



MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

*EDUCATING FOR A RESPONSIBLE FUTURE*

*The Tuskegee Airmen:  
The Segregated Skies of World War II*

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Teacher's Guide



1000 CHASTAIN ROAD • KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY • KENNESAW, GA 30144-5591

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# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN



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### Overview:

Between 1940 and 1946, African Americans officially served in the United States military. These men and women fought the enemy during World War II as pilots, navigators, and technicians. Because they trained in Tuskegee, Alabama, they became known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

The Tuskegee Airmen were brave and successful pilots. They flew missions in Europe and North Africa, where they escorted heavy bomber planes, made air attacks, and kept the skies safe.

Even though these men and women fought as hard as their white counterparts, the United States was still a racist and segregated society in the 1940s. Most people believed that African Americans and whites should not work or live alongside one another. Even the U.S. military was still segregated by race. Many white military leaders did not expect the Airmen to fly so well. The Tuskegee Airmen faced discrimination and ridicule even as they risked their lives for our country's freedom.

The Tuskegee Airmen flew escort missions and proved that African Americans could fight and protect as well as any other U.S. pilot or soldier. The Airmen had an impressive safety record, and this caught the attention of many military leaders. In part because of the Tuskegee Airmen's success, President Truman integrated the armed forces in 1948. That means that soldiers of all races could at last fight together as equals.

Since the end of World War II, the heroism of the Tuskegee Airmen has become clearer. We now know that these brave men and women helped pave the way for the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and beyond.

*The Tuskegee Airmen: The Segregated Skies of World War II* is a traveling exhibit that provides an overview of the challenges and triumphs of the Tuskegee Airmen. The Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University has compiled this guide for educators' use in conjunction with the exhibit.

### Learning Objectives:

- Become familiar with the story of the Tuskegee Airmen, as well as with facts, vocabulary, and the historical timeline of their involvement in World War II
- Identify the history and importance of the Tuskegee Airmen for African-American history, military history, and U.S. success in WWII
- Compare elements of Airmen's experiences and cultural context to other historical moments, including contemporary U.S. society
- Practice skills in research, collaborative work, writing, reading, and public presentation
- Relate the history of the Tuskegee Airmen to issues of civic engagement, definitions of patriotism and heroism, and awareness of racism in U.S. history

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### Activities:

Activity 1: <b>Timeline of African American Involvement in the U.S. Military</b>	Grades 5-12
Activity 2: <b>Drawing and Defining Tuskegee Vocabulary</b>	Grades 5-8
Activity 3: <b>The Tuskegee Airmen and the History of African Americans in the U.S. Military</b>	Grades 8-12
Activity 4: <b>Jews and African Americans: Comparing Jim Crow and Nuremberg Laws</b>	Grades 8-12
Activity 5: <b>Contrasting Images of African Americans during WWII</b>	Grades 8-12
Activity 6: <b>Segregation and Public Space</b>	Grades 8-12
Activity 7: <b>Heroes, Patriotism, and Delayed Recognition</b>	Grades 8-12
Activity 8: <b>Honoring the Airmen's Legacy</b>	Grades 5-12
Activity 9: <b>Oral History</b>	Grades 5-12
Activity 10: <b>The Tuskegee Airmen and the Navajo Code Talkers of WWII</b>	Grades 5-12
Activity 11: <b>Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute</b>	Grades 5-8
Activity 12: <b>Make a DARE-Plane!</b>	Grades 5-8

### These activities meet the criteria of the following Georgia Performance Standards:

**SS5H2 The student will analyze the effects of Reconstruction on American life.**

c. Explain how slavery was replaced by sharecropping and how African-Americans were prevented from exercising their newly won rights; include a discussion of Jim Crow laws and customs.

**SS5H6 The student will explain the reasons for America's involvement in World War II.**

e. Describe the effects of rationing and the changing role of women and African-Americans; include "Rosie the Riveter" and the Tuskegee Airmen.

