

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT – 2009-2012

Lesson Title – Civil War from Marisa Haralson

Grade – High School

Length of class period – 45-60 minutes

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

- ✓ What is the impact of soldiers in the war?
- ✓ How can you judge whether or not a speech is successful or effective?

Objectives – (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

- ✓ Students will be able to state an opinion about the black regiments, using examples from the resources to support their opinion.
- ✓ Students will analyze one main character's decisions and evaluate their role in the larger context.

Materials – (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?)

Glory. Dir. Edward Zwick. Perf. Matthew Broderick and Denzel Washington. Tri Star Pictures, 1989. DVD.

"The Descendants of the 29th Regiment." *The Descendents of the 29th Regiment*. Web. May-June 2007. <<http://conn29th.org/stories.htm>>.

Activities – (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

1. Complete journal entries after each class – three parts to each entry (summary, evaluation of character, opinion of events).
 1. In the first 5 minutes of class discuss the journal entries done for homework.
 2. In the last 10 minutes of class discuss the scenes viewed that day in order to understand what transpired and allow for the different points of view to be heard.
 3. Stop the movie at various points to have a question and answer, a discussion, or a debate about various situations, decisions, actions, etc.
 4. Create a question board for students to post questions on regarding events, dialogue, etc. At the beginning and end of class discuss those questions.
 5. At the conclusion of the movie – discuss and compare the experiences of the 54th Massachusetts to that of the 29th Connecticut (information provided on attached handout)

Assessment – (How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?)

The journal entries will be collected at the conclusion of the movie and graded on the three parts that must be in each entry.

Students will write a 5-paragraph essay on the hardships of soldiers during the Civil War – evidence must come from research, the movie, and the Connecticut handout.

Connecticut Grade Level Expectations

Ask relevant questions related to social studies/history to initiate, extend, or debate a point of view.

Use evidence to develop an interpretation of a historical event.

Describe how major events in United States history affected Connecticut citizens.

These letters are reprinted courtesy of the Connecticut Historical Society.

Oct 4th [1864] Near Richmond, VA

My Dear wife it has Been along time since i have ritten tou you seeing that their is no engage ment to day I thought I woold pen you a few lines to let you know that I am well as Common except some lame the res of the Boyes are well at present wee left petersburg Wednesday sep 28 for richmond va arived at deep Bottom thursday about 3 oClock in the morning it seamed to me as if i should drop down dead I was so tired it was a dark & foggy night two the Rebs pi[t]ched Battle with us thursday morning at 6 ½ Wee drove them Back about 4 miles the 8th Pensilvaney & 9th lost over three hundred men this was don in makin acharge wee the 29th Marched up the Balles did whistle aroun our heads dreadflley wee all expected that it was our last time the Rebs cept fiering for a long time But they finaley gave up after a while wee Could look ahead & see the men fall one after another wee had orders to drop under abank in which w[e] did very freeley & glad to get off so wee Just set their & look at the woonded men as they passed By some was shot in the face & eyes some in the arme & legs trying to get away this day is the 4th of october & I had a mes of string Beenes so Caled the Black Eyed Pea they grow 7 inches long I also found some Cotton growing & some was ripe & some was not so I thought I wold send you some of the cotton you will find the seed inside which is Black you can plant it in the spring earley it growes Just like our Buck wheat & Just as sprangley as wheat you might plant it in a box where the frost wont tuch it weehave had along spell of rainey weather North east storm the papers say that richmond is as good as taken Burney is on the east side Gen Grant on the south General Sher[i]dan & Gen Sherman on the west & our gun Boat fetching up the rear wee captured the Rebel Ram saturday their will be more Blood shed Before many dayes wee are fixing our Brest workes evry day expecting another Charge every day the rebs dont fire on us & wee dont fire on them But keep hard to work all the time the Boyes have toren down 3 howses & wold tore down another if the officers would let them Abby I sent you home one more ten dollar note in aletter to capt Boardman he sent me some postage stamps & one dolar in green Backs I rote for him to answer Back But I have not got any answer as yet wee have Been expecting to Be payed off But have not received any yet When wee do I shal send it home No more at present Give my regards to all my enquireing Friends Tell Jane Simones that I have not heard from Horace But once since wee left South Carolinia Tell triphnia Brown that I have heard from William afew dayes ago Joseph is well Amos C Brewster is well & Charles Paul is well & Alfred Reynoles Horace freeman Wilce & john & charles hasard all of them is well & Armenas Dier is quite well for him from your ever trew & loveing Husband Joseph O cross
Direct Mr Joseph O Cross Berneys Brigade Tenth Armeey Corps By Way fortres monroe
Please to Give my love to frans and rest of the children

A Letter From Jacob F. Spencer 1840 - Unknown

First Sgt. Jacob F. Spencer of Clinton was part of a regiment, skirmishing with such personal enemies in a patch of woods in Virginia in October 1864, when he captured three South Carolina soldiers. One of the prisoners made the issue even more personal. He would never have surrendered, he said, if he had known Spencer was a "nigger."

