

Google Arts & Culture

Learn Together: How the National Park Service Commemorates African Americans



Using the lesson plan and Google Arts & Culture resources

This lesson plan is designed to support you as you explore Google Arts & Culture stories and exhibits related to the lesson topic. The images you will see here are just a sample of the media—texts, images, audio, and video—available to you on the Google Arts & Culture website. A parent or teacher might be guiding you through the lesson, or you might choose to complete it on your own.

All you need to access the lesson is an internet connection and a web browser. You may want to take notes, whether you do that digitally or with paper and pen.

The lesson plan has an **introduction**, which will describe the topic and provide some background information that will help you understand what you are seeing, hearing, and reading. Then the lesson will take you on a journey from one **Story** or **Exhibit** to another, fill in some details along the way, and pose **questions** that will help you focus on important ideas. Some lesson plans include a **project** related to the lesson topic. All end with a **quiz** and some **ideas for exploring the topic further**.

The lesson plan includes **questions** about the main stories and exhibits, and there is also a **quiz**. You will want to write answers to the questions in a notebook or on a piece of paper. Then you can check all your answers when you've finished the lesson.

Resources on the Google Arts & Culture website include Themes, Stories, Museum Views, items and images.

- ❖ **Themes** bring together stories, exhibits, collections, images, audio, and video files that relate to a topic.
- ❖ In a **Story**, clicking on the arrow on the right side of a slide will move you forward. The arrow on the left side takes you back. Sometimes, clicking on the right arrow will zoom you in on an image. Just keep clicking to keep moving forward. Audio and videos on slides will play automatically. Clicking on an image title will take you to a page with more information about it.
- ❖ In **Museum Views**, you move through a 3D space. Click to move forward. Click, hold, and move the cursor left or right to turn.
- ❖ An **item** will take you to an individual **image**, where you can zoom in and sometimes read more about the artefact.



In this lesson, you will learn about:

- ❖ how the National Park Service (NPS) was established.
- ❖ why it is important to examine, explore, and preserve places in the United States.
- ❖ some important Black historical sites commemorated by the NPS.
- ❖ the lives and experiences of pioneering Black people in the US.

You will:

- ❖ view some stories and exhibits about historic places associated with Black history and culture in the United States.
- ❖ answer some questions about what you have seen and read.

This lesson will take **30–45 minutes** to complete.



**Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site
National Park Service**

Learn Together: The National Park Service Commemorates African Americans

Hundreds of thousands of people visit the many sites associated with the National Park Service (NPS) every year. Created by an act signed by President Woodrow Wilson on August 25, 1916, the National Park Service system comprises 422 areas, covering more than 85 million acres, including national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

The NPS is responsible for hundreds of national historic sites, or properties associated with the lives of people, events, activities, or developments that were important in the past. National historic sites honor important historical figures by preserving their homes and telling their stories through the artifacts, papers, and photographs of that person's life.

African Americans contribute vitally to the history and culture of the United States. Therefore, it follows that many NPS national historic sites are dedicated to prominent African Americans. Visitors learn how African Americans shaped the history and culture of the United States by exploring their lives, homes, and institutions.

As you view the exhibits and stories in this lesson, think about these questions:

- ❖ What makes a site significant enough to become a part of the National Parks Service?
- ❖ Why study history and culture by examining the historic sites of the National Parks Service?
- ❖ What do national historic sites teach us about Black culture and history in the United States?



The NPS: Exploring African American Heritage

At 110 ½ E. Leigh Street in Richmond, Virginia, a stately townhouse stands. Although it resembles other houses in Jackson Ward, a premier African American neighborhood during the 1920s, this house stands apart because its owner played a special role in promoting economic opportunities and civil rights for African Americans during the Jim Crow era. The townhouse, once owned by Maggie Lena Walker, is just one example of the many places the National Park Service preserves across the United States. By learning about private homes and public and religious institutions, people can discover how African Americans helped to shape the history and culture of America.

Click [here](#) to learn about national historic sites dedicated to important African Americans.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What is special about the house at 110 ½ E. Leigh Street?
2. If you visit Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, what will you mainly learn about?
3. Based on the people and places highlighted by the NPS, what is one way that African Americans helped shape the United States? Present your answer in one or two paragraphs. Cite evidence from the exhibit to support your ideas.

To learn about the National Park service, click [here](#).

Maggie L. Walker House Exterior, circa 1922
Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, National Park Service



The Father of the Civil Rights Movement: Frederick Douglass

Born an enslaved person in Maryland in 1818, Frederick Douglass became one of the most famous men in nineteenth-century America. After his daring escape from slavery to New York City in 1838, he championed civil rights and fought to end slavery, becoming a traveling lecturer in the United States and overseas. Douglass aided other freedom seekers and advised Abraham Lincoln. He held several national appointments, including U.S. minister to Haiti. As an author and journalist, he published speeches, articles, and autobiographies, and he founded a newspaper. Frederick Douglass rose through determination, brilliance, and eloquence to shape the American nation.

Click [here](#) to learn about Frederick Douglass and his home at Cedar Hill.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What is the name of Frederick Douglass's last estate?
2. Why do you think Douglass has been called "the father of the civil rights movement"?
3. Douglass reportedly once said that he uses his "voice and pen, in season and out of season...to stand for freedom of all colors..." Explain what you think he meant by that statement.

To learn more about Frederick Douglass, click [here](#).



Civil Rights Activist and Entrepreneur: Maggie L. Walker

As a civil rights activist and pioneering entrepreneur, Maggie Lena Walker (1864–1934) devoted herself to uplifting the African American community in Richmond, Virginia, and in the nation as a whole. Walker often highlighted her own success, inspiring other African Americans. Her home was a testament to her success story: the daughter of a former slave who rose to prominence on the national landscape in 1903 as the nation's first African American female bank president. In addition to her work empowering other African Americans economically, she emphasized education, civic engagement, and gender equality as the path towards racial justice during the Jim Crow era.