**SS8H7 The student will evaluate key political, social, and economic changes that occurred in Georgia between 1877 and 1918.**

Analyze how rights were denied to African-Americans through Jim Crow laws, Plessy v. Ferguson, disenfranchisement, and racial violence.

**SS8H11 The student will evaluate the role of Georgia in the modern civil rights movement.**

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### Activity 1: Timeline of African American Involvement in the U.S. Military

Objectives: To identify key participants in African American military history  
To construct and compare historical timelines  
To interpret timelines and the impact of historic events on individuals

Supplies needed: Computer with internet access  
Paper and pen/pencil

Step 1: Read the timeline posted by the U.S. Department of Defense at the following website:

<http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2007/BlackHistoryMonth/Timeline.html>

Step 2: Students should identify the names of at least five African Americans who participated in U.S. military history.

Step 3: Use the internet to find additional information on one of the five individuals. Create a timeline using the dates of the person's life, death, and key events available via the internet, keeping empty space either above or below the timeline. A good place to begin is the army

[http://www.army.mil/africanamericans/main\\_content.html](http://www.army.mil/africanamericans/main_content.html)

and defense department:

<http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2007/BlackHistoryMonth/Index.html>

Step 4: Find a timeline of U.S. history on the internet. Two useful sites include:

<http://www.animatedatlas.com/timeline.html>

and

<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/timeline/timelineO.cfm>.

Using the timeline already created, add a second timeline that includes key political and social events that happened during this person's life. You should have two concurrent timelines on one piece of paper.

Step 5: As a class, discuss some of the individuals named in the exercise. Imagine how that person might have felt during specific historical events. How might these events have influenced this person to decide to fight as part of the U.S. military?

Step 6: Ask students to pretend to be the person who they researched. Write a letter from the perspective of that person telling a friend or family member about a major historical event that occurred while they were alive.

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### Activity 2: Drawing and Defining Tuskegee Vocabulary

Objectives: To define and interpret vocabulary words related to the story of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Supplies needed: Vocabulary worksheet  
Dictionary  
Paper and pencil/pen  
Crayons or markers

Step 1: Hand out copies of a worksheet containing the following vocabulary words (or, alternately, write the words on a chalkboard in front of the class):

Discrimination	honor	military
Aviation	patriotism	bravery
Segregation	prejudice	pilot
Jim Crow	propaganda	racism

Step 2: As a class, go through each word one by one and guess what the definitions might be.

Step 3: Use a dictionary to look up the correct definition for each word, and compare the official definition to the one discussed by the class. Then formulate some real-life situations that provide examples of what the word means.

Step 4: Talk about how some of these words make you feel. Where have you heard them before? Are they happy or sad words? What do they make you think of?

Step 5: Ask each student to choose one word and draw a picture of that word. The picture could depict the definition, or portray how the word feels, or show a situation related to the word.

Step 6: Ask students to share their pictures and explain the drawings they made.



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### Activity 3: The Tuskegee Airmen and the History of African Americans in the U.S. Military

Objectives: To become familiar with the history of African American involvement in the U.S. military from the Revolutionary War to the present  
To evaluate the story of the Tuskegee Airmen within the larger context of African American military history

Supplies needed: Computer with internet access  
Chalkboard and chalk  
Paper and pencil/pen

Step 1: Break up into small groups. Ask each group to research the history of African American involvement in the U.S. military by browsing the following websites:

[http://www.army.mil/africanamericans/main\\_content.html](http://www.army.mil/africanamericans/main_content.html)

<http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2007/BlackHistoryMonth/Index.html>

Step 2: Write a list of wars/military initiatives on the board. Ask each group to choose one war or military period to research.

Step 3: Each group should research details of the involvement of African Americans during the selected time period. Each group should focus on a few key individuals, battles, or facts.

Step 4: Ask each group to present a 5-minute report on the contributions of African Americans in U.S. military history. Discuss ways in which the Tuskegee Airmen were influenced by their predecessors, as well as how they influenced black soldiers who came after them.

