



## ***Discover Colonel Young's Protest Ride for Equality and Country: A Lightning Lesson from Teaching with Historic Places, featuring the historic Colonel Charles Young House***



*Credit: National Afro-American Museum & Cultural Center and the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection*

When the United States entered World War I, segregation was entrenched in military culture as well as civilian society. It put barriers up to prevent African Americans from enlisting. Despite this, about 380,000 African Americans served in the U.S. military during the war.

Colonel Charles Young was the highest-ranking African American Army officer in 1918. Despite an impressive leadership record, the Army refused Young's request to command troops in Europe. Military leaders told him he was not healthy enough to serve.

To prove his fitness, Young made a difficult ride on horseback from his home in Wilberforce, Ohio to Washington, D.C. His brave display failed to persuade the Secretary of War. Young did not lead soldiers in Europe, but he fought for respect on the Homefront.



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### **About This Lesson**

The lesson plan, *Discover Colonel Young's Protest Ride for Equality and Country: A Lightning Lesson from Teaching with Historic Places*, featuring the historic Colonel Charles Young House, is based on the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Colonel Charles Young House, also known as "[Youngsholm](#)." This lesson was published in March 2017. Paul LaRue, a retired history teacher, and Sarah Nestor wrote this lesson, with editing assistance from National Park Service Historian Katie Orr and the Cultural Resources Office of Interpretation and Education staff in Washington, D.C. This lesson is one in a series that brings the important stories of historic places into classrooms across the country.

### **Objectives**

1. Describe how racism affected African American service men in the early 20th century and how Colonel Charles Young persevered through it;
2. Develop and defend a theory to explain why men and women volunteer to serve in the Army;
3. Investigate, analyze, and report on one of three topics covered in an optional activity:
  - 1) Bias in news reporting and its challenge for historians;
  - 2) Civil rights and the U.S. military;
  - 3) A local history investigation at a nearby cemetery to study WWI.

### **Materials for students**

1. Map of the mid-Atlantic region showing Colonel Charles Young's route with marked stops from Wilberforce, Ohio, to Washington, D.C.;
2. Secondary source reading about Colonel Charles Young's life and the circumstances of the ride.
3. Primary source reading by Colonel Charles Young, a 1918 letter addressed to the Secretary of War;
4. Historical photograph of "Youngsholm," the Colonel Charles Young House in Wilberforce, Ohio, circa 1910.

### **About the Place**

The Colonel Charles Young House is part of the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument and the 401<sup>st</sup> site operated by the National Park Service. It is located at 1120 US Route 42 East, Wilberforce, Ohio 45384. Tours may be arranged by appointment. Visit the Park [website](#) to learn more.



### **Where this lesson fits into the curriculum**

**Time Period:** Late 19th Century, Early 20th Century, World War I.

**Topics:** This lesson can be used in history and social studies curricula to cover topics related to civil rights and military service, African American history, World War I, and Military History.

### **Relevant United States History Standards for Grades 5-12**

*This lesson relates to the following National Standards for History from the UCLA National Center for History in the Schools:*

#### **US History Era 7**

- Standard 3A: *The student understands social tensions and their consequences in the postwar era*
- Standard 2C: *The student understands the impact at home and abroad of the United States involvement in World War I.*

### **Relevant Curriculum Standards for Social Studies**

*This lesson relates to the following Curriculum Standards for Social Studies from the National Council for the Social Studies:*

**Theme I: Culture;** Standard E

**Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change, Standards;** Standards A, E

**Theme III: People, Places, Environments;** Standard B

**Theme IV: Individual Development and Identity;** Standards C and G

**Theme VI: Power, Authority, and Governance;** Standards A and H

### **Relevant Common Core Standards**

*This lesson relates to the following Common Core English and Language Arts Standards for History and Social Studies for middle and high school students:*

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6- 8.2

#### **Craft and Structure**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6- 12.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6- 12.4

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6- 8.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6- 8.9

#### **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6- 8.10



## Getting Started Prompt

What motivated African Americans to volunteer for a segregated military during WWI?

