Service in Two Places

Black Americans in World War I, overseas and at home

SS24.US2.2a "Describe the roles of Black Americans as members of the military and on the home front during World War I, including the Harlem Hellfighters and the Great Migration."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways Black service members supported the fighting, circle two home-front contributions, and draw an arrow from one home-front contribution to the wartime need it met.

A War Fought Overseas and at Home

1. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Black Americans joined the armed forces even though the military was segregated. More than 350,000 Black men served. Most were assigned to labor or support units rather than combat units. They unloaded ships, built roads, and moved supplies so soldiers at the front could fight. Black soldiers also faced unequal treatment from some officers and civilians. Yet their work kept equipment and food moving across the Atlantic and through France. For many service members, wearing a uniform meant defending a country that did not give them equal rights at home.

2. The 369th Infantry Regiment of New York, nicknamed the Harlem Hellfighters, shows another side of that service. Because U.S. commanders often denied Black units combat assignments, the 369th fought under French command in 1918. Its soldiers spent months in front-line positions and earned praise for their courage; France awarded the regiment the Croix de Guerre. Their record challenged racist claims that Black troops could not fight effectively. Yet their bravery did not end segregation in the U.S. military. The regiment's experience shows both what Black soldiers accomplished and the barriers they had to cross to serve in combat.

3. On the home front, war industries needed workers to make steel, ships, and other supplies. During the Great Migration, many Black families left the South for northern and midwestern cities, seeking jobs and an escape from Jim Crow laws and racial violence. Wartime demand helped open factory positions, although Black workers still faced discrimination in hiring and pay. Some women took paid jobs, while Black communities also organized drives to buy war bonds and support soldiers. Their labor and fundraising helped sustain the war effort overseas. Moving north could bring new opportunities, but it did not guarantee safety or equality.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the work of Black troops in support units help soldiers at the front?

2. What did the Harlem Hellfighters do in combat, and what barrier shaped where they served?

3. How did the Great Migration link Black families' choices to wartime needs on the home front?

4. How did discrimination affect Black Americans in both military service and wartime civilian work?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word museum label titled “Service in Two Places.” Describe the Harlem Hellfighters and the Great Migration, connect one home-front contribution to the needs of troops overseas, and explain why these stories belong together.

ANSWER KEY

Service in Two Places

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.2a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways Black service members supported the fighting, circle two home-front contributions, and draw an arrow from one home-front contribution to the wartime need it met. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the work of Black troops in support units help soldiers at the front?	**They unloaded ships, built roads, and moved supplies, keeping food and equipment flowing to soldiers who were fighting.**
2	What did the Harlem Hellfighters do in combat, and what barrier shaped where they served?	**They fought in front-line positions under French command because U.S. commanders often denied Black units combat assignments.**
3	How did the Great Migration link Black families' choices to wartime needs on the home front?	**Many families left the South seeking jobs and greater safety. Wartime industries in northern and midwestern cities needed workers to make supplies.**
4	How did discrimination affect Black Americans in both military service and wartime civilian work?	**Black troops were often kept out of combat assignments, while Black workers faced discrimination in hiring and pay.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Service in Two Places: The Harlem Hellfighters fought in France under French command after U.S. leaders often kept Black units from combat. At home, the Great Migration brought many Black families from the South to cities where wartime factories needed workers. Those workers helped produce ships and supplies for troops overseas. Black communities also organized war bond drives. These stories belong together because Black Americans supported the same war on battlefields and at home, even while segregation and discrimination restricted their chances to serve and earn fairly.

Accept other passage-supported examples of military and home-front service. For the museum label, look for a clear connection between a home-front contribution and the war overseas, not just a list of facts.