Creation and Service in the American Civil War

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Date _____ Class _____

Essential Question | How did the creation, service and remembrance of the 54th Massachusetts connect the struggle against slavery with the demand for equal treatment?

NJSLS Social Studies

6.1.8.HistoryUP.5.b examines African American roles in the Civil War. 6.1.8.HistoryCC.5.d connects geography, leadership and other factors with the war. 6.1.12.GeoSV.4.a extends map and primary source analysis of Civil War decisions.

NJSLS ELA and Common Core Literacy

NJSLS RI.CR.6.1 and W.AW.6.1 support evidence and argument. CCLS RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.7 and WHST.6-8.1 address evidence, summary, maps and arguments. RH.9-10.1, WHST.9-10.1, RH.11-12.1 and WHST.11-12.1 provide grade band extensions.

Mathematics and Science Connections

NJSLS 6.RP.A.3 supports pay ratios and percent. MS-ESS2-2 supports explanations of surface processes through an erosion model. These supporting activities do not fully assess every part of the science performance expectation.

Read and write using evidence. Complete each daily Do Now before its source and each Quick Write after the related work. Finish the 15 assessment questions and final RACE argument. Teacher modeling and group instruction appear in the separate teacher guide.

Day 1 | Creation and Recruitment

Do Now

Why might a person volunteer to defend a country that denies equal treatment?

Source A | A regiment built through public action

On January 26, 1863, the War Department authorized Massachusetts Governor John Andrew to raise Black troops. This followed the Emancipation Proclamation, which allowed the United States to accept Black men into military service. The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry was among the earliest Black Union regiments. It was not the first Black military unit in American history. Other Black units had already organized during the Civil War. [1, 2]

Frederick Douglass and Black community leaders helped recruit volunteers. Men came from Massachusetts, other states and places beyond the United States. Douglass's sons Lewis and Charles enlisted. Recruits trained at Camp Meigs in Readville, near Boston. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw commanded the regiment. Its enlisted men were Black, while its commissioned officers were White. This arrangement reflected military discrimination rather than a lack of Black ability to lead. [2, 3]

The regiment left Boston on May 28, 1863, to serve in the South. Recruitment connected military service with arguments about freedom and citizenship. A uniform created an opportunity to act against slavery, but it did not automatically remove unequal treatment. A historical explanation should distinguish the government's decision to authorize a unit from the choices of the people who joined it. [2, 3]