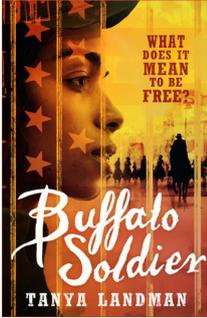




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Buffalo Soldier

by Tanya Landman
ISBN: 9781406314595
ARRP: \$16.95
NZRRP: \$18.99
June 2014

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

“What kind of a girl steals the clothes from a dead man’s back and runs off to join the army? A desperate one. That’s who.” At the end of the American Civil War, Charley – a young African-American slave from the deep south – is ostensibly freed. But then her adopted mother is raped and lynched at the hands of a mob and Charley is left alone. In a terrifyingly lawless land, where the colour of a person’s skin can bring violent death, Charley disguises herself as a man and joins the army. Soon she’s being sent to the prairies to fight a whole new war against the “savage Indians”. Trapped in a world of injustice and inequality, it’s only when Charley is posted to Apache territory that she begins to learn what it is to be truly free.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Tanya Landman has written numerous books for children and young people including the Sam Swann series, *Apache*, *The Goldsmith’s Daughter*, *Mondays Are Murder* and the beautiful picture book *Mary’s Penny*. Tanya lives in Bideford, Devon.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

<p>These notes are for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary years 7-10 • Ages 12+ 	<p>Key Learning Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • History 	<p>Example of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Fiction 	<p>Themes/Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Civil War • Gender • Bravery <p>Physical and Emotional Journey</p>				
<p>National Curriculum Focus:*</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <p>English Year 7 ACELA1529 ACELA1782 ACELT1619 ACELT1620 ACELT1621 ACELT1803 ACELT1622 ACELT1625 ACELY1721 ACELY1722 ACELY1723 ACELY1724 ACELY1725</p> </td> <td> <p>Year 8 ACELA1542 ACELA1547 ACELT1626 ACELT1627 ACELT1628 ACELT1807 ACELT1629 ACELT1632 ACELY1732 ACELY1733 ACELY1734</p> </td> <td> <p>Year 9 ACELA1552 ACELA1560 ACELT1633 ACELT1771 ACELT1634 ACELT1635 ACELT1636 ACELY1742 ACELY1745</p> </td> <td> <p>*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.</p> </td> </tr> </table>				<p>English Year 7 ACELA1529 ACELA1782 ACELT1619 ACELT1620 ACELT1621 ACELT1803 ACELT1622 ACELT1625 ACELY1721 ACELY1722 ACELY1723 ACELY1724 ACELY1725</p>	<p>Year 8 ACELA1542 ACELA1547 ACELT1626 ACELT1627 ACELT1628 ACELT1807 ACELT1629 ACELT1632 ACELY1732 ACELY1733 ACELY1734</p>	<p>Year 9 ACELA1552 ACELA1560 ACELT1633 ACELT1771 ACELT1634 ACELT1635 ACELT1636 ACELY1742 ACELY1745</p>	<p>*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.</p>
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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Before Reading

Working in small groups, prepare a brief overview of the American Civil War. Prepare a short presentation discussing the parties involved, the causes of the war and the result.

Read accounts of African American slavery in the Confederate States of America. What roles did slaves play in society? How were they treated by their owners? What rights did a slave have?

Discuss the term “Buffalo Soldier”. Ask students if anyone knows the definition of a Buffalo Soldier. Where have you heard this term before (i.e. songs, films, books, etc.)?

Discussion Questions

“A streak of her blood is smeared across her dress right next to mine. Ain’t that strange? Can’t tell whose is whose.” (p 17)
Charlotte observes that despite their physical differences and opposite standing in society, her blood and Miss Louellen’s blood is the same. Why do you think Tanya Landman included this scene in the novel? How does this enrich the setting and prepare the reader for what is to come in the story?

“We all one now. We the United States of America! Well that did make a difference. As a matter of fact that changed everything. I figured we could take ourselves into town. Find ourselves some work. Start to live like regular folks.” (p 54-5)

What does the word “freedom” mean to you? What, in reality, did it mean for Charlotte and the other slaves after they were emancipated by the Yankees? What could the USA Government have done to help the freed men and women transition from slavery to freedom?

Character Study

Discuss each character and their significance to the story. How does their character grow throughout the novel? Find quotes from the text to support your ideas.

- Charlotte
- Jonas
- Cookie
- Henry
- Reuben
- Jim

Why does Charlotte decide to pose as a man? What options/securities are open to her as a man that are not available to her as a woman? Why does she choose to join the army rather than live as a freed slave?

Tanya Landman employs first person to put the reader in Charlotte’s shoes. How does this technique connect the reader to Charlotte’s story? How would the novel have been different if it had been written in third person?

“It’s the ones beyond we gonna be dealing with: them are the ones we got to subdue so the good citizens of America can settle on their land peaceable” (p107)

Why does Charlotte fall in line with the army/government’s view on Native Americans? How does this compare with the treatment of African Americans that Charlotte has experienced first hand? What parallels are there with the USA’s treatment of Native American and the British colonialists’ treatment of Indigenous Australians?

“See, I figure folks got to have someone to love. Someone to look up to. But they got to have someone to hate just as bad. Someone to look down on, to peck at, just like chickens in a yard.” (p113)

Do you agree with the above statement? Do you think Charlotte agrees with this by the end of the novel?

“Might sound kinda crazy, but it was the first time in my life I’d ever felt close to being truly happy.” (p122)

How does Charlotte find a brief period of happiness in the army, even though she has been through terrible times and is constantly at risk of exposing her true self and being punished/killed?

“He falls at my feet. His brains spill on my boots. And a scarlet veil come down over my eyes. I’m madder than I ever been. Madder than i ever dreamed possible. I’m taking out Indians as fast as they come at me, and hell, I’m loving it.” (p140)

How does Henry’s death affect Charlotte?

Charlotte experiences the loss of several other key figures in her life: Cookie/Amos, Abe and Jonas. Discuss how each of these deaths affect Charlotte, using quotes to support your argument.

What are different explanations for why Company W became known as Buffalo Soldiers as mentioned in the text? Research the real-life Buffalo Soldiers online or in your library to find out if these explanations are accurate. Are there any additional explanations?

Discuss the motivations of both sides of the war between the USA army and the Native Americans.



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

“All that killing. Women. Children. Old folks. And it ain’t enough just to kill them indians, they’re being scalped too, and worse, and it’s General Michael’s men doing all that savagery not them redskins.” (p 213)

Discuss the abuse of power by the USA army in this novel.

“Seems like they don’t have a whole heap of cuss words in Apache. According to Bill Hickey a woman’s about the most insulting thing you can call a man.” (p 319)

What does this quote reveal about the place of women during this time? Is this still an issue today?

“When we done eating he unbutton my jacket and he lift up my shirt and he take his knife from his belt. Lay it flat against my skin and slide it up under them bandages I been winding around my chest all these years. With one cut he set me free.” (p 341)

Discuss the symbolism of Jim helping Charlotte to reclaim her womanhood.

What does Charlotte’s encounter with Buffalo Bill at the end of the novel imply about history? Are historical recounts accurate? Is it possible to have an unbiased view of history?