



Buffalo Soldiers: Medal of Honor Recipients

Materials:

- PowerPoint: **Buffalo Soldiers: Medal of Honor Recipients**
- Video on Buffalo Soldiers <https://www.britannica.com/topic/buffalo-soldiers>
- Video, **Buffalo Soldiers: The Unknown Army**
<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/programs/buffalo-soldiers/>

Plan of Instruction:

1. **Introduction:** By the end of the Civil War, the War Department saw the value of black soldiers; after all, twenty-six black Union soldiers were Medal of Honor recipients. In 1866, Congress passed the Army Organization Act to authorize six black regiments, two were cavalry regiments. Their primary responsibilities were to help control the Native Americans of the plains, protect settlers from cattle rustlers and thieves, build forts and roads, erect telegraph lines, and provide protection for stagecoaches, wagon trains, and railroad crews along the Western front.

The two all-black cavalry regiments became the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalries, the famous “Buffalo Soldiers.” They were called Buffalo Soldiers by the Native Americans because of their dark curly hair, which resembled the buffalo’s coat, and the soldiers’ fierce fighting ability. The black cavalry’s primary mission was to keep order in areas disrupted by hostile Indians who were angry about the broken promises of the federal government. It was ironic that former slaves were tasked with removing Native Americans from their land.

The Buffalo Soldiers performed their duties with honor and distinction over the most forbidding terrain and extremes of climate the United States offered. Eighteen African Americans earned the Medal of Honor in the American Indian Wars (1866-1890).

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/buffalo-soldiers>

2. **Lecture:**

- a. **Slide 1: *Buffalo Soldiers: Medal of Honor Recipients***

- b. **Slide 2: “Buffalo Soldiers”** (Read slide)

- c. **Slide 3: Group Slide** The 9th and 10th Cavalries protected stagecoach and mail routes, built, and maintained forts, mapped vast areas of the Southwest, strung hundreds of



miles of telegraph lines, and established law and order in an area full of outlaws, Mexican revolutionaries, and hostile Native Americans.

- d. **Slide 4: Sergeant John Denny, 9th U.S. Cavalry (1846-1901)** Sergeant Denny's Medal of Honor citation reads, "Removed a wounded comrade, under fire, to a place of safety." He earned the Medal of Honor on September 18, 1879, at Las Animas Canyon, New Mexico. It took fifteen years before it was recognized and approved. Sergeant Denny rescued wounded Private Freeland during a battle with Chief Victorio and his band of Apaches, who had the 9th Cavalry under heavy fire. Denny ran out through heavy fire on both sides to successfully bring Private Freeland to safety.
- e. **Slide 5: Indian Scouts** Before 1865, several slaves escaped from their masters and sought refuge among the Seminoles in Florida. The Black Seminoles later moved to Mexico and were recruited by the U.S. Army to act as lookouts for the Buffalo Soldiers. Four of these scouts, Pompey Factor (1849-1928), Adam Payne (1843-1877), Isaac Payne (1854-1904), and John Ward (1847-1911), received the Medal of Honor. Because most of the Seminole scouts were of African descent, they were assigned to the all-black 9th and 10th Cavalries known as the Buffalo Soldiers.
- f. **Slide 6: Corporal Isaiah Mays, 24th U.S. Infantry (1858-1925)** Corporal Mays earned the Medal of Honor on February 18, 1890. His citation reads, "Gallantry in the fight between Paymaster Wham's escort and robbers. Mays walked and crawled 2 miles to a ranch for help." Corporal Mays served as part of an escort for Major Joseph Wham, Paymaster, U.S. Army, who was transporting \$38,345.10. Robbers ambushed Corporal Mays and troops, and a significant battle incurred. As many of the troops were wounded, Corporal Mays went for help. The robbers successfully obtained the payroll, but Corporal Mays was awarded the Medal of Honor for his fighting and bravery.
- g. **Slide 7: Other Medal of Honor Winners** (Read Slide)
- h. **Slide 8: Sergeant Thomas Shaw, 9th U.S. Cavalry (1846-1895)** Sergeant Shaw earned his Medal of Honor for his spirited defense of his comrades against Nana and his renegade Apaches on August 12, 1881. His citation read, "Forced the enemy back after stubbornly holding his ground in an extremely exposed position and prevented the enemy's superior numbers from surrounding his command."



