

A HISTORY® CHANNEL ORIGINAL

# \* \* \* THE \* \* HELLFIGHTERS



#### Video Resource:

This documentary introduces students to the accomplishments and legacy of the Harlem Hellfighters. This guide offers ways to incorporate the documentary and discussions of the 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment into classroom

activities and discussions related to World War I and 20<sup>th</sup>century U.S. history. The documentary is appropriate for upper middle school and high school students.

#### Terms to Define:

Before or after watching the documentary, ask students to define the terms below to build context for understanding the 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

Citizenship	Paradox
Ethereal	Prejudice
Infantry	Reinforcements
Jim Crow	Valor
Mustered	

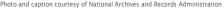
### 369th Infantry Regiment: Brief Timeline

Ask students to review the timeline below. They can also add additional key dates to the timeline as they research the Harlem Hellfighters and World War I.

- June 2 1913 Parent unit constituted in the New York National Guard as of the 15th Infantry Regiment (colored).
- June 29, 1916 15<sup>th</sup> New York National Guard in New York City is organized.
- July 25, 1917 The 15th mustered into federal service at Camp Whitman, New York where they undergo training in basic military practices, and is drafted into Federal service August 5, 1917.
- October 8, 1917 The 15th travels to Camp Wadsworth, South Carolina where they receive combat training.
- · December 1917- The 15th commanded by Col. William Hayward, embarks from New York to France.
- March 1, 1918 Reorganized and redesignated as the 369th Infantry
- March 14, 1918 The 369th is assigned to the French Army.
- $\cdot$  March 1918 December 1918 The  $369^{\rm th}$  serves with the French  $16^{\rm th}$  Division and the French  $161^{\rm st}$  Division.

- May 1918 Private Henry Johnson and Private Neadom Roberts fight off a German patrol unit near Saint Menehoul, France. Both are severely wounded.
- July 1918 December 1918 The regiment fought at the Second Battle of the Marne and at Meuse-Argonne. They captured the village of Sechault.
- **December 1918** Over 170 members of the 369<sup>th</sup> awarded with the Croix de Guerre.
- February 1919 The 369th returns to New York and to the New York Army National Guard. The unit leads a parade in New York City in which World War I soldiers are honored.
- $\cdot$  June 2015 Henry Johnson receives a Medal of Honor for his valor while serving with the 369th Infantry Regiment.









SERGT. HENRY JOHNSON, OF ALBANY, N. Y., THE OUTSTANDING HERO.
Weindle-handed he routed 28 Huns, killing 4 of them and wounding the remainded her love his ammunition ran out he based, a bole, hulfe. Sergt. Johnson, or the 38-91 infantry (old 18th of N. 3.), when the first man in his regiment to win the

#### **Discussion Ouestions:**

- 1. Why was the 369th Infantry Regiment assigned to serve with the French Army during World War !?
- 2. What were some of the obstacles the members of the 369<sup>th</sup> faced, both in the United States and once they were fighting in Europe?
- **3.** Who is Henry Johnson, and what contributes to the lasting remembrance of his legacy today?
- **4.** Why might the soldiers of the 369th consider the objective of democracy significant, and what motivations could have led the members of the 369th to participate in World War I?
- **5.** Why do you think the accomplishments of the 369<sup>th</sup> were not fully acknowledged during World War I? What are some of the ways they have been honored today?
- 6. Why do you think we should remember the service of the 369<sup>th</sup>?

#### Did You Know?

- Approximately 380,000 African Americans served in the U.S. armed forces during World War I.
- Nearly 200,000 African Americans who served during World War I played roles in Europe as support troops and over 40,000 served in combat.
- Many members of the 369th were from Harlem, New York; the nickname "Hellfighters" is said to have been coined by German troops, or more likely, the American press.
- When they returned from the war in February 1919, over one million people lined the streets of New York City's Fifth Avenue. The 369<sup>th</sup> marched first in the parade, led by legendary bandleader James Reese Europe.
- The 369th was one of the few units to have black officers in addition to black soldiers.



#### **Activities:**

1. The 369th Infantry Regiment: Explorations
Students can choose one soldier who fought with the 369th who served during World War I to research. (Examples might include James Reese Europe and Henry Johnson.)
Students can research one Harlem Hellfighter and create a one-sheet with bullet points about their life or a short visual presentation.

Regiment: Legacy
After watching the
documentary and doing their
own research, ask students
to write a short op-ed or
article about the legacy of
the 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry
Regiment. What was their
contribution to U.S. history,
and why should they be
remembered today?

2. The 369th Infantry

#### 3. Henry Johnson:

In 2015, Henry Johnson was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service in World War I. After researching Johnson's story and watching the video, ask students to create a short biography, PowerPoint presentation, article or short story about Johnson's service and accomplishments. (Students can share these stories with younger grades or fellow students.)

## 4. The Harlem Hellfighters: Photo Analysis

Students can visit the National Archives' website to view images of the 369th, and educators can find tools to help students analyze these photographs. Visit this page at: www.archives.gov/education/lessons/369th-infantry to find these photos and resources.

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#### Websites:

More background information and short videos about World War I: www.History.com/wwi

The United States World War I Centennial Commission: www.worldwar-1centennial.org

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: African Americans and World War I: http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-world-war-i.html

#### **Books:**

Brooks, Max (Author) and Canaan White (Illustrator). *The Harlem Hellfighters*. (Broadway Books, 2014).

Myers, Walter Dean and Bill Miles. The Harlem Hellfighters: When Pride Met Courage. (Amistad, 2005). (For Readers Ages 8-12).

Sammons, Jeffrey T. and John H. Morrow, Jr. Harlem's Rattlers and the Great War: The Undaunted 369th Regiment and the African American Quest for Equality. (University Press of Kansas, 2014).





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The Harlem Hellfighters