

Topic: African-American Soldiers in WWI

Historical Thinking Skills Assessed: Sourcing, Critical Reading

Grade Level: High

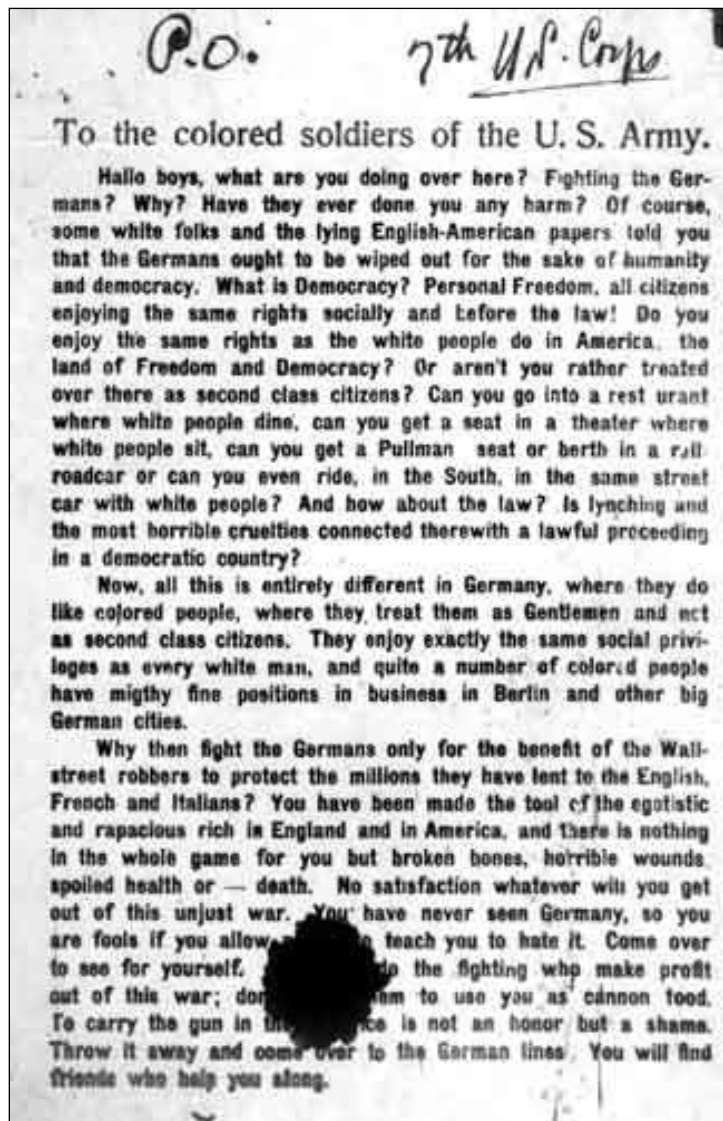
[National History Standards](#)

Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

Standard 2: The changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I

Using the Item: This item assesses students' critical reading skills and ability to ascertain the main idea of the source while identifying the bias inherent in the message.

Background: During World War I, armed forces on both sides used the new weapon of air power to distribute propaganda quickly and efficiently to masses of soldiers and civilians. The Germans were well aware of the history of racial animus in the United States and sought to take advantage of this by appealing to African American soldiers' feelings of second-class citizenship in their own country.



Transcription

Hallo boys, what are you doing over here? Fighting the Germans? Why? Have they ever done you any harm? Of course, some white folks and the lying English-American papers told you that the Germans ought to be wiped out for the sake of humanity and democracy. What is Democracy? Personal Freedom; all citizens enjoying the same rights socially and before the law! Do you enjoy the same rights as the white people do in America, the land of Freedom and Democracy? Or aren't you rather treated over there as second-class citizens? Can you get into a restaurant where white people dine, can you get a seat in a theater where white people sit, can you get a Pullman seat or berth in a railroadcar or an you even ride, in the South, in the same street car with white people? And how about the law? Is lynching and the most horrible crimes connected therewith a lawful proceeding in a democratic country?

Now, all this is entirely different in Germany, where they do like colored people, where they treat them as Gentlemen and not as second class citizens. They enjoy exactly the same social privileges as every white man, and quite a number of colored people have mighty fine positions in business in Berlin and other big German cities.

Why then fight the Germans only for the benefit of the Wall Street robbers to protect the millions they have lent to the English, French and Italians? You have been made the tool of the egotistic and rapacious rich in England and in America, and there is nothing in the whole game for you but broken bones, horrible wounds, spoiled health or – death. No satisfaction whatever will you get out of this unjust war. You have never seen Germany, so you are fools if you allow people to make you hate us. Come over to see for yourself. Let those do the fighting who make the profit out of this war; don't allow them to use you as cannon fodder! To carry a gun in this service is not an honor, but a shame. Throw it away and come over to the German lines. You will find friends who help you along.