i. **Slide 9: Buffalo Soldiers Escorting Stagecoach, Kansas, 1867** www.blackpast.org.

j. **Slide 10: 1st Sergeant Moses Williams, 9th U.S. Cavalry (1849-1899)**

Sergeant Williams earned his Medal of Honor on August 16, 1881, at Cuchillo Negro Mountains, New Mexico. His citation reads, "Rallied a detachment, skillfully conducted a running fight of three or four hours, and by his coolness, bravery and unflinching devotion to duty in standing by his commanding officer in an exposed position under heavy fire from a large party of Indians saved the lives of at least three of his comrades." Apache War Chief, Nana, led the attack against the leadership of Sergeant Moses, and eventually, Nana broke off the engagement and vanished into the mountains.

k. **Slide 11: Sergeant William McBryar, 10th U.S. Cavalry (1861-1941)**

Sergeant McBryar earned his Medal of Honor on March 7, 1890 by tracking through rough terrain and fighting Apaches that killed a man. Sergeant McBryar's citation reads, "Distinguished himself for coolness, bravery and marksmanship while his troop was in pursuit of hostile Apache Indians."

l. **Slide 12: Sergeant Henry Johnson, 9th U.S. Cavalry (1850-1904)**

Sergeant Johnson earned the Medal of Honor in action against Ute Indians at the battle of Milk River, Colorado, from September 29 to October 5, 1879. His citation reads, "Voluntarily left the fortified shelter and under heavy fire at close range made the rounds of the pits to instruct the guards, fought his way to the creek and back to bring water to the wounded."

m. **Slide 13: Photo of Buffalo Soldier, circa 1890**

n. **Slide 14: Sergeant Brent Woods, 9th U.S. Cavalry (1850-1906)**

Sergeant Woods earned the Medal of Honor in his pursuit of Apache War Chief Nana. Woods led troopers in a charge against Nana, and Nana fled and found refuge in Mexico. Sergeant Woods was recognized for saving the lives of his comrades and citizens at Gavilan Canyon, New Mexico.

o. **Slide 15: Sergeant Benjamin Brown, 24th U.S. Infantry (1859-1910)**



Sergeant Brown earned his Medal of Honor on May 11, 1889, defending the payroll for Major Joseph W. Wham. Robbers overpowered his troops, and the payroll was abandoned to the robbers. Sergeant Brown tried to protect his men until he was shot in the abdomen, and then he was shot in both arms; that would end his fight.

p. Slide 16: Photograph of Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Robinson, Nebraska

Standing: Sergeant James Wilson; 1st Sergeant David Badie; Sergeant Thomas Shaw

Sitting: Chief Trumpeter Stephen Taylor; Sergeant Edward McKenzie; Sergeant Robert Burley; Sergeant Zekiel Sykes (From *Black Valor: Buffalo Soldiers & The Medal of Honor*)

q. Slide 17: Summary (Read slide) Share video Buffalo Soldiers: The Unknown Army

3. Citation:

45-minute Video on Buffalo Soldiers

<https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=buffalo+soldiers#id=3&vid=1e8ebdf29d2aaa79134822185287e917&action=click>

Other videos:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/buffalo-soldiers>

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/programs/buffalo-soldiers/>

Resource for Teaching Materials from the National Archives

<https://www.docsteach.org/>

Material for Buffalo Soldiers: Indian Scouts

<https://texashillcountry.com/bracketville-seminole-negro-indian/>

Material for Indian Scouts

<https://arizonahistoricalociety.org/2020/07/28/buffalo-soldiers-and-indian-scouts/>

African American Recipients of the Medal of Honor by Charles W. Hanna, Published 2002 by McFarland & Company, Inc

List of African American Medal of Honor Winners

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_African-American_Medal_of_Honor_recipients