Step 5: Using your knowledge of the history of African American soldiers in the U.S. military, write a letter to an African American soldier currently serving in the armed forces, thanking them, for their service to our country.



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### Activity 4: Jews and African Americans: Comparing Jim Crow and Nuremberg Laws

Objectives: To learn about Jim Crow laws and racial segregation in the US  
To compare Jim Crow laws to the Nuremberg laws  
To examine and compare methods of resistance to racism

Supplies needed: Computer with internet access  
Paper and pencil/pen for notes

Step 1: Read about Jim Crow laws regarding racial segregation in the U.S.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/segregation.html>  
<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/>  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/>

Read about the anti-Semitic Nuremberg laws here:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007167>

and discuss the timeline of anti-Semitic laws passed in Germany listed here:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007459>

Compare the Nuremberg laws to Jim Crow. Discuss the question, "Given the inhumane treatment of Jews by Nazi Germany, how do you think the Tuskegee Airmen felt about fighting in this war?"

Step 2: Explain to the students that African Americans and German Jews lived in very different contexts, but both groups faced racist beliefs and laws. Use the internet or library to research ways in which members of both groups resisted these racist laws.

Discuss:

How did African Americans who lived during Jim Crow find ways to resist segregation?

Find out background information on one such person and report on what they did.

(Examples: Medgar Evers, Rosa Parks, Homer Plessy)

How did Jews who lived during the Third Reich rule find ways to resist the Nazi party?

Find background information on one resistance group and report on what they did.

(Examples: The White Rose, Sonderkommandos, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising)



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### Activity 5: Contrasting Images of African Americans during WWII

**Objectives:**

- To learn about segregation during the time of Jim Crow
- To learn about government treatment of African American soldiers during WWII
- To practice analysis and comparison of visual texts

**Supplies needed:**

- Computer with internet access
- Paper and markers, crayons, other art supplies

**Step 1:** Compare photographs of segregation in the US with WWII propaganda that includes images and stories of African American soldiers. If needed, define propaganda and discuss its function in shaping political opinion.

<http://www.stltoday.com/airmen>

[http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/story/519D1DA684BB10AA862575E600682872?](http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/story/519D1DA684BB10AA862575E600682872?OpenDocument)

[OpenDocument](#)

**Step 2:** Discuss the questions:

How do the pictures of segregation make you feel?

What do you notice about the pictures?

Imagine seeing these kinds of pictures in all public places, everywhere you go. What effect do you think these images had on African Americans?

What is different between the pictures of segregation and the positive propaganda about the Tuskegee Airmen?

Why do you think the government would make such images? What message were they trying to convey?

How do you explain the contradiction between the two kinds of images?

**Step 3:** Use the art supplies to create your own recruitment poster for the Tuskegee Airmen. When finished, explain your image to your classmates.



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### Activity 6: Segregation and Public Space

**Objectives:**

- To experience the lingering effects of segregation on contemporary society
- To practice skills of observation and analysis of human behavior
- To apply the lessons learned about segregation's impact to students' personal lives

**Supplies needed:**

- Transportation to and from a public place
- Adult supervision during activity
- Paper and pen/pencil

**Step 1:** Go to a public place where you can expect to see people of many different races, genders, or ethnicities. Be sure to tell adults where you are going and have a trusted adult nearby to supervise you. Spend 10 minutes looking at who talks to whom, who walks with whom, how people act towards one another. Take time to notice how people interact, what people wear, who says "hello" in passing, and who makes eye contact with one another. Try to notice if you see any trends in people's behavior.

**Step 2:** Write down notes on the following questions:

- Are small groups more likely to be integrated or segregated by race? By gender? By any other physical feature? Why do you think this is?
- What are the good and bad things about having friends of your same race? Of the same gender? Is it different for minority vs. white students?
- What's the difference between segregation in the 1940s/1950s and the way crowds and groups interact today?
- Think about the racial makeup of your friends and family. Think about the racial makeup of your neighborhood, county, or city. Does segregation still exist? Is this a good or a bad thing?

