



# Robert Smalls

## Fearless Defender of Black America

### Lesson Plan

#### Overview

Robert Smalls exhibited courage and undeterred conviction in his fight for freedom, respect, and legal rights for former slaves. As a slave in the Gullah region of South Carolina, he risked his life to give the Union Navy an edge during the Civil War. Now a hero and a freedman, he had the opportunity to invest in his education, launch business opportunities, and serve his state in various political roles. Smalls' political career revealed his determination to right past wrongs. During the Reconstruction Era, his integrity and non-discriminatory perspective helped both Black and white citizens transition into a new and just society.

This lesson provides an unusual perspective of military maneuvers during the Civil War and Republican and Democratic political strategies through the Reconstruction Era, with an emphasis on resistance to white supremacy. This lesson highlights altruism, fortitude, courage, selflessness, and "radical grace", and presents positive examples of fatherhood and servant-leadership.

#### Lesson Prompt

Have you ever wondered how slaves served the military during the Civil War? Here is an example of a courageous African-American slave whose desire for freedom made him a Union hero and paved the way for a career as a businessman and a distinguished politician.

Have the students watch the PowerPoint slide deck about Robert Smalls. There are also videos students can watch about his life.

There are accompanying assignments and multiple-choice questions that can be included on upcoming quizzes or tests. Have students review the Critical Thinking and Discussion Questions. (You may wish to preview and select the questions that fit your lesson goal.)

#### Vocabulary

Students can look up and define the following vocabulary words:

Appomattox	<i>carte de visite</i>	commandeer
conscripted	contraband	<i>coup d'état</i>
Creole	dialect	diaspora
disenfranchise	Lowcountry	Pinkertons
Reconstruction	statesman	stevedore