

## 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.



*Modern reenactment photo of Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Davis*

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.

# 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 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, Troop H, July, 1871.

Imagine that you live in the 19<sup>th</sup> 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)



Muster and Descriptive list of Public Houses in the 2nd H<sup>1</sup> 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	1/2	Gray	By purchase Jan 23, 66	Serveable	Henry W. Young	Private	Boundary	See work
19	Old Aired	5	1	Brown	"	Unserveable	Alfred Schofield	"	"	"
20	D. L.	7	1	Bay	"	Serveable	Amiel Morris	"	"	"
21	Andersen	7	1/2	"	"	Serveable	Anderson Borden	"	"	"
22	Eagle	10	3	White	"	Unserveable	James Whites	"	"	See back
23	Spencer	5	-	Gray	"	Serveable	M. Blanchard	"	"	"
24	Boagell	9	2	Blue	"	Unserveable	Lewis Smith	Squad	"	Unserveable
25	Wortman	9	2	Black	"	Serveable	P. J. ...	Private	"	"
26	Clipsy	5	2	Bay	By purchase June 1871	Unserveable	James Whites	"	"	See back
27	Spiff	8	-	Brown	"	Serveable	M. Blanchard	"	"	"
28	Spicer	15	1	Bay	"	Unserveable	Lewis Smith	Squad	"	Unserveable
29	John	5	2	Smel	"	Serveable	Edmund Durst	Private	"	"
30	Judge Bacon	5	1	Bay	"	Unserveable	Edmund Durst	Private	"	"
31	Princeton	15	-	Brown	"	Serveable	Edmund Durst	Private	"	"
32	Carroll	7	8	Smel	By purchase Jan 4, 66	Serveable	John Wilson	"	"	See back
33	See	9	3	Bay	"	"	See Wright	"	"	"
34	Carl Ester	1	-	Smel	By purchase Jan 1871	Unserveable	William Younger	"	"	See back