But Spencer won a medal for the capture, pinned on him by Major Gen. Godfrey Weitzel, the white officer commanding the separate, but allegedly equal, army division reserved for black regiments. Spencer's regiment was the 29th Connecticut, one of two raised in the state after the model of such successful black regiments as the 54th Massachusetts.

William Buckingham put out a call in November 1863 for men of color to form regiments, and hundreds signed up. Spencer enlisted as a private in New Haven three days before Christmas, listing his birthplace as Maryland and his most recent residence as Clinton. He gave his age as 23, his occupation as "laborer" and his marital status as single. He was 5 feet, 8 1/2 inches tall, eyes black, hair black. Under "complexion" the recruiting officer also filled in "black."

Spencer apparently made a good impression. A little over a week later, on New Years' Day, 1864, he was made first sergeant of Company D -- the highest-ranking black officer in the 100-member company. Such companies, and the regiment they made up, were commanded by white captains and lieutenants. Reaching full strength in March, the regiment went into months of training in Maryland, followed by guard duty in a liberated part of South Carolina. It quickly became clear that, despite promises, black troops were not to get equal treatment.

When the soldiers of the 29th Connecticut learned they would not be paid the promised pay, they were told to be patient.

"I ... was really disgusted with this failure on the part of the Government to give us a decent compensation for our work as soldiers," wrote Alexander Newton, another soldier in the 29th. "The officers advised us to take it and assured us that at the next payment we should receive our full compensation." Whether or not they got it, records show that at the end of August 1864, when the 29th had already been in battle for two weeks near Petersburg, Va., its soldiers had not been paid since April 30.

Arriving near Petersburg in mid-August, after four months of training and guard duty, part of the 29th went immediately into battle.

"I remember a twenty-pound cannon ball coming towards me, I could see it distinctly through the smoke," wrote Newton, who later became a minister. "It looked like it had been sent especially for me. I said quickly, 'Lord, you promised that a thousand should fall by my side but that it should not come nigh me.' It was quick praying, quick thinking, quick coming; but when the ball was within about three feet of me it struck the ground and bounded over my head."

The regiment took part in a number of minor skirmishes and reconnaissance over the next months, and in the assault on Fort Harrison near Richmond in September -- an engagement in which 14 African Americans, though none from the 29th, won medals of honor.

At the end of October the siege was in its fifth month, and Grant was ready to hunker down for the winter. But he thought he would try one more attack near Petersburg to capture a crucial railroad line. While he did this, the troops closest to Richmond -- including the 29th Connecticut -- would advance as a distraction. On Oct. 27, the soldiers of the 29th rose while it was still dark and marched for two hours, arriving at their position at 7 a.m. Their job was to skirmish with the farthest-forward Confederate pickets. The 600 men of the 29th beat the pickets back, slowly advancing to the first line of Confederate earthworks, where a battery of cannon opened up on them. They killed the battery crew, and in the lull that followed called out to the rebels, "How about Fort Pillow?" -- Referring to a Confederate massacre of black prisoners in Tennessee -- and "Look over here, Johnny, and see how niggers can shoot!"

At nightfall, their muskets fouled with powder residue, the 29th was still at the front. They were still there the next morning. "We held the pits for twenty-four hours," Newton wrote, "brought the rebels to their knees, brought down their flag and unfurled the Stars and Stripes to the breeze." Twelve members of the regiment had been killed and 69 wounded. It was in this 24-hour engagement that Jacob Spencer had his moment. In a letter to the regimental headquarters the next day, Company D's captain, Frederick E. Camp of Middletown, wrote: "First Sergt. Jacob F. Spencer, of Company D, with the assistance of three men whom he called to his aid, captured 3 prisoners belonging to the Eleventh South Carolina Regiment."

A long winter of trench life followed, but in the spring the siege was broken. Two companies of the 29th were the first infantry units into Richmond after the Confederates abandoned it. A few days later, they saw the jubilation of Richmond's African Americans as President Lincoln visited the city. Then the war was over. There were still hard times ahead for the 29th. The regiment was shipped to Texas to garrison a post there and found a land of fleas, mosquitoes, mud and disease. "It was a time of sore trials," wrote Newton. "One of our officers, Captain Clark, ought to have been with the Greys instead of the Blues, he had so little use for the Colored troops." He marched them "almost to death," and illness took men at the rate of 10 a day. Finally, in the fall of 1865, the 29th Connecticut was mustered out of the service and returned to Hartford. There Buckingham, the governor, addressed them in what he must have thought were reassuring terms: "Although Connecticut now denies you privileges which it grants to others, for no other apparent reason than because God has made you to differ in complexion, yet justice will not always stand afar off. Be patient."