**Step 2:** Choose a place that you go on a regular basis where you usually see the same people or sit in the same place. Pick a day and deliberately change your routine. For example, sit on a different seat on your school bus or classroom, in the lunchroom, walk home with someone new, or go to a store or part of your school where you normally don't go. Make sure that you tell an adult and get their permission so that they know you are safe. Be brave, and practice integration—moving into a new kind of space, with different kinds of people.

**Step 3:** When everyone has finished the exercise, discuss the following questions:

- How did people react when you changed your routine?
- How did you feel when you did the activity? Why did you feel that way?
- Were the reactions the same or different from what you expected?
- Now imagine that segregation wasn't just social—it was the law—just like during Jim Crow. How do you think it would have felt to do this activity during that time?
- What might have been the consequences?

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### Activity 7: Heroes, Patriotism, and Delayed Recognition

Objectives: To analyze recent government recognition of the Tuskegee Airmen  
To consider the meaning of heroism and patriotism  
To consider the role that race plays in the recognition of heroes in U.S. history

Supplies needed: Computer with internet access  
Paper and pencil/pen

Step 1: Read about Barack Obama's recognition of the Tuskegee Airmen at his presidential inauguration ceremony:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/10/us/politics/10inaug.html>

Discuss answers to the following questions:

- How do you think the Airmen felt to be honored by Obama?
- Why did Obama choose this occasion to honor the Airmen?
- Do you think that bravery of the Tuskegee Airmen helped pave the way for this historic moment, the election of the first African American president?

Step 2: Research a public memorial that was created to honor American soldiers. Find pictures and determine who, if anyone, is depicted in the memorial. Answer the following questions:

- Who is this memorial meant to honor or remember?
- Can you tell the race of the people depicted in the memorial?
- How many famous African-American soldiers can you name?
- How many famous white soldiers can you name?
- Why is it important to have national heroes of all races?



Step 3: Write down the names of a few people that are your heroes. Answer and discuss:

- What characteristics make them heroes? What characteristics did the Airmen have?
- Do you think you have what it takes to become a hero someday?
- Next, write one page about what patriotism means to you. Discuss these questions:
  - What makes you proud of your country?
  - Do you think it would have been harder to be patriotic if you were living in segregated America?
  - Do you think it's possible to be patriotic and still find faults with the country in which you live? Why or why not? Give an example.

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### Activity 8: Honoring the Airmen's Legacy

Objectives: To create a work of art that honors the bravery of the Tuskegee Airmen

Supplies needed: Paper, pen/pencil  
Markers, crayons, paints, art supplies  
Scissors, rulers, glue  
Musical instruments (optional)  
Envelopes and stamps (optional)

Step 1: Discuss a few reasons to be thankful for the bravery of the Tuskegee Airmen. What would you say to an Airman if he or she was in your classroom? How would you thank him or her?

Step 2: Create an artistic object that honors the Tuskegee Airmen. Some options include:

Pretend you are a lawyer defending the Tuskegee Airman charged with entering the white officer's barracks. What arguments would you make?

Write a poem, rap, or song about the Airmen.

Create a poster or stamp that honors the bravery of the Airmen.

Create a 1940s poster intended to recruit the Airmen.

Pretend you are alive during WWII, and write a letter to the President arguing that the military should be integrated.

Write a letter to the editor that tells the history of the Airmen and its relationship to minorities in the military today.

Write a script for a 2-minute newsreel that describes the bravery of the Airmen.

Step 3: When you are finished, share your work with the class. If possible, find a way to share the work with others, whether by mailing a letter or performing a song for your family or other classes at school.



