine years later, another president honored the Airmen. In 2007, President George W. Bush awarded the Airmen the Congressional Gold Medal. In addition to these honors, the Airmen have been recognized in movies such as the 1995 film "The Tuskegee Airmen" and the 2012 film "Red Tails."

## Primary Resources from the Library of Congress

Images	Description	Perm URL
	<p>Photograph shows several Tuskegee airmen attending a briefing</p>	<p><a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007675065/">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007675065/</a></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Title: [Photograph of several Tuskegee airmen attending a briefing in Ramitelli, Italy, March 1945]</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creator(s): <a href="#">Frissell, Toni, 1907-1988</a>, photographer</li> <li>Date Created/Published: [1945 March]</li> </ul>
	<p>Photograph shows left to right, Marcellus G. Smith, Louisville, Kentucky, and Roscoe C. Brown</p>	<p><a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007675063/">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007675063/</a></p> <p>Title: [Tuskegee airmen Marcellus G. Smith and Roscoe C. Brown, Ramitelli, Italy, March 1945]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creator(s): <a href="#">Frissell, Toni, 1907-1988</a>, photographer</li> <li>Date Created/Published: [1945 March]</li> </ul>
	<p>Women workers during WWII</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Bransby, David</a>, photographer</li> <li>Related Names: <a href="#">United States. Office of War Information.</a></li> <li>Date Created/Published: 1942 May.</li> </ul>





As the bulge is further reduced, notice the nine German divisions concentrated in western tip of the bulge.

Map  
(Part of  
Collecti  
on)

**Corpor  
ate  
name** Allied Forces. Army Group,  
12th. Engineer Section

**Main  
title** [January 15, 1945], HQ  
Twelfth Army Group  
situation map.

**Publis  
hed/Cr  
eated** [England?] : Twelfth Army  
Group, [1945]

**Relate  
d  
names** United States. Army. Army  
Group, 1st. Headquarters.

**Descri  
ption** 1 map : col. ; 47 x 52 cm.


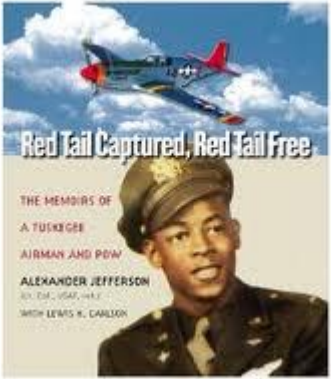
**Scale  
info** Scale 1:1,000,000.

**Collect  
ion** Allied Forces. Army Group,  
12th. Engineer Section. HQ  
Twelfth Army Group  
situation map (DLC)  
2001628569

**Additio  
nal  
format  
s** Available also through the  
Library of Congress web  
site as a raster image.

**Subjec  
ts** Ardennes, Battle of the,  
1944-1945--Maps.  
World War, 1939-1945--  
Campaigns--Ardennes--  
Maps  
Ardennes.

**LC  
classifi  
cation** G5701.S7 svar .A4

		<p><b>Geographic class no.</b> 5701</p> <p><b>Repository</b> Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 dcu</p> <p><b>Links</b> &lt;<a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g5701s.ict21225">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g5701s.ict21225</a>&gt;  HQ Twelfth Army Group situation map -- All maps: &lt;<a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g5701sm.gct00021">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g5701sm.gct00021</a>&gt;</p>
	<p>Bessie Coleman is noted as one of the first African Americans in aviation what does this description mean to you as a means of perseverance</p>	<p>Women in History. Bessie Coleman biography. Last Updated: 7/26/2012. Lakewood Public Library. Date accessed 7/26/2012.  &lt;<a href="http://www.lkwdpl.org/wihohio/colebes.htm">http://www.lkwdpl.org/wihohio/colebes.htm</a>&gt;</p>
	<p>P.O.W. Tuskegee Airman Col. Alexander Jefferson.</p>	<p>Jefferson, Alexander and Lewis. Carlson. <b>Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee. Airman and POW.</b> Fordham. University Press, 2005</p>



WWII  
American  
B-25  
bomber  
plane

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1992001165/PP/>

- [Palmer, Alfred T.](#), photographer
- Date Created/Published: 1942 Oct.
- Medium: 1 transparency: color.
- Reproduction Number: LC-DIG-fsac-1a35288 (digital file from original transparency) LC-USW361-145 (color film copy slide)
- Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.
- Call Number: LC-USW36-145 <P&P> [P&P]
- Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

# Handouts

## Photo Analysis Worksheet

### Step 1. Observation

A.

Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

B.

Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

Activities

People

Objects

### Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

### Step 3. Questions

A.

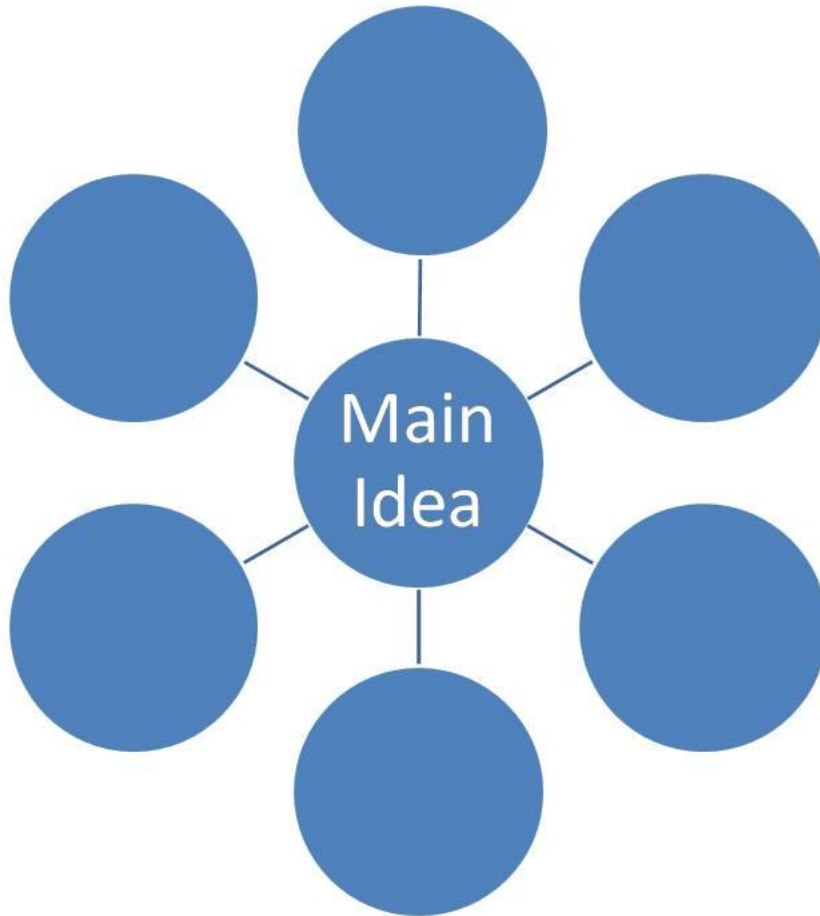
What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

Where could you find answers to them?

B.

**Designed and developed by the Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408**

- After watching video: The Tuskegee Brotherhood: Bomber story  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mytxLNbwCMY&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mytxLNbwCMY&feature=player_embedded)  
Complete the Web on idea of brotherhood and then write one page



Complete the following Timeline based on the information learned about World War II

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Time Line**

Write dates for each event in time order from left to right. Add details along the line.

