

# COLONIAL MARINES

## Primary Learning Outcomes

To teach students about African American involvement in the War of 1812. To present the moral and practical dilemmas of arming enslaved individuals and discuss the impact that establishing an African American Regiment had on Black history. The supplemental reading provides specific detail on the Colonial Marines during the War of 1812.

---

□

## Assessed Standards

**Grade:** 8

### Social Studies

**Standard:** The student will explain significant factors that affected the development of Georgia as part of the growth of the United States between 1789 and 1840.

**Indicator:** Explain the importance of key issues and events that led to the Civil War; include slavery, states' rights, nullification, Missouri Compromise, Compromise of 1850, the debate over secession in Georgia, and the role of Alexander Stephens.

---

## Procedure and Activities

Step: 1 Duration: 25 minutes

**Introduce students to the Corps of Colonial Marines using the background information and the classroom reading.**

### Attachments for Step 1

**Background Information:** Introduction to the Colonial Marines.

**Reading:** Colonial Marines.

Step: 2 Duration: 20 minutes

**Explain and discuss the three primary reasons the British began using slaves as soldiers.**

### Attachments for Step 2

**Background Information:** African American Soldiers.

Step: 3 Duration: 25 minutes

**Discuss why the recruitment of African American soldiers was important for Black History.**

**Attachments for Step 3**

**Background Information:** Importance to Black History.

Step: 4 Duration: 20 minutes

**Pass out the Colonial Marine puzzle. Students can work on this alone or in groups.**

**Attachments for Step 4**

**Puzzle**

**Puzzle Answer Sheet**

Step: 5 Duration: 20 minutes

**Pass out the classroom quiz on the Colonial Marines.**

**Attachments for Step 5**

**Quiz**

**Quiz Answer Sheet**



**Materials and Equipment**

Background information, reading, puzzle, quiz.

**Total Duration**

1 hour, 50 minutes

---

**Assessment**

Students will be assessed on their participation in the classroom activities and discussion. Their quizzes will be evaluated for accuracy.

## **Attachments for Step 1**

### Introduction to the Colonial Marines

The Corps of Colonial Marines was a military regiment composed of runaway slaves and free blacks. The Corps was formed to help the British fight a war against the United States. The United States had declared war on Britain because the British had been seizing American ships and forcing the sailors into servitude and because the Americans wanted to take Canada from the British.

Once the British reached American soil in 1812, many slaves ran away from their owners and went to meet them, hoping that the British would free them. The British told these runaways that if they enlisted in the British military and fought against the Americans, they would be freed and could return to England as soldiers or receive their own land in other British colonies once the War was over. This new regiment of runaway slaves was called the Colonial Marines.

In 1814, British Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane landed in Georgia. He issued a proclamation that stated "all those who may be disposed to emigrate from the United States" should join British ships and enlist in the Colonial Marines. Approximately 1,500 slaves ran away from their owners and joined the British. These new soldiers were given the same pay and rations as the white British soldiers.

The Treaty of Ghent was signed in December 1814. It declared peace between England and the United States. The War of 1812 was over. Many slave owners demanded that their slaves be returned. The British refused. They said that the slaves were on board British ships and that British ships counted as "British soil" which meant that the slaves were free. Once the British sailed away from the United States, many of the Colonial Marines were sent to the British colony of Trinidad where they became independent farmers.

**Reading:** Colonial Marines

## Attachments for Step 2

### African American Soldiers

*Slavery did not occur in England. However, many of the British colonies had large plantations that relied on slave labor. Why would the British decide to use slaves as soldiers? Discuss the possible reasons and take answers from students.*

There were three primary reasons that the British decided to turn slaves into soldiers:

