

**For Teachers & Students Familiar with Minecraft:**  
**Simulating the Black Battalion's Role in World War I**

**Lesson Title:** Minecraft Simulation (For Teachers & Students Familiar with Minecraft) – The Black Battalion's Role in WWI

**Grade Level:** 4+

**Subject Areas & Curriculum Expectations:**

*Social Studies* (create and explore maps by using coordinate grids, topography and various map features)

*Math* (coordinate grids and mapping as part of their study of geometry)

*STEM* (building and designing, geometry and coordinates)

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**Lesson Objectives:**

- Understand the role and contributions of the Black Battalion during the First World War
  - Explore the impact of their work on the war effort
  - Develop teamwork, problem-solving, and resource management skills using Minecraft
  - Simulate key tasks involving how the wood was used
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**Lesson Procedure:**

**Introduction & Historical Context**

- ◆ Ask students: *What do you know about the different roles soldiers played during the First World War?*

Possible answers:

- Infantry Soldiers: fought on the front lines in trenches, using rifles and grenade*
- Machine Gunners: Operated heavy machine guns to defend positions or attack enemy troops*
- Snipers: Used specialized rifles to target enemy soldiers from a distance*
- Tank Crew; operated and maintained the tanks used in battles*
- Pilots: flew planes*

- ◆ Tell your students that today we will be learning about a battalion that took on labor duties during the First World War
- ◆ Read the book, *We Remember The Black Battalion*

- ◆ Post Reading: Lead a discussion with your class on the challenges faced by the Black Battalion

Possible answers:

**Discrimination and segregation** – *They were treated unfairly and kept separate from white soldiers.*

**Not allowed to be combat soldiers** – *They were given labor roles instead of fighting in battle.*

**Hard labour** – *They had to cut down trees and mill wood*

**Lack of technology** – *They didn't have the advanced tools we have today, which made their labour work even harder*

*What impact did their contribution have on the war effort?*

Possible answers: (provided the lumber for railway ties to be created, provided the lumber to reinforce the trenches; without their labor, many military projects would have taken much longer; their work allowed combat soldiers to focus on fighting instead of manual labor)

### Minecraft Simulation Setup & Gameplay

- ◆ **Important Note:** Each Minecraft world is generated anew each time. Before starting the project with your class, ensure that the coordinates align correctly. Some adjustments may be needed—please tweak them as necessary. If changes are required, an additional set of TOP SECRET mission cards are available with blank coordinates, allowing you to fill in the numbers yourself.
- ◆ **Important to Discuss & Remember:** We are using Minecraft to simulate how wood was used during the First World War. The Black Battalion did not build railroads, railway ties, or dig and reinforce trenches themselves. Instead, they were responsible for cutting trees, transporting logs to the mill, and milling them. These materials were then used by other soldiers to reinforce trenches and create railway ties. They also did not build sawmills, train stations, railroads, or underground rooms.
- ◆ Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group a TOP SECRET mission card. Provide the students with the code to join the Minecraft world you created.  
<https://www.tes.com/en-ca/teaching-resource/t-and-i-secret-mission-learning-cards-11402450> (link to the TOP SECRET cards for download)
- ◆ Review Minecraft tools and mechanics for cutting trees, crafting, and building

### Reflection & Assessment:

- ◆ Ask students to reflect on their experience:
  - What challenges did they face?*
  - How do they think this compares to the real-life challenges of the Black Battalion?*
- ◆ Discuss how the Black Battalion's work was essential yet undervalued in its time.
- ◆ Each team presents their work and explains how they tackled their tasks. They can give a virtual tour of their completed railway and trench systems.

## Assessment Criteria:

Category	Criteria
Simulation	Did students effectively simulate the Black Battalion's work?
Collaboration	Did teams work together efficiently?
Creativity	Did students find innovative solutions to problems?
Reflection	Did students demonstrate understanding in discussions and writing?

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## Conclusion:

By using Minecraft to simulate the essential work of the Black Battalion, students participate in an interactive learning experience that connects history with problem-solving and teamwork. This lesson highlights an often-overlooked contribution to WWI while helping students develop practical skills in a digital environment.

BUILDERS	PROJECT
	Cut down the trees and clear an area to build a mill at coordinates (226,74,-847).
	Create a railroad from the mill (226,74,-847) to the town at coordinates (90,68,-754). And build a train station on the edge of town.
	Create a railroad from the mill (226,74,-847) and the town (90,68,-754) to the trenches at coordinates (-19,69,-1044).
	Dig and reinforce a trench with lumber planks from (-23,64,-944) to (-25,67,-1156)
	Build an underground room for sleeping, eating and planning somewhere along the trench line.
	Connect a railroad from the first town (90,68,-754) to the second town (148,64,-1118) and build a train station at the edge of town.