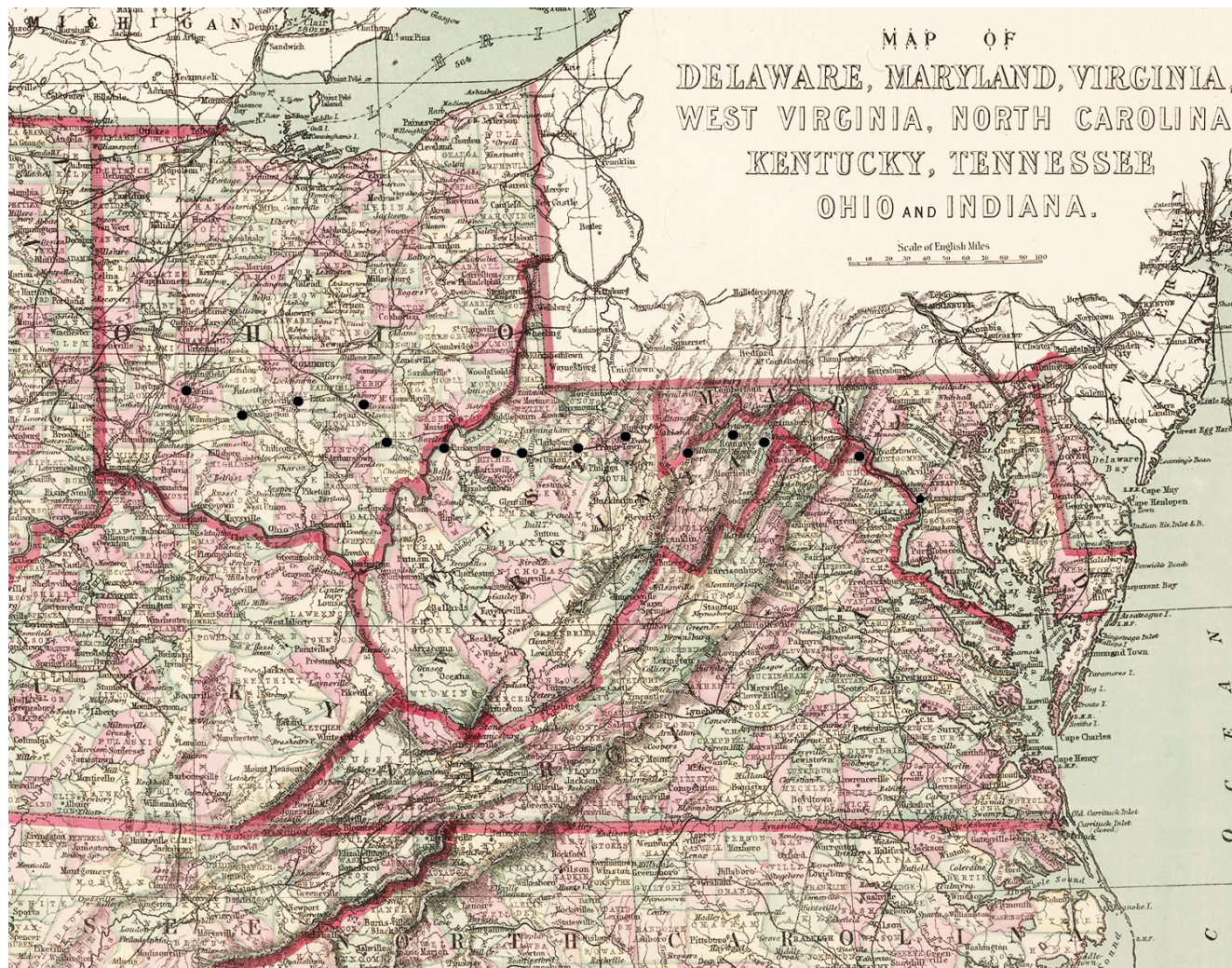
What historic place might you study to answer this question? Why?



## Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)

### Locating the Site

**Map 1: Colonel Charles Young's ride from Wilberforce, Ohio to Washington, D.C., June 1918.**



### **Caption for Map 1**

The black dots mark towns where U.S. cavalry officer Colonel Charles Young spent the night as he rode horseback from Wilberforce, Ohio, to Washington, D.C. in June 1918.

Colonel Young made this journey to prove he was healthy enough to lead troops in Europe during World War I. He did this at age 54, after the Army denied his first request for a command. The Army pointed to Young's health and said he was not fit. Young objected. He believed he was healthy and the Army did not want him in leadership because of his race. He rode almost 500 miles on horseback to prove them wrong.



## *Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)*

### Document 1: Colonel Charles Young's Itinerary, June 1918

Distance measures the number of miles between the stop and the last place Colonel Charles Young rested during the ride from Wilberforce, Ohio, to Washington, D.C.