Click [here](#) to learn about Maggie Walker and her home.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. Where did Maggie Lena Walker make her home and business?
2. Why is Maggie Lena Walker celebrated today?
3. Explain the meaning of this statement.

“Mrs. Walker strove to make her success visible as a means to inspire others to follow in her footsteps.”

To learn about Maggie L. Walker’s economic and civil rights legacy, click [here](#).

Pioneers of the U.S. Military: The Tuskegee Airmen

Before 1940, African Americans were barred from flying for the U.S. military. Civil rights organizations and the Black press exerted pressure that resulted in the formation of an all African-American pursuit squadron based in Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1941. The servicemen in this squadron became known as the Tuskegee Airmen. They overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of World War II. They proved conclusively that African Americans could fly and maintain sophisticated combat aircraft. The Tuskegee Airmen's achievements, together with the men and women who supported them, paved the way for full integration of the U.S. military.

Click [here](#) to learn about the Tuskegee Airmen and the Tuskegee Institute.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. Who were the Tuskegee Airmen?
2. What were some of the achievements of the Tuskegee Airmen?
3. Do some research on one of the pilots of either the 99th Fighter Squadron or the 332nd Fighter Group. Then, write one or two paragraphs about his life.

To learn about African Americans in the U.S. Military, click [here](#).

Quiz

Read the questions and write your answer in your notebook or on a piece of paper.

1. Whose home served as the headquarters for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History?
2. What happened at the Edmund Winston Pettus Bridge on March 7, 1965?
3. How did Frederick Douglass show his support for women's rights?
4. Why did Frederick Douglass keep the book *Seraph, Baltimore Collection of Church Music (1835)*?
5. What "modern technology" was showcased in Maggie Walker's home during the early 1900s?
6. Why did Maggie Walker furnish her library with books, diplomas, and portraits of Walker's accomplished African American contemporaries?
7. Where is the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site located?
8. Tuskegee Army Air Field was a segregated military base. What does this mean?

Explore Further

This lesson has given you some vocabulary to talk about some issues and ideas related to Black history and culture. To learn more about Black history and culture in the United States, click [here](#).



It's Your Turn!

In this lesson, you learned about the National Parks Service and how it honors and preserves important people and places in the United States, including significant contributions made by African Americans. Now it's time for you to do something. Here are some ideas for projects that you can do at home or in the classroom.

- ❖ Seemingly ordinary objects carry an important meaning. For example, the financial success of Maggie L. Walker afforded her the use of the the fan in the photo—the world's first electric household appliance. Find an object in your own home that says something important about you or someone in your family. Write two or three paragraphs describing the object and explaining its significance.
- ❖ Research National Historic Sites of interest to you. Then, make a travel map that marks each location. Be sure to include a drawing or photograph of each site with a brief caption that explains why it earned its designation.
- ❖ Choose one of the African Americans that you have learned about in this lesson. Make a presentation in which you explain how the place in which they lived or worked was significant to their success. Then, share your presentation in person or online through an approved social media site.

Answers

The NPS: Exploring African American Heritage

1. The house at 110 ½ E. Leigh Street is special because it belonged to entrepreneur and civil rights activist Maggie L. Walker.
2. If you visit Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, you will mainly learn about the story of Brown v. Board of Education, which ended legal segregation in public schools.
3. Paragraphs will vary but should demonstrate that African Americans, despite facing personal racial injustice, fought for equal rights and economic opportunities for all Americans.

The Father of the Civil Rights Movement: Frederick Douglass

1. Cedar Hill is the name of Frederick Douglass's last estate.
2. Sample Answer: Frederick Douglass is "the father of the civil rights movement" because he was one of the first individuals to successfully champion civil rights during the 19th century. He did so through his personal accomplishments and civil work.
3. Answers will vary but students should demonstrate an understanding that Frederick Douglass worked for equal rights.

Civil Rights Activist and Entrepreneur: Maggie L. Walker

1. Maggie Walker made her home and business in Richmond, Virginia.
2. Maggie Walker is celebrated today because she was the nation's first African American female bank president and worked toward education, civic engagement, and gender equality as the path towards racial justice during the Jim Crow era.
3. Answers will vary but students should demonstrate an understanding that Maggie Walker surrounded herself with fine things because she had earned them during a time when most African Americans were prohibited from economic opportunities because of racial injustice.

Pioneers of the U.S. Military: The Tuskegee Airmen

1. The Tuskegee Airmen were the first all African-American pursuit squadron in the U.S. military.
2. They proved conclusively that African Americans could fly and maintain sophisticated combat aircraft, and they paved the way for full integration of the U.S. military.
3. Answers will vary.



Portrait of Robert M. Glass, Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site

Answers

Quiz

1. Dr. Carter G. Woodson's home served as the headquarters for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.
2. Voting rights marchers were violently confronted by law enforcement personnel on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7, 1965.
3. Frederick Douglass showed his support for women's rights by participating in the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848.
4. Frederick Douglass kept the book because it reminded him of his escape from slavery.
5. Electricity, specifically and electric lamp, was showcased as an example of "modern technology" in Maggie Walker's home.
6. These objects conveyed that the Walkers were not just a wealthy family, but one that was both well-educated and well-connected.
7. Tuskegee Airmen National History Site is located at Motion Field in Tuskegee, Alabama.
8. It means that everyone who worked on and at the airfield was African American and kept separate from White military personnel.