

# **BLACK HISTORY MONTH: DISCUSSION GUIDE**

## **OVERVIEW**

What do a civil rights leader, the Negro Leagues, 19<sup>th</sup>-century soldiers, and folktales have in common? They all represent one small piece of the rich history of black culture in the United States. February is Black History Month. It was established in 1926 so that all Americans could learn more about the history and contributions of African Americans.

Use this discussion guide and related videos and activities in your classroom to help students explore events and individuals that have shaped African-American culture in the United States.

## **CLASSROOM DISCUSSION**

1. Show the segment “Martin Luther King” from the “Heroes of American History” video.

Discuss Dr. King’s work with your students:

- What were Dr. King’s goals?
- What methods did Dr. King use to change laws relating to civil rights, as well as people’s attitudes towards blacks?
- How was Dr. King’s approach to civil disobedience different from other people who have fought injustice?
- Was Dr. King successful?

Brainstorm causes that would be worthy of civil disobedience today and list them on the board. Discuss whether Dr. King’s nonviolent methods would still work today.

2. Show the segment “The Integration of Major League Baseball” from “The Playing Field” video. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)

Discuss how the integration of Major League Baseball affected the Negro Leagues. Then divide the class into small groups and have each group debate whether the demise of the Negro Leagues was good or bad. Make sure students consider the following points:

- What were the Negro Leagues and why did they exist?
- Why were the Negro Leagues a symbol of segregation?
- How did the opportunities for African Americans to play baseball change after the integration of Major League Baseball?
- Why didn’t the Negro Leagues survive?
- What effect did the demise of the Negro Leagues have on African Americans?
- What effect did the integration of professional baseball have on African Americans in other aspects of society?

Ask a volunteer from each group to summarize their conclusions.

3. Show the segment “Efforts of the Buffalo Soldiers in the American West” from the “Buffalo Soldiers” video. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)

Have students research the buffalo soldiers and then write a one-page essay about them.

Their essays should address the following questions:

- Who were the buffalo soldiers?
  - When and where did they serve?
  - Why did these people join the military?
  - What duties or jobs did buffalo soldiers perform?
  - What contributions did the buffalo soldiers make to American history?
4. Show the segment “Bruh Fox and Doc Rabbit Build a House” from the “African and African-American Folktales” video. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)  
Discuss with students why people tell stories. Then ask students to write a paragraph explaining why enslaved African-Americans may have told the “Bruh Fox” tale.
    - What is this story’s message?
    - What does the story tell us about slave culture?
    - Why would this story be passed down from generation to generation?

## **ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

### **National Council for Social Studies**

The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This discussion guide addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environments
- Individual Development and Identity
- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Civic Ideals and Practice

## **WORD SEARCH**

### **Notable Americans**

1. Martin Luther King
2. Rosa Parks
3. Frederick Douglass
4. Crispus Attucks
5. Mary McLeod Bethune
6. Dorothy Dandridge
7. George Washington Carver
8. Dred Scott

9. Thurgood Marshall
10. Langston Hughes
11. Sojourner Truth
12. Harriet Tubman