Example: Distance between starting point at Wilberforce and first stop at Washington Courthouse is 30 miles

**Start:** Wilberforce, Ohio

	<b>Distance</b>	<b>Route</b>
Washington Courthouse, OH	30 miles	US35
Circleville, OH	26 miles	US22
Logan, OH	38 miles	US22/US33
Athens, OH	27 miles	US33
Parkesburg, WV	42 miles	US50
Ellenboro, WV	42 miles	US50
West Union, WV	23 miles	US50
Clarksburg, WV	30 miles	US50
Evansville, WV	33 miles	US50
Gormanias, WV	38 miles	US50
Romney, WV	42 miles	US50
Capon Bridge, WV	22 miles	US50
Winchester, VA	20 miles	US50
Hamilton, VA	32 miles	US7
Dranesville, VA	26 miles	US7
Washington, DC	26 miles	US7/US50







## *Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)*

### **Reading 1: “The Life and Service of Colonel Charles Young”**

*By Paul LaRue and Sarah Nestor; Edited by Katie Orr*

Colonel Charles Young was the highest-ranking African American Army officer when the United States entered World War I. You might assume Colonel Young would have been the logical choice to lead African American troops, but the Army ruled differently. He was one of 380,000 African American soldiers who served in the U.S. and overseas during the war. The Army denied him a leadership. African Americans around the nation shared his disappointment. Young and his supporters saw the Army's decision as an example of discrimination.

Charles Young was born in May's Lick, Kentucky in 1864. His parents, Gabriel and Arminta, were enslaved at the time, making him enslaved at birth. His father escaped in 1865 and enlisted in the Union Army. Gabriel Young served in the 5th United States Colored Heavy Artillery. The family moved to Ripley, Ohio, after the war. Ohio was already a free state before the Civil War. In fact, Ripley was a hub on the Underground Railroad. The town's culture of activism and self-improvement influenced Charles Young as a boy. Young also grew up around horses and inherited his love for them from his father. His mother and grandmother could both read and write. This was not common among enslaved people. Their example encouraged Young to write and he was a good student. As a young man, Charles Young applied to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point after attending local schools. He became one of the first ten African Americans admitted to West Point.

Young accepted a position as a second Lieutenant in the 9th Cavalry after graduation. In the 9th Cavalry, the Army separated him from white soldiers. The 9th Cavalry regiment was one of the famous regiments of African American troops known as the “Buffalo Soldiers.” According to folklore, the nickname comes from American Indians' observations of the soldiers, who had darker hair and skin color than the white regiments. It was also a nod of respect to their strength and spirit as soldiers. They associated all of these traits with the American Buffalo. Young served in the 9th Cavalry from 1889-1907 and later in the 10th Cavalry. He led African American troops in Cuba, Haiti, the Philippines, Mexico, Africa, and in the western United States.

Between periods of military service, Young sometimes left fighting to teach military science at Wilberforce University in Ohio. This school was founded before the Civil War and it is one of the oldest Historically Black Colleges and Universities. It was named in honor of an English anti-slavery activist named William Wilberforce. Colonel Young started teaching in 1894. As a teacher, he worked with other important African American thinkers and scholars like W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Laurence Dunbar. An activist and historian, DuBois included Colonel Young's achievements in his writings about Black history. Dunbar was a poet and playwright, and Young composed music for Dunbar's verses.



## *Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)*

Colonel Young married a woman named Ada Mills in 1904. She was from California. In 1907, Colonel and Mrs. Young bought a house near the university in Wilberforce. They called it "Youngsholm." Ada lived here with their two children, Marie and Charles Noel. Their historic house was built around 1839 and was a "station" on the Underground Railroad.

After teaching for several years, Colonel Young returned to lead Buffalo Soldiers in the western United States. He and his men guarded land that the United States claimed during the 1800s. This land was not settled by its citizens yet and much of it is part of the National Park Service today. In fact, Colonel Charles Young was the first African American superintendent of a National Park as an Army officer patrolling Sequoia National Park in California one summer. Under Young and other leaders, the Buffalo Soldiers were some of the first U.S. government employees to work in National Parks. They patrolled the land and built roads. Young also guarded the U.S. border with Mexico. He helped the Army fight the Mexican revolutionary leader Pancho Villa in 1916.

European countries entered the First World War in 1914 and the United States waited until April 6, 1917 to declare war on Germany. When the U.S. did go to war, African Americans were eager to serve in the military. Many volunteered. However, in a nation divided by race, some people asked: who would lead the African American troops in Europe? Would the leaders be men of color or would they be white? At age 53, Colonel Young was the highest-ranking African American military officer in the United States at the time. He believed he should lead these soldiers and so did his supporters.

