

THE HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS

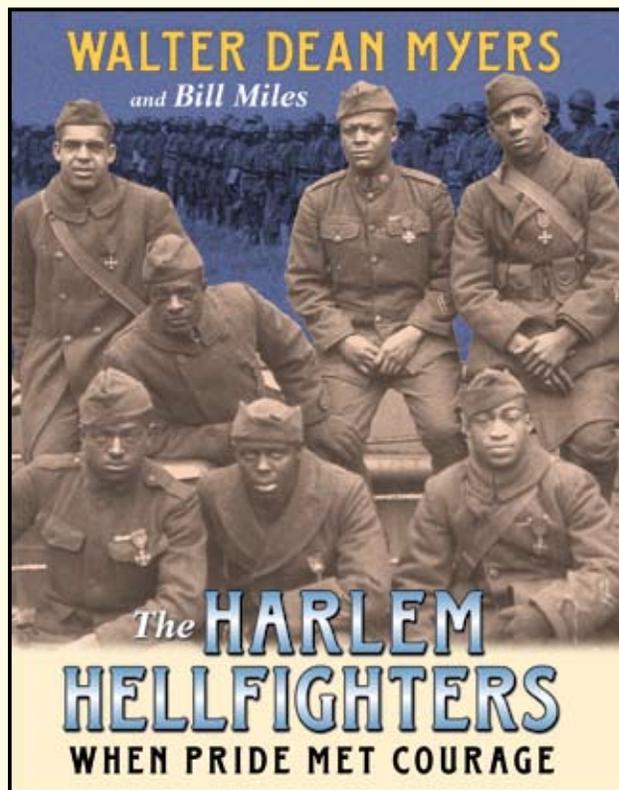
WHEN PRIDE MET COURAGE

BY WALTER DEAN MYERS
AND BILL MILES

TEACHING GUIDE

★ “The use of primary sources, the wealth of information, and the rarity of the subject make this book a must for public libraries and classroom use.”

—VOYA (starred review)



ABOUT THE BOOK

In a time when their humanity was questioned in their homeland, the Harlem Hellfighters, the 369th Infantry Regiment of African American soldiers in the United States Army, fought on the front lines of World War I to defend democracy. Walter Dean Myers and Bill Miles compellingly illuminate this little-known history of bravery and sacrifice within the context of the racism, politics, and shifting economy of the time. Infused with archival photographs and documents, *The Harlem Hellfighters* brings alive the heroic struggle and triumph of a group of patriotic African American men from all walks of life.

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DISCUSSION TOPICS

- 1. History.** In the preface, Bill Miles writes, “We cannot let this history die, nor can we let it fade away.” Do you agree? Why or why not? What did you learn from reading *The Harlem Hellfighters*? What more do you want to learn?
- 2. Race.** How did race affect the formation and work of the 369th Regiment? Why did African American men sign up for this unit? What are your thoughts about the bulletin issued by Major-General Ballou regarding the responsibilities of officers of color to avoid racial conflicts (pages 74–75)? What causes racism and who is responsible for racism?
- 3. War.** This book presents different reasons individuals and countries went to war. It also presents the atrocities of war. Do you know anyone who has fought in a war? If so, what has that person told you about it? Why do you think war exists? Does our country have a responsibility to defend people in other places in the world and to make the world “safe for democracy”? Explain.
- 4. Heroism.** Who in this book do you consider a hero? Why? What makes someone a hero? Does it take an extraordinary situation like war to make someone a hero? Why or why not? What do you think the book’s subtitle means? How does it relate to the Harlem Hellfighters?



Walter Dean Myers Archives

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- 1. Hall of Heroes.** Create posters featuring illustrations and information about heroic figures included in the book. Additional research may enhance these histories. Turn a school hallway into a space for these portraits of heroism and sacrifice. This project can be expanded to include heroes from students’ families or the school community.
- 2. Follow the 369th.** Trace the journey of the members of the 369th. Using modern and historical maps, mark locations from the book, including hometowns, training locations, travel routes, and battle sites. Use pins or other markers of various colors to indicate different types of locations, translated in a map key.
- 3. Spread the Word.** Inspired by Bill Miles’s statement that “we cannot let this history die,” find outlets for sharing the story of the Harlem Hellfighters. Write an informative article highlighting the key points of this history and submit it to a school, local, organizational, or national newspaper or website. Be sure to cite the book as your source.



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