

**Title:** To Desegregate the United States military or not ...

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**Course:** American History

**Time Frame:** 1-2 class periods

**Subjects:**

Civil Rights

**Grade Levels:**

9, 10, 11, 12

**Classroom/Homework Activity to be performed:**

- The students will analyze two groups of primary sources documents related to the desegregation of the armed forces on July 26, 1948. They will work together cooperatively to gain a broader understanding of the pressures placed on the President and use various letters written to President Harry S. Truman in regards to the desegregation of the military.
- In this lesson, students will be asked to analyze two groups of the letters written to President Truman concerning the desegregation of the United States military. One group of letters will be supportive of the Desegregation of the US military and the second group of letters will voice opposition to the desegregation of the military.

**Rationale:**

- Using and analyzing primary sources forces students to investigate more deeply into the issue of segregation in America. The desegregation of the armed forces was a significant step toward the civil rights movement, but it also built upon the actions of the African-American soldiers during World War I and World War II.

**Lesson objectives - the student will:**

1. Students will read and evaluate primary source letters.
2. Students will experience historical empathy.
3. Students will practice higher order thinking.
4. Students will analyze primary source letters and make an informed decision using the information.

**District, state, or national performance and knowledge standards/goals/skills met:**

Missouri Standards

2. Continuity and change in the history of Missouri, the United States and the world
6. Relationships of the individual and groups to institutions and cultural traditions
7. The use of tools of social science inquiry (such as surveys, statistics, maps, documents)

Common Core Standards:

### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3](#)

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

#### **Secondary materials (book, article, video documentary, etc.) needed:**

- Prezi or PowerPoint presentation on the events following World War II
- Textbook
- Related videos

#### **Primary materials (book, article, video documentary, etc.) needed:**

- The Truman Presidential Library and Museum website includes links to digital copies of a number of the documents referenced in this lesson, plus many others. The library's website is [www.trumanlibrary.org](http://www.trumanlibrary.org). Click on the "Education" link and then click on "Primary Documents." Next, click on "Desegregation of the Armed Forces." At the top of the desegregation page, click on "Documents." The titles of the documents used in this lesson are below:

#### Support of Desegregation Letters:

1. Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Dagen to Harry S. Truman, June 15, 1948.
2. A. Philip Randolph to Harry S. Truman, with attached White House memos, July 7, 1948.
3. Leon Henderson to Harry S. Truman, July 22, 1948.
4. Esther Davis to Harry S. Truman, with reply by Matthew Connelly, July 30, 1948.
5. Leonard Brown to Harry S. Truman, with reply by David Niles, April 17, 1951.
6. Marshall Ross to Harry S. Truman, August 10, 1951.

#### Opposition to Desegregation Letters:

1. Charles Mole to Adjutant General, with reply by Marcus Ray, December 14, 1945.
2. Memo re: comments of Representative Rankin, .n.d.
3. Joseph Beauharnais to Harry S. Truman, June 24, 1949.
4. Worthington Thompson to Philleo Nash, with attached report, March 20, 1950.

#### **Full description of activity or assignment:**

1. Prior to the lesson, students will have studied World War II and post-World War II America. The students will have covered the role of African American soldiers in WWI and WWII and the "Double-V for Victory"

campaign. The students will have also studied the multiple levels of violence and Jim Crow laws that many African American people suffered in post-WWII America.

2. At the beginning of class, the teacher will divide the students into groups of 3-4. Each group will receive a packet of letters written to President Truman concerning the desegregation of the US military.
3. After reading the letters, each group will "advise" President Truman in what course of action the group feels is the most beneficial to President Truman and the American people.

### **Full explanation of the assessment method and/or scoring guide:**

1. After reading the documents (letters) each group will complete a document analysis sheet on each of the letters that the group received (2-4 documents). Click on link for the sheet: <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/educ/docanal2.pdf>
  
1. Students will be required to defend the group's position and discuss the position at the debate. They are expected to write a paragraph on which option they prefer and defend their support of that option. They will bring this paper to the debate and use it as talking points in the course of the debate.