



Remembrance Day

Jr – Sr High Lesson Plans

A FOOTNOTE TO FREEDOM

RECLAIMING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF A BLACK BATTALION SOLDIER



LANCE B. DIXON

Grade Levels:

- Junior High (Grades 7-9)
- Senior High (Grades 10-12)

Duration: 1-2 class periods (60-90 minutes each)

Remembrance Day Themes:

- Service and sacrifice
- Identity and belonging
- Racism and discrimination in Canadian history
- Untold stories of Black Canadians
- Legacy, remembrance, and historical justice



About **A Footnote to Freedom**

Footnote to Freedom: Reclaiming the Life and Legacy of a Black Battalion Soldier by Lance Dixon is a historical narrative that uncovers the life of a Black Canadian soldier whose story had largely faded from public memory despite his service, perseverance, and contributions to his country. Through historical research, archival records, and personal storytelling, the book traces the soldier's journey from a society shaped by racial barriers to his participation in Canada's military efforts during a time of national and global conflict. In doing so, it highlights the often-overlooked experiences of Black Canadians who sought to serve a nation that did not always extend to them the same rights, respect, or opportunities afforded to others.

For high school teachers, the book provides a valuable lens through which students can explore themes of citizenship, identity, racism, resilience, and historical memory. Beyond being a military history, it challenges readers to consider whose stories are remembered, whose stories are forgotten, and how acts of historical recovery can reshape our understanding of the past. The text supports discussions connected to Remembrance Day, social justice, and Canadian identity by encouraging students to examine the complexities of service and sacrifice while recognizing the contributions of marginalized communities to Canada's history. It ultimately demonstrates that remembrance is not only an act of honouring those who served, but also a commitment to ensuring that all voices are included in the national story.

Junior High Lesson Plan (Grades 7-9)



Essential Question

Why is it important to remember all Canadians who served during times of war?

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand the meaning and purpose of Remembrance Day.
- Explore the experiences of Black soldiers in Canadian history.
- Identify challenges faced by individuals who were treated unfairly because of race.
- Reflect on how remembering forgotten stories contributes to a more complete understanding of history.

Materials

- Excerpts from *A Footnote to Freedom*
- Chart paper or digital collaboration board
- Remembrance Day photos and artifacts
- Reflection journal or worksheet

Introduction Activity (10-15 minutes)

Think-Pair-Share

Display the questions:

1. What does Remembrance Day mean to you?
2. Whose stories are usually remembered?
3. Are there people whose contributions may have been overlooked?

Students discuss in pairs and share with the class.

Learning Activity (25-30 minutes)

Reading and Discussion

Introduce the story of the Black battalion soldier featured in *A Footnote to Freedom*.

Discuss:

- Why he chose to serve Canada.
- Obstacles he faced before, during, or after service.
- How racism affected opportunities for Black Canadians.
- Why his story was not widely known.

Small-Group Analysis

Groups examine questions such as:

- What qualities did the soldier demonstrate?
- What challenges did he overcome?
- Why do you think some historical stories are forgotten?
- How can communities help preserve important histories?
- Students record their responses and share key insights.

Junior High Lesson Plan (Grades 7-9)



Creative Reflection Activity (20 minutes)

"A Poppy for the Forgotten"

Students design a poppy or remembrance card.

Inside the card, students write:

"One lesson I learned from this soldier's story is..."

or

"I remember and honour those whose contributions were overlooked because..."

Consolidation (10 minutes)

Exit Ticket

Students complete:

- One thing I learned about Black Canadian history:
- One thing that surprised me:
- One reason remembering diverse stories matters:

Assessment

Success Criteria

Students can:

- ☐ Explain the significance of Remembrance Day.
- ☐ Describe the contributions of Black soldiers.
- ☐ Reflect on inclusion and historical recognition.
- ☐ Make personal connections to themes of remembrance.

Senior High Lesson Plan (Grades 10-12)



Essential Question

How does recovering forgotten histories change our understanding of Canada and Remembrance Day?