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### Activity 9: Oral History

**Objectives:**

- To understand and evaluate the role of oral histories and personal narratives for purposes of historical preservation
- To learn basic interview and oral history skills
- To complete an oral history

**Supplies needed:**

- Computer with internet access
- Copies of the "Oral History Guidelines"
- Tape recorders or video cameras

**Step 1:** Ask students to freewrite for 5 minutes about the question: "How do we know what we know about history?"

**Step 2:** Discuss student answers. Focus on answers that describe history as oral history, stories, and information passed down through generations.

**Step 3:** Find examples of oral history interviews on the internet. Some examples include:

<http://www.storycorps.org/listen>

<http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-nativeamericans.html>

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/exinterv.html>

Watch the interview excerpts and talk about the interview process. Hand out and study oral history guidelines at:

<http://www.history.com/classroom/oralhistguidelines.pdf>

**Step 4:** Ask each student to make a list of 3 people they might ask to interview. Have the children ask each person for permission, one at a time, in turn until they find someone who agrees to the interview.

**Step 5:** Do background research on the interview subject. Find out as much as you can before the interview so you have specific questions to ask. For example, rather than asking, "Where were you born?" you could find out ahead of time and instead ask "Do you remember growing up in Cleveland?"

**Step 6:** Prepare a series of interview questions or topics. Practice asking questions that require explanation rather than a simple "yes or no" answer.

**Step 7:** Set up the interview, prepare, and complete the interview. Follow the guidelines published on the Library of Congress website:

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/oralhist/ohguide.html>

**Step 8:** Write highlights from the interview and present a report to the class.

**Step 9:** Discuss the good and bad parts of using oral history to learn history. What makes it useful? What are its limits?

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### Activity 10: The Tuskegee Airmen and the Navajo Code Talkers of WWII

Objectives: To learn about the history and treatment of the Navajo Code Talkers of WWII  
To compare the treatment of the Code Talkers with the Tuskegee Airmen during WWII

Supplies needed: Computer with internet access  
Paper and pencil/pen

Step 1: Research the story of the Navajo Code Talkers using the following websites:

<http://www.navajocodetalkers.org/>

<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq61-2.htm>

Step 2: Review the story of the Tuskegee Airmen, focusing on their treatment by the white members of the U.S. military and the harsh realities of Jim Crow segregation.

[http://www.tuskegeearmen.org/Tuskegee\\_Airmen\\_History.html](http://www.tuskegeearmen.org/Tuskegee_Airmen_History.html)

<http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=52333>

Step 3: Ask and discuss the following questions:

How were the Tuskegee Airmen treated differently from the Navajo Code Talkers?

Why do you think they were treated that way?

Do you think they would be treated the same way today? Why or why not?

Step 4: Locate the Navajo Code Talker's Dictionary at

<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq61-4.htm>

and ask each student to spell a Tuskegee-related vocabulary word in code. When finished, trade with a partner and decode the word.



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### Activity 11: Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute

Objectives: To learn about the life and character of Booker T. Washington  
To learn about Washington's role in the creation of the Tuskegee Institute and the success of the Tuskegee Airmen

Supplies needed: Library resources or computer with internet access  
Paper and pen/pencil

Step 1: Research the history of Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute using your library resources or this website:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/btoverview.htm>

Step 2: Ask students to answer the following questions:

What year did the first students graduate from the Tuskegee Institute?  
(1885)

Why was Washington's speech at the 1895 Atlanta Exposition so controversial?  
(because it suggested that he supported segregation)

What year did Washington die?  
(1915)

What characteristics did Washington believe were needed for African Americans to succeed?

(hard work, education, & self-help)

How did the Tuskegee Airmen continue Washington's legacy?  
(open answer)

Do you think that Washington would have been proud of the Airmen?  
(yes)

Step 3: Ask students to write one page in response to the question, "How can I continue the legacy of Booker T. Washington?" Share answers with a focus on practical steps and commitment to hard work and education.



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### Activity 12: Make a DARE-Plane!