Some powerful men in the Army did not think Young should lead. In June 1917, the Army promoted Charles Young to the rank of Colonel *but* declared that Colonel Young, was physically unqualified for leading troops in World War I. Colonel Young did not accept this. He believed it was his duty to lead troops in France. Colonel Young objected formally and sent documents to show he was healthy. From his home in Ohio, he tried to appeal to the senior officials in government and asked them to change their minds, but he could not persuade them with words.

After a year of pleading, Colonel Young mounted his horse in Wilberforce on June 6, 1918, and began a difficult 16-day ride to Washington D.C. He rode horseback for 497 miles. He crossed through Ohio, West Virginia, Maryland, and Virginia in two weeks. Young completed his ride on June 22 when he arrived in the District of Columbia. He was tired and worn but healthy. In the capital, Young met with the Secretary of War, Newton Baker. The Secretary did not change his mind even after seeing proof that Young was able to command. Young was a trailblazer and hit one barrier he could not break. After a lifetime of bravery and leadership, after a great show of strength, Colonel Young still could not persuade the U.S. Army to give him a command in Europe.



## *Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)*

Colonel Young continued to serve in the Army despite discrimination and barriers to the positions he wanted. The Army assigned him to a unit in Liberia. Liberia is a country in Africa with ties to the United States. Americans founded it in 1847 to be a new home for free African Americans. Colonel Young died in Liberia on January 8, 1922 and the Army buried him in Arlington National Cemetery. This cemetery is located in Arlington, Virginia, right across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The United States reserves it for American soldiers and important individuals like presidents, senators, and diplomats.

Colonel Young's ride showed his strength in patriotism and his ability to stand against the odds. He challenged people who were his superiors in rank and did it during a war. He challenged people who considered themselves superior to him because of race. He was an exceptional person in many ways, but he was not alone in this case. Many African American World War I soldiers dealt with racism in the Army. They also faced it when they returned home. Several African American World War I soldiers were lynched (murdered by a mob without a trial) after the war. This kind of terrorism was widespread in the United States after the war. In 1919, lynch mobs murdered 77 African Americans and legal segregation lasted for over forty more years. The conditions they faced during this era led up to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Colonel Charles Young defended what he believed in. He served but he did not do it blindly. The story of his life reveals that someone can challenge unfair systems in government while still respecting their government. The United States honors him today by preserving his "Youngsholm" in Ohio. In 1979, the Secretary of Interior designated Colonel Young's family home in Wilberforce a National Historic Landmark. It is important because of its role in helping African American freedom seekers flee the South and because the Young family lived there. Today, it is a National Monument and cared for by the National Park Service on behalf of the American people.



## Questions for Reading 1: “The Life and Service of Colonel Charles Young”

**1)** Who was Colonel Charles Young? In your own words, describe in a short paragraph why Young is an important person to study in history.

**2)** Do you think Colonel Charles Young was qualified in 1917 to lead troops in Europe during World War I? List three events from his life in the United States that may have prepared him for this work and briefly explain how those events prepared him.

**3)** In two sentences, explain in your own words why Colonel Young rode from Wilberforce, Ohio, to Washington, D.C. What do you think motivated him? Why?

**4)** Youngsholm is preserved as evidence of Young’s life. From the essay, what other places might have evidence of Young’s life or the lives of other Buffalo Soldiers? What might you be able to learn about them by studying that place?



## Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)

### Reading 2: Letter from Colonel Charles Young to Secretary of War Newton Baker, April 20, 1918.

Wilberforce, Ohio, April 20, 1918.

From: Chas. Young, Col. U.S. Army, retd.

To: The Hon. The Secretary of War.

Subject: Asking for work.

1. I beg to call the personal attention of the Secretary of War to the recommendation of the Examining Board in my case, now in the office of the Adj. General, and which was to the effect that the "finding of the Medical Officers be waived in my case and that I should be advanced to my next grade and be retained in the active service during the period of the war."
2. Not the findings of the Surgeons, but these proceedings of the Board with its recommendations (unanimous), I understand were approved by the Secretary of War; but that through an error the words "active duty" were used instead of "active service," which brought about my retirement.
3. Despite the diagnosis of the Doctors, I feel as physically fit as I did during the hard service in Mexico with Gen. Pershing, I, therefore, deem it my duty to my country to inform the Secretary of War that I believe myself wholly able to assume the work of organization, training, and leading troops in the field. To help in the country's service is my sole motive in making this direct request. Besides I have an abiding conviction that in the present need of the country for higher officers who know the trade of war that I cannot honorably take advantage of a technicality or an error and thus escape my plain duty.
4. Giving me this chance will but be in line with the national reputation of the Secretary of War for unflinching fairness in dealing with all men, and I submit, will in no small way enhance the enthusiasm of the colored people throughout the United States for the tremendous war task in which we are engaged.