1. Manpower: The British forces were stretched thin. They had been continuously at war for several decades. They had fought the Revolutionary War with the United States, were currently fighting the Napoleonic Wars with France, and were engaged in naval battles with pirates that would attack British ships. In addition, the British had colonies in Africa, the West Indies, and the Caribbean. All of these colonies needed to be defended and fighting was commonplace. The British began recruiting from native populations and slaves out of pure necessity.
2. Economics: The British knew that a large portion of the United States depended on slave labor to keep the economy going and to keep the country prosperous. In announcing that they would free any runaway slaves who enlisted in the British military, they not only gained new soldiers, but they also deprived planters of their labor force. Ideally the planters would lose money and the US economy would suffer, which would help the British win the war.
3. Scare Tactic: The British knew that white planters were terrified that the slaves would rebel or revolt. In Haiti in 1790s, the British had encouraged a slave revolt that ended in a bloody massacre. In the United States there was a rumor that the British intended to turn Georgia and the Carolinas into black republics and that they wanted a war between blacks and whites. The British let this rumor go unchecked in order to scare Americans. They knew that freeing slaves and then training them to use weapons would scare Americans even more.

## Attachments for Step 3

### Importance to Black History

*The early recruitment of slaves as soldiers may seem like a small step or small event in the history of the United States, but it actually had very important impacts. What do you think these impacts were? Discuss this with students.*

There were three primary impacts of slave recruitment:

1. It was an early experiment in emancipation.
2. It was an illustration of black opposition.
3. It created the beginnings of a new moral policy.

#### 1. An early experiment in emancipation

The freeing of slaves that became soldiers occurred two decades before the imperial event in 1830 when the British abolished slavery in their colonies. In America, slavery would not be abolished for another half a century. Many of these slave soldiers were part of a great African American emigration that has been largely ignored by the history books. Once their military service was over, many of the soldiers went to Trinidad and established their own villages. They created a new free black yeomanry and were one of the first groups of free black farmers. Their decedents are still living in Trinidad today.

#### 2. An illustration of black opposition

Much of the American literature depicted African Americans as “docile.” These books suggested that Africans wanted to be slaves and that they wanted to be taken care of by their white masters. This type of literature was an attempt to justify slavery. When runaway slaves joined the British in 1812, they took up arms against their ex-masters and became a disciplined military unit that was much praised by British Admirals for their valor and courage. Joining the British military was a vivid example of African resistance to the institution of slavery.

An example of this African independence occurred when the Colonial Marines were being established. Originally, the British wanted to make the American runaways part of the British West India Regiment. Part of this regiment was originally made up of slaves that were technically owned by the King of England. The American runaways refused to join, saying that the West India Regiment was a slave regiment and that they wanted a separate regiment made up of free blacks. Then British agreed and the Colonial Marines were formed.

#### 3. Created the beginnings of a new moral policy

Even though slavery would not be abolished for several more decades, freeing black soldiers caused the British to think critically about the treatment of blacks in general. In 1807, the British Parliament freed all the slaves serving in the West India Regiment. This act freed approximately 10,000 soldiers overnight. The British realized that their soldiers would need to be provided for regardless of their color. As a result, blacks in the British military received the same pay, rations, uniforms, and medical treatment as white soldiers.

In the United States, it was common place for slaves' families to be broken apart. Family members could be sold to plantations in other states or separated when white families married or moved. When the British began recruiting American slaves, they emphasized relocating the family as a whole. When the Colonial Marines sailed away from the United States, their families often went with them. These acts are mere tokens today, but were very controversial at the time.

## **Attachments for Step 4**

### **Puzzle**

#### Puzzle Instructions

Find the words in the word search and cross them off as you go. Words can be found backwards, forwards, up, down, and diagonally. There are twelve bold letters throughout the search.

Once you've found all the words, use the bold letters that are within a circled word to complete Clue #4. Hint: This made it very difficult for European soldiers to fight effectively in the tropics.

### **Puzzle Answer Sheet**

## **Attachments for Step 5**

### **Quiz**

Quiz includes five types of questions:

Multiple Choice

True/False

Short Answer/Fill in the Blank

Sentence Correction (Rewrite the sentences to be correct)

Short Essay

### **Quiz Answer Sheet**