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Analyze the historical experiences of Black Canadians in military service.
- Evaluate how systemic racism shaped opportunities and recognition.
- Examine the process of historical recovery and remembrance.
- Develop evidence-based perspectives on citizenship, service, and legacy.

Introduction Activity (15 minutes)

Historical Inquiry

Display the statement:

"History is not only about what happened. It is also about whose stories get told."

Ask students:

- Do all veterans receive equal recognition?
- Why might some stories disappear from public memory?
- Who decides what becomes part of history?

Conduct a brief discussion.

Reading and Historical Analysis (30-40 minutes)

Guided Reading

Students read selected excerpts from A Footnote to Freedom.

Focus areas:

1. Military Service
2. Racial Barriers
3. Citizenship and Identity
4. Legacy and Recognition

Discussion Questions

- How did the soldier demonstrate courage and resilience?
- What barriers existed for Black Canadians during this period?
- How does this story challenge traditional Remembrance Day narratives?
- Why is historical recovery important to a democratic society?

Students support responses using evidence from the text.

Senior High Lesson Plan (Grades 10-12)



Critical Thinking Activity (30 minutes)

Document-Based Discussion

Students work in groups to examine:

- The soldier's experiences
- Broader Canadian wartime history
- Modern efforts to recognize overlooked contributions

Groups answer:

- How does this story expand our understanding of Canadian identity?
- What role does remembrance play in promoting social justice?
- What responsibilities do historians, educators, and citizens have in preserving these stories?

Culminating Assignment Options

Option 1: Reflective Essay

Prompt:

How does A Footnote to Freedom deepen our understanding of Remembrance Day and the experiences of Black Canadians?

Option 2: Historical Tribute

Create:

- A commemorative poster
- A video tribute
- A digital biography
- A museum-style exhibit panel

Students must connect the soldier's life to the larger themes of remembrance and historical recognition.

Closing Reflection

Read aloud:

"Remembrance is not only about honouring sacrifice. It is about ensuring that those who served are never forgotten, regardless of race, background, or circumstance."

Students respond:

- What does remembrance mean after learning this story?
- How should Canada continue to honour overlooked veterans?

Alberta Curriculum Alignment



Social Studies/History

- Canadian military history
- Black Canadian history
- Human rights and citizenship

English Language Arts

- Biography and memoir
- Critical reading and analysis
- Reflective writing

Art

- Remembrance posters
- Heritage murals
- Commemorative displays

Indigenous, Equity, and Inclusion Connections

- Exploring whose stories have historically been excluded
- Understanding barriers faced by marginalized groups
- Examining how reconciliation and recognition require truth-telling

Remembrance Day Ceremony Connection

Students can contribute to a school Remembrance Day assembly by:

- Reading a passage from *A Footnote to Freedom*
- Presenting a brief biography of the featured soldier
- Sharing reflections about inclusion in Canadian military history
- Creating a visual display highlighting Black Canadians' contributions to military service

Key Message:

Remembrance Day is strengthened when we honour all who served. The story in *A Footnote to Freedom* reminds students that courage, sacrifice, and service transcend race, and that recovering forgotten histories helps create a fuller and more honest understanding of Canada's past.

Alberta Curriculum Alignment (Grades 7-9)



The following alignment connects the Remembrance Day lessons to Alberta curriculum outcomes and competencies, emphasizing historical thinking, citizenship, literacy, critical analysis, and ethical citizenship.

Social Studies

The Alberta Social Studies curriculum emphasizes the study of history, citizenship, government, and civic engagement. Students are expected to analyze evidence, evaluate perspectives, and understand how historical experiences shape contemporary society.

Key Curriculum Connections

Citizenship

Students examine how individuals contribute to society and how active citizenship strengthens communities. The life of the Black battalion soldier provides a powerful example of service, sacrifice, and civic responsibility despite systemic barriers.