Source: "Letter from Charles Young to Secretary of War." *Ohio Historical Connection: The African-American Experience in Ohio 1850-1920. Charles Young Collection.* (Visit <http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/html/deta80a.html?ID=5450> to access a scanned document image with original type)





## Visual Evidence

**Photo 1: "Youngsholm," the Colonel Charles Young House, 1910.**



*Credit: Photo courtesy of the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center*

### **Caption for Photo 1: "Youngsholm," the Colonel Charles Young House, 1910.**

Colonel Charles Young and Ada Young bought a two-story brick house near Wilberforce University in 1907. Ada lived here with their two children, Marie and Charles Noel, when her husband traveled for his Army duties. It was from this house that Colonel Charles Young started his ride to Washington, D.C., in 1918.



## *Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)*

### **Questions for Photo 1: “Youngsholm,” the Colonel Charles Young House, 1910.**

**1)** Describe Youngsholm’s appearance. How many levels does it have? What building materials were used to construct it? In your own words, explain why this place is important.

**2)** Who lived in Youngsholm with Colonel Charles Young? How do you think they felt about the war and Young’s determination to fight in it? Why?

**3)** Name one place in your community that is preserved as a historic place. What history does it tell? Name another place that is not preserved but you think should be, because of its history. What history does it have the power to tell?





### Optional Activity 1

#### **“The First Draft of History”: News Reporting and the Historian’s Challenge**

This activity has students explore two accounts of Colonel Young's ride and then asks students to explore how reporters' perspectives, including bias and the assumptions they make about their audience, influence the historical record. First, provide students with a copy of the primary sources below. Ask them to identify similarities and differences in the two accounts published in leading African American publications, the *Cleveland Advocate* and the nationally-read paper, *The Crisis*. Then, guide a class discussion to go over their observations or have students write down their compare/contrast observations as lists.

#### **Col. Young Rides to Capital on Horseback**

Washington's Colored population was agreeably surprised today with the arrival of Colonel Charles Young, who came all the way from Wilberforce, Ohio, his home a distance of 650 miles [sic], on horse back and foot. The Colonel looks fit for an endurance hike or for service at the front. The restoration to active duty in this war, of the race's senior army officer, it is believed by race men here, would remove one source of unrest within the race.

*Source: Taylor, Ralph. "Col. Young Rides to Capital on Horseback." Cleveland Advocate, June 29, 1918, p. 4.*

*[Editor's note: The Cleveland Advocate was a weekly Republican paper focusing on local and national news that were of interest to African Americans.]*

#### **The Horizon, a news bulletin taken from The Crisis:**

Colonel Charles Young in order to test his physical fitness made a trip from Xenia Ohio, to the National Capital on horseback, a distance of 497 miles. He arrived in first class condition in sixteen days.

*Source: "The Horizon: The War." The Crisis, August 1918, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 187.*

Next, have students explore the concept of unintended or implicit bias in news reporting further. Journalists make assumptions based on who they think their audience is. Ask your students to search an online database of recent newspapers or digital archives of historical news publications to find two news articles from different publications about current events or another historical event. They should save or print out the two documents, study them, and be prepared to compare and contrast them.

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## *Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)*

Ask the students to theorize why the accounts are different, using examples from their classroom work and personal experiences, and how assumptions made in news reporting might affect the work of historians. Ask them to give an example of how a historian might solve problems with using news articles to study history.

With their articles and study, students can write a one-page analysis to answer these questions or give a short oral presentation to the class.



### Optional Activity 2

#### **Breaking Barriers to Military Service in American History**

Military Service and Civil Rights are not issues limited to African Americans. In U.S. history, there are many examples of groups of citizens who were kept from serving in the military or kept from certain parts of the military. Have students work in groups or as individual investigators, to select and research a topic related to Civil Rights and U.S. military service. Students may consider another individual or era related to African American history, but they may also consider investigating the experiences of American Indians, women, people who identify as LGBTQ, or a cross-section of those identities. For example, women were barred from fighting in some combat situations or from the Marine Corps until the 21st century. Until 1993, it was illegal for LGBTQ citizens to serve in many parts of the military but it was another 22 years before they could be open and honest about who they were at work without fearing dismissal.

