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# Seventy Years After Bessie Coleman, First African American Pilot

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TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES  
REVISED LESSON PLAN  
Lennie Jones

1. TITLE:

Seventy Years After Bessie Coleman, First African American Pilot, Earns Her Pilot's License

2. OVERVIEW:

In exploring the history of African Americans in Aviation with a special emphasis on those who were pioneers in the field, the students in the Upper Grade Girls Seminar learned about Bessie Coleman, the first African American Pilot who earned her pilot's license in 1921.

After hearing about the amazing visit from three Tuskegee airmen that their teachers experienced during a teacher's seminar hosted by DePaul University on teaching with primary sources, the girls discussed what types of information they would have liked to learn directly from Bessie Coleman.

The discussion then expanded to other areas and individuals noted on a timeline of African American history and the focus was placed on another female African American pioneer, Carol Moseley Braun.

3. GOALS:

Students will learn about famous African Americans in aviation history. Students will learn about the barriers of racial discrimination that African Americans faced in seeking to enter the field of aviation. Students will learn the history of the Tuskegee airmen and the significant role they played in World War II. Students will learn about Carol Moseley Braun and the "firsts" she has achieved. Students will learn basic journalistic techniques for interviewing from a volunteer graduate of the Medill School of Journalism.

4. OBJECTIVES:

STUDENTS WILL:

- Construct/Write questions that will lead to learning new information about an interviewee using journalistic techniques.
- Interview and be interviewed by a learning partner to gain skill in writing thoughtful questions.
- Interview a senior family member regarding an incident or event in the family's history.
- Collect or describe any items relating to the interviewee's story that are primary sources.
- Create a timeline for the next 25 years, indicating areas in which they could become the first African American female to achieve a particular goal.

- Construct/Write at least two questions to ask Senator Carol Moseley Braun that are not answered in her biography or the other materials taken from the archived website of the Library of Congress.
- Host and participate in an oral history seminar with special guest, Carol Moseley Braun.

## 5. INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS:

\*Despite challenging racial barriers why did Carol Moseley Braun pursue the goal of becoming the first African American woman senator?

\*How can student use oral histories and other primary sources in shaping and achieving their personal goals in life?

## 6. TIME REQUIRED (four to six class periods)

Class Period One – Procedure 1  
 Class Period Two – Procedure 2  
 Class Period Three – Procedure 3  
 Class Period Four – Procedure 4

## 7. RECOMMENDED GRADE RANGE 6-8

## 8. SUBJECT/SUB-SUBJECT

Language Arts, Social Studies

## 9. Standards – Illinois State Goals

3.C.2a Write for a variety of purposes and for specified audiences in a variety of forms.

4.A.2a Demonstrate understanding of the listening process by summarizing and paraphrasing spoken messages orally and in writing in formal and informal situations.

4.A.3a Demonstrate ways (e.g., ask probing questions, provide feedback to a speaker, summarize and paraphrase complex spoken messages) that listening attentively can improve comprehension.

4.B.2b Use speaking skills and procedures to participate in group discussions.

5.A.2a Formulate questions and construct a basic research plan.

5.B.2b Cite sources used.

5.B.3b Identify, evaluate and cite primary sources.

14.D.3 Describe roles and influences of individuals, groups and media in shaping current Illinois and United States public policy (e.g., general public opinion, special interest groups, formal parties, media).

16.A.3b Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical maps and other historical sources.

16.A.2c Ask questions and seek answers by collecting and analyzing data from historic documents, images and other literary and non-literary sources.

18.C.3a Describe ways in which a diverse U.S. population has developed and maintained common beliefs (e.g., life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; the Constitution and the Bill of Rights).

#### 10. CREDITS:

- Library of Congress
- Bill Healy
- Carol Moseley Braun
- Margo Tomaras

#### PREPARATION

#### 11. MATERIALS USED:

Handouts of resource materials and computers.