Historical Thinking

Students will:

- Analyze historical evidence.
- Examine diverse perspectives.
- Identify significance in historical events and experiences.
- Consider how historical injustices affect present-day understanding.

Identity and Belonging

Students explore:

- Canadian identity.
- Inclusion and exclusion.
- The experiences of diverse communities within Canada.

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

- Describe the significance of Remembrance Day.
- Explain the contributions of Black Canadians to Canada's military history.
- Recognize barriers faced by Black soldiers during wartime and postwar Canada.

Skills and Procedures

Students will:

- Analyze primary and secondary source material.
- Interpret historical evidence.
- Compare historical and contemporary perspectives.
- Communicate conclusions using evidence from the text.

Alberta Curriculum Alignment (Grades 7-9)



English Language Arts

Students will:

- Read and interpret informational and literary texts.
- Identify themes and author's message.
- Respond critically and personally to texts.
- Create written and visual responses demonstrating understanding.

Assessment Evidence

Students can:

- ☐ Participate in discussions using textual evidence.
- ☐ Complete reflective writing.
- ☐ Present ideas orally.
- ☐ Create commemorative artwork supported by written explanation.

Alberta Curriculum Alignment (Gr 10-12)



The following alignment connects the Remembrance Day lessons to Alberta curriculum outcomes and competencies, emphasizing historical thinking, citizenship, literacy, critical analysis, and ethical citizenship.

Social Studies

The current Alberta Social Studies program encourages students to investigate issues, evaluate multiple perspectives, and understand the relationships between citizenship, rights, identity, and historical experiences.

Key Curriculum Themes

Citizenship and Identity

Students explore:

- What it means to be Canadian.
- The relationship between citizenship and belonging.
- How discrimination impacts participation in society.
- Contributions of diverse groups to nation-building.

A 'Footnote to Freedom' provides a case study through which students can examine these concepts in an authentic Canadian context.

Historical Significance

Students evaluate:

- Why certain stories are remembered.
- Why others have been marginalized.
- The importance of recovering overlooked voices.

Justice and Human Rights

Students investigate:

- Historical inequities.
- Barriers faced by minority communities.
- Evolving understandings of equality and recognition.

The experiences of the Black battalion soldier allow students to examine the tension between military service, citizenship, and racial discrimination.

English Language Arts

Senior High ELA focuses on helping students understand literature, communicate effectively, think critically, and become responsible citizens.

Text Study Outcomes

Students:

- Analyze character development.
- Examine themes and author's purpose.
- Evaluate historical and cultural context.
- Construct evidence-based interpretations.
- Communicate ideas through speaking, writing, and presentation

Alberta Curriculum Alignment (Gr 10-12)



Learning Outcomes

Students will:

Analyze

- The soldier's experiences within broader Canadian history.
- The impact of racism on military service and recognition.
- The relationship between memory, history, and social justice.

Evaluate

- How historical narratives are constructed.
- The consequences of historical omission.
- The role of remembrance in contemporary Canada.

Create

- Essays.
- Museum exhibits.
- Digital biographies.
- Remembrance presentations.
- Historical inquiry projects.

Indigenous, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Connections

This lesson supports Alberta's emphasis on examining multiple perspectives and understanding diverse experiences in Canadian history.

Students explore:

- Historically marginalized voices.
- Equity and representation.
- The importance of inclusive historical narratives.
- Respect for differing lived experiences.

Remembrance Day Extension

Students create a school-wide display titled: "We Remember"

Using examples from *A Footnote to Freedom*, students:

Research overlooked veterans.

Create biographies.

Present quotations and reflections.

Connect historic sacrifices to modern citizenship.

Key Take Away

By the end of the lesson, students should understand that Remembrance Day is not only about remembering military sacrifice, but also about ensuring that all who served are recognized. Through the story presented in *A Footnote to Freedom*, students develop a more complete understanding of Canadian history, citizenship, and the ongoing work of historical recognition and social justice.