Students should create a bibliography to list the primary and secondary sources they find, including books, newspaper articles, and legal documents.

After your students investigate and do the research, either individually or in their groups, they will put together a report to explain who they studied, what the civil rights issue was/is, and the history of the issue. The report should explain the current situation with the issue and the students' thoughts on the future of the issue. The report may be presented in written analysis or oral form. Following the reporting of information, the class could engage in a debate on the issues surrounding the topic, such as for or against women on the front lines. Students could each contribute their information relating to their issues to create a "History of Civil Rights in the Military" timeline display to share with the school and community.



### Optional Activity 3

#### **Buried But Not Forgotten: WWI History In A Local Cemetery**

Have students visit a local cemetery. Ask students to identify headstones of World War I Veterans. You may want your class to examine the cemetery records. Look to identify any veterans with unmarked graves. Work with the cemetery and the local veterans' services office to get government headstones for the unmarked graves.

Your students could also research a local World War I veteran from your community. This could include researching what branch and unit the veteran served in, and then researching the role and responsibilities of the branch and unit. For example, was this unit deployed, and if so, where? Are there records of this unit being involved in a major battle? What was the overall branch's role in the War? If descendants of the veteran live in the area (ex. grandchildren), they may be able to offer family history and/or share primary resources (photos, letters, medals/honors). With this research and resources, the students can discover how an individual soldier contributes and fits into the larger war effort. The students can present a brief history of the veteran. The students could recognize the veteran at a school assembly for Veterans or Memorial Day.

For more information on obtaining a government headstone for veterans, go to:

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-03-02/pdf/2016-04553.pdf>



### References and Contributing Resources

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## Discover the Colonel Charles Young House (Buffalo Soldiers Nat'l Monument)

### Additional Online Resources

The websites listed below provide learners with additional information about African American history and Colonel Charles Young.

#### National Park Service

The National Park Service manages the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in Wilberforce Ohio, the historic home of Colonel Charles Young and his family. It is open to the public and offers a museum, guided ranger tours, and an archive. Click [here](https://www.nps.gov/chyo/index.htm) [https://www.nps.gov/chyo/index.htm] to visit the Park website.

#### Ohio History Connection

The Ohio History Connection's *The African American Experience in Ohio 1850-1920* offers free access to 100+ primary sources from the life of Colonel Charles Young, including creative writing, military documents, and letters from family and individuals like W.E.B. Dubois, R.R. Moton, and Booker T. Washington. Young's letters relate his own thoughts about experiencing racism, including racism in school and in the Army. Click [here](http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/html/mss/831.html) [http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/html/mss/831.html] to visit the Young archive.

The same collection of African American history includes the Ralph Tyler Collection. Tyler was an African American WWI war correspondent and his articles chronicle African American life during World War I. These articles can also be accessed free online [here](http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/html/nwspaper/advocate05.html) [http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/html/nwspaper/advocate05.html].

#### Ohio Memory

Another World War I lesson plan by Paul LaRue is available at the Ohio Memory website, along with several other teacher and classroom resources. Click [here](http://www.ohiohistoryhost.org/ohiomemory/resources/for-teachers) [http://www.ohiohistoryhost.org/ohiomemory/resources/for-teachers] to access them or download the second lesson plan directly by clicking [here](http://www.ohiohistoryhost.org/ohiomemory/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Searching-for-Homer-Lawson-Lesson-Plan.pdf) [http://www.ohiohistoryhost.org/ohiomemory/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Searching-for-Homer-Lawson-Lesson-Plan.pdf].

#### The United States World War One Centennial Commission

The US WWI Centennial Commission's mission is in part to educate Americans about the World War. Its [robust website](http://www.worldwar1centennial.org/) [http://www.worldwar1centennial.org/] provides teachers and facilitators with lessons, timelines, and interactives to support student exploration and curricula. Click [here](https://www.theworldwar.org/education) [https://www.theworldwar.org/education] to access a searchable database of materials and resources on its website.

#### The Modernist Journal Project

Formed through a Brown University / University of Tulsa partnership, the project provides digitized copies of the NAACP's *The Crisis* (1910 -1922). The collection is a trove of information on African American World War I soldiers, including Charles Young. Click [here](http://www.modjourn.org/render.php?view=mjp_object&id=crisiscollection) [http://www.modjourn.org/render.php?view=mjp\_object&id=crisiscollection] to visit the Modernist Journals Project's *Crisis* series.