#### 12. RESOURCES USED:

\*Speakers/Presenters: Carol Moseley Braun and Bill Healy

\*Timeline of African American Aviators

\*Book: Black Wings: Courageous Stories of African Americans in Aviation and Space History

Library of Congress online Items:

Title: Carol Moseley Braun for President – Home

Abstract: Official Web site of Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun's exploratory committee for the 2004 Democratic Party nomination for President of the United States.

Date Captured: October 8, 2003 – January 30, 2004

Archived Site

Subject(s): United States—Democratic Party

Presidents—United State—Election

Democratic Party—United States

Moseley-Braun, Carol

Political candidates—United States

Elections—United States

United States—Politics and government—2001

Languages: English

Genre: web site

Access Condition: None

URL at time of [carolforpresident.com/content.php?page=home](http://carolforpresident.com/content.php?page=home)

Capture:

Citation ID: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.natlib/mrva0016.1939>

Record ID: mrva0016.1939  
Collection Title: Election 2004 Web Archive

### 13. PROCEDURE:

Procedure 1 – Discuss African American Historical Timeline and share and discuss materials on African American aviators.

Homework – Students will explore the Library of Congress for information on any of the topics discussed in class. ([Worksheet](#))

Procedure 2 – a) Introduce students to basic journalistic interviewing skills. ([Worksheet](#))  
b) Partner students to interview each other.  
c) Allow students to share what they learned from the interviews.  
d) Share materials on Carol Moseley Braun

Homework – Students will read the materials on Carol Moseley Braun and use the Library of Congress citation given to locate Additional information about her.

Procedure 3 – a) Students will compare, contrast and discuss the photographs of Bessie Coleman and Carol Moseley Braun. ([Worksheet](#))  
b) Students will construct at least two questions to ask Carol Moseley Braun ([Worksheet](#)).

Procedure 4 – Students will be allowed to ask their questions of the special guest.

Homework – Write a journal entry on the experience of listening to and talking with Carol Moseley Braun

Procedure 5 – a) Students will interview a senior family member. ([Worksheet](#))  
b) Students will collect or describe any items, relating to the family member interview, that are primary sources.

### 14. EVALUATION:

- \*Participation in discussion
- \*Quality of questions
- \*Student reflections/journal entries

### REFLECTION

The impact of the use of a primary source, i.e., Carol Moseley Braun, on my students' learning was huge. The stories that Ms. Braun shared with them and her responses to their questions converted bare bone facts to biographical and historical information that truly engaged them. For example, when Ms. Braun described to the students what it felt

like to be the only woman in the highest legislative body in the country, I could sense that the students were really listening and relating to some of the discouragement and pain she had experienced.

The tips that the students received during the journalism session were very helpful. Students were able to construct questions that were more in depth which resulted in them being able to extract more information from Ms. Braun.

I believe that one of the most important outcomes of the lesson for the students was their growing realization of how interesting and relevant history is in their lives. I believe the use of a primary source helped the students develop a greater appreciation for what can be learned from secondary and other sources.

The students greatly enjoyed the activity of interviewing each other and sharing what they learned about their classmates. I think it would be a good idea to give them the opportunity to interview their oldest family members. I also think an activity that allowed them to collect artifacts and other primary sources should be included in the lesson plan.

## REVISION

I would like to see a few interviews of family members that allowed students to reconstruct an event or chapter from their own family histories, presenting, wherever possible, other primary sources such as letters, clothing, etc.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ (B. Coleman-Procedure 1)

Bessie Coleman, the first African American pilot, died in a plane accident in 1926. If you could ask one question of her today, what would you ask her? Remember, you want your question to lead to information or insights that you don't have from the biographical materials you have read on Bessie Coleman.

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_ (Partner Interview- Procedure 2)

Using some of the interviewing tips and strategies you learned in the journalism seminar, interview the student with whom you've been partnered with the goal of obtaining interesting information that you did not previously know. Write down the new information and be prepared to share it with the class.

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_ (Family Interview – Procedure 5)

Using the interviewing tips and strategies you've learned, interview one of the senior members of your family about an incident or event that is part of your family's history. Collect (or be able to describe) any items relating to your story that are primary sources. Be prepared to share your interview and primary sources with the class.

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