Source: National Archives and Records Administration. Photograph 165-WW-164A-7 in Records of War Department General and Special Staff, Record Group 165.

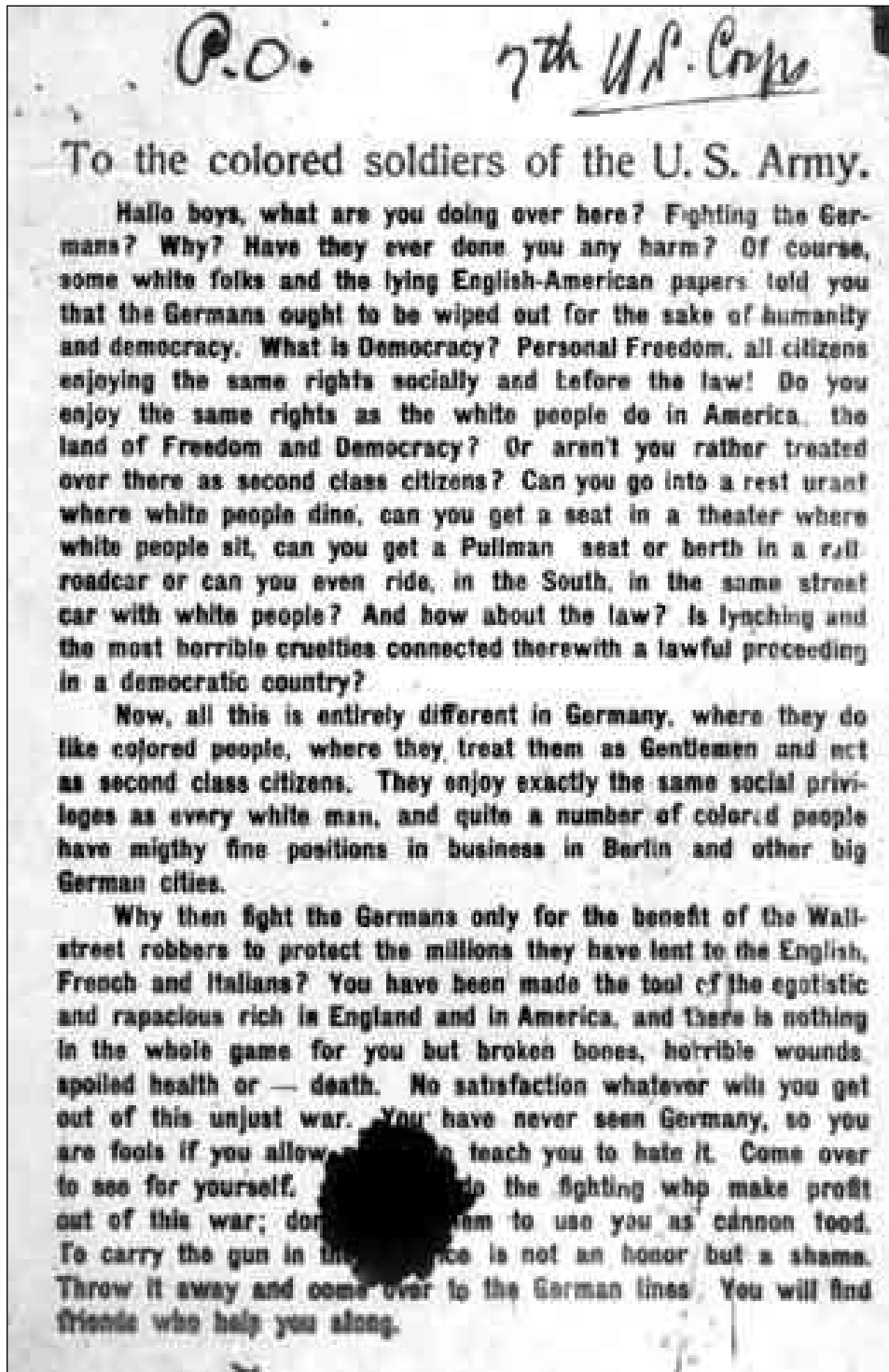
Which of the following quotations from the text best exemplifies the authors' motivation?

- A. “. . .in Germany, where they do like colored people, where they treat them as Gentlemen . . .”
- B. “Throw it away and come over to the German lines . . .” [answer cue]**
- C. “No satisfaction whatever will you get out of this unjust war.”
- D. “. . . quite a number of colored people have mighty fine positions in business in Berlin and other big German cities . . .”

Explanation: Answer “B” is the best response because it reveals the author’s true motivation in appealing to the soldiers to desert and come to the German side. “A” is evidence the author uses to support the main idea, as is “D.” Answer “C” is an emotional appeal to the soldiers that is also used to support the main idea. **[Sourcing, Critical Reading]**

HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Directions: Read the primary source below, and circle the response that best answers the question.



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