

## Robert Smalls

### Fearless Defender of Black America

#### Overview:

This lesson teaches about former slave and Civil War hero Robert Smalls, who dedicated his freedom to bringing economic and educational opportunities to his home state of South Carolina during the years of Reconstruction. Smalls served as a U.S. Congressman and faced continual opposition from racist politicians, however he remained undeterred in the quest to give Blacks “an equal chance in the battle of life.”

#### Lesson Objective:

In this lesson students will:

- Learn about Black “Gullah” culture in 19<sup>th</sup> Century South Carolina.
- Understand why former slaves enlisted in the Civil War.
- Discover the value of leaders who focus on their communities.
- See how determination and risk help us succeed.
- Learn about enterprise and innovation in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Black community.
- Discuss the positive impact of the following:
  - Service
  - Determination
  - Opportunity
  - Leadership
  - Risk
  - Freedom
  - Enterprise

#### Lesson Prompt:

How many people do you know who would risk their lives for freedom? Is the risk of death worth the reward of freedom? Why would a former slave purchase the house of his former owner and allow the widow of his slaveowner to live there? The determination of Robert Smalls will inspire students to face every challenge with a resolve to overcome, and to understand the long-term benefits of a mobilized community.

This lesson includes a prepared PowerPoint slide deck summarizing Smalls’ rise from slave life in the historic Gullah culture of South Carolina to his heroic seizure of a Confederate ship and his rise to political leadership. Share the slide show and have students consider and discuss the questions contained in it to spark discussion. Select activities from the accompanying Activity Pack according to your time allowance and student appropriateness.

Included in the Activity Pack are:

*Multiple Choice Questions (grades 4-8)*

*Critical Thinking Exercises (grades K-5 with guidance; 6-8 unassisted)*

*Crossword Puzzle*

*Coloring Page (grades K-3)*

*Selected Videos*

## **Vocabulary:**

Appomattox, bankrupt, commandeering, Creole, *coup d'état*, dialect, disenfranchise, Gullah, Lowcountry, Reconstruction

## **Recommended Resources:**

Robert Smalls: Sailing to Freedom (WCBD News 2, 2021)

<https://youtu.be/fdAhhKnu18Q> (5 minutes, 5 seconds)

Robert Smalls: Hero of the Planter (NBC Learn, 2020)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xMy7-jYvsM> (2 minutes, 45 seconds)

## Standards and Learning Objectives

*Mapped to the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards published by the National Council for the Social Studies*

### Grades K-2

#### Civics

- D2.Civ.2.K-2.** Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community.
- D2.Civ.6.K-2.** Describe how communities work to accomplish common tasks, establish responsibilities, and fulfill roles of authority.
- D2.Civ.8.K-2.** Describe democratic principles such as equality, fairness, and respect for legitimate authority and rules.
- D2.Civ.10.K-2.** Compare their own point of view with others' perspectives.
- D2.Civ.12.K-2.** Identify and explain how rules function in public (classroom and school) settings.
- D2.Civ.14.K-2.** Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.

#### Economics

- D2.Eco.2.K-2.** Identify the benefits and costs of making various personal decisions.

#### Geography

- D2.Geo.6.K-2.** Identify some cultural and environmental characteristics of specific places.

#### History

- D2.His.1.K-2.** Create a chronological sequence of multiple events.
- D2.His.2.K-2.** Compare life in the past to life today.
- D2.His.3.K-2.** Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped a significant historical change.
- D2.His.4.K-2.** Compare perspectives of people in the past to those of people in the present.

### Grades 3-5

#### Civics

- D2.Civ.2.3-5.** Explain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate.

**D2.Civ.4.3-5.** Explain how groups of people make rules to create responsibilities and protect freedoms.

**D2.Civ.6.3-5.** Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.

**D2.Civ.8.3-5.** Identify core civic virtues and democratic principles that guide government, society, and communities.

**D2.Civ.10.3-5.** Identify the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others' points of view about civic issues.

**D2.Civ.12.3-5.** Explain how rules and laws change society and how people change rules and laws.

**D2.Civ.14.3-5.** Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

## Economics

**D2.Eco.1.3-5.** Compare the benefits and costs of individual choices.

**D2.Eco.2.3-5.** Identify positive and negative incentives that influence the decisions people make.

## Geography

**D2.Geo.6.3-5.** Describe how environmental and cultural characteristics influence population distribution in specific places or regions.

## History

**D2.His.1.3-5.** Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to compare developments that happened at the same time.

**D2.His.2.3-5.** Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today.

**D2.His.3.3-5.** Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.

**D2.His.4.3-5.** Explain why individuals and groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.

## Grades 6-8

### Civics

**D2.Civ.2.6-8.** Explain specific roles played by citizens (such as voters, jurors, taxpayers, members of the armed forces, petitioners, protesters, and office-holders).

**D2.Civ.4.6-8.** Explain the powers and limits of the three branches of government, public officials, and bureaucracies at different levels in the United States and in other countries.

**D2.Civ.6.6-8.** Describe the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.

**D2.Civ.10.6-8.** Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

**D2.Civ.12.6-8.** Assess specific rules and laws (both actual and proposed) as means of addressing public problems.

**D2.Civ.14.6-8.** Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.

## Economics

**D2.Eco.1.6-8.** Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.

## Geography

**D2.Geo.6.6-8.** Explain how the physical and human characteristics of places and regions are connected to human identities and cultures.

## History

**D2.His.1.6-8.** Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

**D2.His.2.6-8.** Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

**D2.His.3.6-8.** Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

**D2.His.4.6-8.** Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.