

A Buffalo Soldier and His Horse

BACKGROUND

In 1866, Congress passed the “Act to Increase and Fix the Military Peace Establishment of the United States.” It called for the creation of 30 new army regiments, including 2 cavalry and 4 infantry that were to “be composed of colored men.” These all-Black regiments, organized in 1866-1867, became the Ninth and Tenth U.S. Cavalry and the Thirty-eighth, Thirty-ninth, Fortieth, and Forty-first U.S. Infantry Regiments.

In 1869, the infantry regiments were consolidated. The Thirty-eighth and Forty-first became the new Twenty-fourth Infantry, and the Thirty-ninth and Fortieth became the new Twenty-fifth Infantry.

Black men enlisted in the army for a variety of reasons. Many of them had been slaves prior to the Civil War. The U.S. Army not only offered them paying jobs but room and board as well. Some of the men simply wanted to get away, to see the Wild West, or to “make something of themselves.” Some of these new soldiers who joined the cavalry were men who had never ridden a horse or had the opportunity to learn horsemanship. They had to learn how to ride, to care for their horses, and to depend on them while out in the field.

Cavalry soldiers were horse soldiers—a title that denoted how they got around. For a man in the cavalry, the horse was his life. He fed, watered, and took care of his horse before he took care of himself. The well being of the horse could mean life or death for the soldier. On the frontier, it was the horse that offered a man transportation. Before the railroads, the trails were not well traveled, and in many places the watering holes were few and far between.

To be in the cavalry, a man had to be no taller than about 5’9” or 5’10” tall and weigh no more than 155-160 pounds. Smaller men were chosen for the cavalry out of consideration for the horse, which had to carry the man and his equipment. Bigger men became infantry soldiers.

It was the soldier’s horse that carried him from place to place and enabled him to participate in campaigns. His horse helped him not only to carry his gear, but to avoid enemy fire. The U.S. Army provided men with horses, but it was often hard to get horses that met government standards. This made it all the more important for soldiers to take good care of them.



Modern reenactment photo of Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Davis

Fort Davis

National Historic Site

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Curriculum Materials Grades 9-12

Student Activity: A Buffalo Soldier and his Horse

Name _____ Date _____

A Buffalo Soldier and His Horse – Step Into the Picture

Take a good look at the picture. You are going to become this Buffalo Soldier. You will take on his persona and give a 2- minute speech—telling about your life as a Buffalo Soldier, your horse, and the importance the horse plays in your life.

To step into the picture and accurately portray the part of this man, you will have to get into character. You will create a fictional history, based on what you have learned about the real Buffalo Soldiers. Use the 3-page primary source: “Muster and Descriptive List of Public Animals” of the 9th Cavalry, Troop H, July, 1871.

Imagine that you live in the 19th century. Answer the following questions about “your” Buffalo Soldier. Then using this information, write a 2-minute speech, talking from his point of view.

Fill in the blanks and/or circle the best answers for your character’s background.

My name is _____

I was born a free black / a slave in (city) _____ in the state of _____ in the year _____.

I am _____ years old.

I have _____ hair and _____ eyes and am _____ feet tall. I am skinny / muscular / fat or _____

My father’s name is _____ and he works as a _____.

My mother’s name is _____ and she works as a _____.

My parents live in _____.

I have _____ brothers and _____ sisters

I am the oldest / youngest / middle child.

I have had some / little / no schooling. _____

I can / cannot read or write. _____

I attend / do not attend the _____ church.

Before I joined the U.S. Army, I worked as a _____

In my spare time, I like to _____ and

I do or do not play any musical instruments. If so, what musical instrument and do you have it with you? _____

The experience that has influenced my life the most was when _____

The person who has been most influential in my life is _____
because he or she taught/showed me _____

I did / did not know how to ride a horse when I enlisted in the army and was assigned to a cavalry regiment. (If so, tell how you learned. If you did not know how to ride, explain why you had never ridden a horse.) _____

I first heard about the all-Black cavalry units in the U.S. Army being formed from _____
at _____

I decided to join the army because _____

I told my family / did not tell my family about my joining the army.
My family supports / does not support me because _____