Objectives: To consider the bravery of the Tuskegee Airmen  
To identify personal ways to “dare” to be a good person  
To create a paper airplane that honors the Tuskegee Airmen

Supplies needed: Computer with internet access  
“DARE-Plane” handout sheets  
Paper (variety of colors)  
Markers, crayons, and other art supplies

Step 1: Download the paper airplane instructions from these websites:  
[http://thumbs.dreamstime.com/thumb\\_106/1166467068X044xf.jpg](http://thumbs.dreamstime.com/thumb_106/1166467068X044xf.jpg)  
[http://www.sciencebuddies.org/mentoring/project\\_ideas/Aero\\_img021.jpg](http://www.sciencebuddies.org/mentoring/project_ideas/Aero_img021.jpg)

Create a “DARE-Plane” handout with the instructions from the website on one side of the paper. Include the following text on the other side of the handout:

#### Make a DARE-PLANE!!!!

African American men and women faced many obstacles in racially-segregated America. Although it was hard, many dared to do better, to want more, and to live in a more equal and just society. The Tuskegee Airmen are one example of hard-working African Americans who dared to challenge stereotypes and expectations in a racist society. These men and women believed that success and justice were possible with hard work and courage. How are you DARING? What do you DARE to change? How do you DARE to make the world a better place? Will you DARE to soar in your life, just like the Tuskegee Airmen?

#### Instructions:

Choose a piece of paper and draw a picture of how you DARE to SOAR. Do you DARE to work hard in school? Do you DARE to be kind to your enemies? Do you DARE to stand up for what is right and just? Show us how you are DARING!

Using the directions, make your drawing into a paper airplane. When you are finished, send it flying through the air. Show us all how you DARE to SOAR!!!!

Step 2: Read through the instructions with students and help them create their DARE-Plane. When finished, ask students to present and explain their airplanes to the class.

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# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN



Museum of History and Holocaust Education

### Additional resources:

#### Websites:

C-SPAN Tuskegee Airmen Interviews

<http://www.c-span.org/apa/tuskegee.asp>

Department of Defense-African Americans in the Military

<http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2007/BlackHistoryMonth/Timeline.html>

National Air and Space Museum– Black Wings

<http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/airoverview.htm>

National Park Service– Tuskegee Airmen Official Website

<http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/airoverview.htm>

#### Film:

*Flying for Freedom: Untold Stories of the Tuskegee Airmen* (2007), Milton Coleman and Herbert Makoka, AMS Pictures

*Nightfighters: The Story of the 332nd Fighter Group, Tuskegee Airmen* (1994), Xenon

*Red Tail Reborn* (2008), Doug Rozendaal, Hemlock Films

*The Tuskegee Airmen* (1995), Laurence Fishburne, HBO Home Video

*The Tuskegee Airmen: They Fought Two Wars* (2003), PBS Home Video

#### Books:

*332nd Fighter Group: Tuskegee Airmen (Aviation Elite Units)* (2007), by Chris Bucholtz, Osprey

*A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman* (2002), by Charles Dryden, University of Alabama

*Black and White Airmen: Their True History* (2007), by John Fleischman, Houghton Mifflin

*Black Wings: Courageous Stories of African Americans in Aviation and Space History* (2008), by Von Hardesty, Smithsonian

*Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (2010), by J. Todd Moye, Oxford University Press

*Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airmen and POW* (2005), by Alexander Jefferson and Lewis Carlson, Fordham

*Tuskegee Airmen (Images of Aviation)* (1998), by Lynn M. Homan and Thomas Reilly, Arcadia

*Tuskegee Airmen: American Heroes* (2002), by Lynn M. Homan, Thomas Reilly, and Rosalie M. Shepherd, Pelican

*The Tuskegee Airmen: The Men Who Changed a Nation* (2008), by Charles E. Francis and Adolph Caso, Branden

*Wind Flyers* (2007), by Angela Johnson and Loren Long, Simon & Schuster

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*Annual Summer Institute* for teachers of WWII and Holocaust history offered in June

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