The horse that I ride is named _____ because _____

What I like best about my horse is _____

What I like least about my horse is _____

Since joining the army, I have had to learn to _____

The hardest part about being in the cavalry is _____

What I miss most since enlisting in the U.S. Army is _____

What I like best about being a soldier in the U.S. Army is _____

Five years from now, I see myself _____

My Speech (use a separate piece of paper)

— names was composed near of water currents
 names of crop of 44 branches for the month of July 1877

Name	Description		Cephalopoda		How long in hands of collector	Name of collector	Rank	Appellation	Remarks
	Gr	Size	Color	Specimen					
Lightning	7	15	Bay	Asphalt	July 1877	Foley	Sergt	Country	
John Jackson	4	15	Black	"	"	William B. Smith	"	"	
Grate	7	15	"	"	"	Geo. J. Robinson	Capt	"	
Buck	4	15	Brown	"	"	Charles Henry	Sergt	"	
Wharley	8	15	Dr Brown	"	"	Charles Price	Private	"	
Bill	7	15	"	"	"	Marshall Campbell	"	"	
Wings	8	15	Black	"	"	Wm. Lee King	Sergt	"	
Ranger	7	15	Brown	"	"	So. J. Parsons	Private	"	
Thunder	7	14	Black	"	"	Fred. Hoag	"	"	
Botanica	9	15	Black	"	"	John Britton	Sergt	"	
Ward	8	15	Black	"	"	Calvin Ruffin	Private	"	
Marguerite	8	16	Black	"	"	Stannis Brown	Capt	"	
Bob	7	15	Bay	"	"	Ed. Moore	Private	"	
Bob Eagle	7	14	"	"	"	John Hance	"	"	
Quide	12	15	"	"	"	Stephen Wade	"	"	
Tommy	8	15	Brown	"	"	Robt Turner	"	"	
John Thompson	9	15	Black	"	"	John Thompson	Capt	"	

Registered March 23 and value paid

Collected July 27, 1877

Inspector's name 1877 and value paid

Inspector's name 1877 and value paid

Inspector's name 1877 and value paid

Muster and Descriptive List of Public Houses in the 2nd H¹ 9th Cavalry for the month of July 1871 (continued)

No.	Name	Description		Acquired		Condition	Name of Officer	Rank	Affiliate	Remarks
		Age	Sex	How	When					
18	Wagoner	19	Male	Gray	Aug 2, 66	Servicable	Henry W. Young	Private	Company	See work
19	Old Aired	5	Male	Brown	"	Unserviceable	Alfred Schofield	"	"	"
20	D. L.	7	Male	Bay	"	Servicable	Amiel Morris	"	"	"
21	Andersen	7	Male	"	"	Servicable	Anderson Borden	"	"	"
22	Eagle	10	Male	White	"	Unserviceable	James Whites	"	"	See back
23	Spencer	5	Male	Gray	"	Servicable	Mr. Blanchard	"	"	"
24	Boagell	9	Male	Blue	"	Unserviceable	Erwinly Smith	Squad	"	Unserviceable
25	Corstgen	9	Male	Black	"	Servicable	P. i.	Private	"	"
26	Clipsy	5	Male	Bay	June 1871	Unserviceable	James Whites	"	"	See back
27	Spiff	8	Male	Brown	"	Servicable	Mr. Blanchard	"	"	"
28	Spicer	15	Male	Bay	"	Unserviceable	Erwinly Smith	Squad	"	Unserviceable
29	John	5	Male	Small	"	Servicable	Edmund Durst	Private	"	"
30	Judge Bacon	15	Male	Bay	"	Unserviceable	John Wilson	Private	"	See back
31	Princeton	15	Male	Brown	"	Servicable	Edmund Robinson	Private	"	"
32	Carroll	7	Male	Small	"	Unserviceable	John Wilson	"	"	See back
33	See	9	Male	Bay	"	"	Wm. Wright	"	"	"
34	Carl Eaton	1	Male	Small	June 1871	Unserviceable	William Younger	"	"	See back

